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EDITORIAL

Georgia. Historical, cultural and political landmarks

Tamar BERUCHASHVILI
Sabin DRĂGULIN

Abstract: *The editorial staff of the science journal Polis, from Iași, has decided to continue its research activity by hosting an issue dedicated to Georgia in its pages. The initiative is part of a broader project that aims to present to readers and interested specialists articles and studies signed by university professors and researchers from Georgia and Romania. The collapse of the USSR in 1991 allowed the opening to the world of cultural spaces that for a long time were closed or at best semi-open. Georgia is a country that in its multi-millennium history came into direct contact with the great Greco-Roman culture and civilization, which left visible traces in the mythology, archaeology and culture of the Georgian people. Together with these elements of antiquity, Christianity represents the fundamental identity element of the Georgian nation. Due to its geographical position, Georgia is a gateway for the European Union to Asia. In this context, Georgia can become a multidimensional and multifunctional regional centre fundamental for connecting the middle corridor with Europe.*

Keywords: *Georgia, history, statehood, Christianity, continuity.*

Georgia – a three-millennium history of statehood

Georgia, a country with a 3,000-year history, stands as a testament to the resilience and pride of its people. Nestled in the heart of the South Caucasus, Georgia is a cradle of ancient civilization, boasting a unique alphabet, language, and a Christian tradition that spans 17 centuries. Throughout its past, Georgia has

managed to preserve its cultural identity, traditions and national character, despite centuries of invasions and conflicts.

Georgia's strategic location has shaped country's history and culture and continues to play an important role in the geopolitical context.

The nation's history is a chronicle of struggle and survival, with its people fiercely protecting their homeland against invaders. Yet, amidst the

turmoil, Georgia's cultural environment has always been distinguished by exceptional humanism, tolerance and compassion. The country's rich cultural heritage is reflected in its unique polyphony, national traditions and epic literature, such as Shota Rustaveli's XII century epic poem "The Knight in the Panther's Skin," a masterpiece that embodies the spirit of Georgian culture.

Georgia's European future starts with Georgia's European past based on shared history, cultural roots and most importantly, shared values.

Since the beginning, Georgia has shared the three pillars considered to be at the foundation of Europe's civilization: Greek and Roman heritage and Christianity. Antique Greco-Roman civilization has left its influence and visible marks in our mythology, archaeology, and culture. Christianity has been central to our identity as a Nation. As the kingdom converted to Christianity in 326, Georgia has been fighting for centuries to preserve its faith and identity against numerous empires and invaders. All along, on the Eastern shores of the Black Sea, it has served as a small Christian outpost facing the empires of Asia. This common heritage has influenced our core values. Among them, tolerance, protection of minorities, and human rights have been most significant. The capital city, Tbilisi's architecture is a true testimony to this history: mosques, synagogues, Christian churches of various denominations, and even Zoroastrian sites coexist side by side.

This long-standing tradition of peaceful coexistence between religions and cultures is best symbolized by more than 26 centuries of Georgians and Jews living together, free of any repression or discrimination. Today, 13,2% of Georgia's population is of Armenian, Azeri descent, Osetian, Ukrainian, Greek, Kurdish or Yezidi heritage, maintaining the old tradition of hospitality that has reached well beyond our borders. As to gender equality, this very modern notion stands at the core of the national epos when Shota Rustaveli in the XII century already said: "ლეკვი ლომისა სწორია ძუ იყოს, თუნდაც ხვადია" (Lions cubs are equal, be they female or male). This again notion was also reflected in the role that women have played throughout our history: in the IV century, St Nino converted the Georgian state; Queen or as she was called, King Tamar reigning (1184-1213) over Georgia's golden Age; or in 1919, the first Democratic Republic of Georgia giving women both the right to vote and be elected.

Today, as an EU candidate country since 2023, Georgia remains committed to the process of European integration that is our civilizational choice enshrined in the Georgian Constitution.

In a time marked by uncertainty, meaningful dialogue and close cooperation remain indispensable. Therefore, Georgia is committed to dialogue, peace and stability in the region. Amidst global challenges like conflicts, climate change, and hu-

manitarian crises, Georgia contributes to transforming the South Caucasus and wider Black Sea region into a space of dialogue and economic prosperity. Drawing from our own bitter experience of the Russian invasion in 2008, the Georgian government supports initiatives like the US President Donald Trump's efforts to end the Russia-Ukraine war as well as his peace deal between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Despite 20% of Georgia's territory (historic regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali) remain under Russian occupation, we continue to pursue development and progress with great energy and determination. Georgia is staunch supporter of the UN principles and a multipolar international order, aiming to ensure global peace and stability. The Georgian government prioritizes peace and economic growth, improving the quality of life for its citizens despite external challenges.

Georgia's strategic location, as the EU's gateway to Asia, offers the shortest alternative route connecting Europe and Asia. In addition, important projects like the Middle Corridor, the Black Sea submarine electricity cable, and the Caspian-Black Sea-Green Energy Corridor provide opportunities for enhanced connectivity and energy security. The country is emerging as a multidimensional and multifunctional regional hub, actively modernizing its infrastructure, including roads, rail, sea and air transportation.

I would like to mention that the preparation of this editorial coincided

with the important and highly symbolic event for my country: the inclusion of **Georgian wheat culture traditions and rituals in the UNESCO List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity!**

This fact inspired me to share the stories of the five elements of Georgian intangible heritage recognized by UNESCO as examples of traditions that define the identity of my country and people. These are: Georgian polyphonic singing, Ancient Georgian traditional Qvevri wine-making method, Living culture of three writing systems of the Georgian alphabet, Chidaoba – wrestling in Georgia and Georgian wheat culture: traditions and rituals.

Georgian polyphonic singing (in the UNESCO list since 2008) is a long-standing secular tradition that has helped preserve the country's identity through centuries of foreign domination and cultural pressure, holds a special place in Georgian culture. There are three main styles of Georgian polyphony. The first is complex polyphony, found mainly in the mountainous region of Svaneti. The second, common in eastern Georgia's Kakheti region, features a vocal dialogue built over a deep bass line. The third style, typical of western Georgia, is contrasted polyphony, with three vocal parts that allow a degree of improvisation. Many of these songs are connected to ancient rituals, such as the cult of the grapevine, and some can be traced back as far as the eighth century. Traditionally, polyphonic songs accompanied

every aspect of daily life. They were sung while working in the fields, as in the Naduri songs that echo the rhythms of physical labour, as well as in healing rituals and Christmas carols known as Alilo. Georgian polyphony also influenced Byzantine liturgical hymns, becoming an important element of religious musical expression.

One well-known example of the Georgian polyphony is song Chakrulo, which was one of 29 musical compositions included in the Voyager Golden Records that were sent by NASA into space in 1977. Although Georgian traditional music survived the constraints of socialist cultural policies, it continues to require careful preservation. The Georgian State provides various programs aimed at safeguarding, studying and promoting this unique cultural heritage.

Archaeological evidence suggests that wine was first produced in Georgia around 8,000 years ago, earning it the title of the “cradle of wine.” Qvevri winemaking (in the UNESCO list since 2013) is practiced across Georgia, especially in village communities where distinctive local grape varieties are grown.

Georgian grape names are nearly always descriptive of their appearance or flavour, reflecting the historic widespread viticulture of the country. Georgia has at least 500 native varieties. Among them, around 45 varieties are commercially produced today, but the Georgian state is on a mission to save and reintroduce the old grapes. A Qvevri is a large, egg-

shaped clay vessel used to make, age and store wine. The skills and knowledge involved in creating Qvevri and producing wine are passed down through generations, shared among families, neighbours and friends who come together during the grape harvest and wine-making season. After the grapes are pressed, the juice, along with the skins, stems and seeds, is poured into the Qvevri. The vessel is then sealed and buried underground, where the wine ferments for five to six months before it is ready to drink. This method of winemaking is still widely used in Georgia. Qvevri winemaking is more than a technique: it shapes the way of life of local communities and is an essential part of their cultural identity and heritage. Wine and grapevines appear frequently in Georgian songs, stories, and oral traditions, reflecting their deep-rooted significance in Georgian culture. Wine plays an important role in both religious and secular celebrations and rituals. Wine cellars are traditionally regarded as the most sacred space in the family home.

Living culture of the three writing systems of the Georgian alphabet (in the UNESCO list since 2015).

The Georgian alphabet is considered one of the 14 truly unique writing systems in the world. Over time, Georgia’s written language has developed three distinct alphabets: Mrgvlovani, Nuskhuri, and Mkhedruli. All three are still in use today. Mrgvlovani was the earliest form, from which Nuskhuri later evolved, followed by Mkhedruli. Each alphabet

has its own cultural and social role, and together they reflect the richness and diversity of Georgian identity. Their continued use also gives communities a strong sense of historical continuity. Mrgvlovani and Nuskhuri are mainly practised and passed on within the Georgian Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church. These alphabets appear in religious texts such as psalms and hymns, as well as in inscriptions on church objects, including icons. In addition, some theological schools, universities and scholars, including linguists and historians, continue to study and teach them. Mkhedruli, on the other hand, is the alphabet used in everyday life and forms the basis of Georgia's education system. It is taught in primary and secondary schools and is also passed down informally within families, from older to younger generations.

Chidaoba, a traditional form of wrestling (in the UNESCO list since 2018), is one of Georgia's oldest martial arts and is practiced widely across the country. It is popular among men of all ages and is carried on by young people, city residents, sports clubs, schools and amateur groups in both rural and urban communities.

Chidaoba is more than a sport. It brings together wrestling techniques with music, dance, and distinctive traditional clothing known as the *chokha*. Originally developed for combat purposes, Chidaoba gradually evolved into a public and ceremonial sport by the late Middle Ages. The

sport follows a strong code of honour and fair play. At times, wrestlers even leave the arena by performing a Georgian folk dance, highlighting the close connection between physical skill and cultural expression. The specific fresco depicting wrestling was discovered in the Alaverdi Cathedral in the Kakheti region of Georgia. This medieval wall painting, dating back to the 11th century, shows two men engaged in a wrestling match and is one of the earliest known visual representations of Georgian wrestling.

Georgian wheat culture: traditions and rituals (in the UNESCO list since 2025) is built around the cultivation and use of local, endemic varieties of wheat, along with traditional tools such as stone mills and hand-made bread ovens. For local communities, wheat symbolizes life, growth, and abundance. Families and villages follow time-honoured customs for planting and harvesting, saving the best grains for special occasions, including ritual meals and religious holidays. Wheat culture fosters cooperation, hospitality, and respect, and the tradition of baking and sharing ceremonial bread remains a powerful symbol of prosperity and fertility. Typically, men take care of the fieldwork, while women manage the wheat stores and bake bread for ceremonies. Knowledge and skills are passed down through participation in family and community events such as births, weddings and funerals. Of the 27 cultivated and wild wheat species recognized

worldwide today, 14 are found in Georgia, among them, 5 are endemic. Certain varieties of wheat that are evolutionarily close to wild species have been preserved exclusively in Georgia, such as Zanduri, Kolkuri Asli and Makha. Archaeological studies conducted on Georgian sites have uncovered wheat remains dating back to the 6th millennium BC, confirming that for 8,000 years - parallel to the ancient tradition of winemaking, the cultivation and sowing of Georgian wheat has continued uninterrupted.

All five elements of Georgian intangible heritage are deeply interconnected and together form a coherent cultural system that shapes Georgia's national identity. Rather than standing alone, they reinforce one another through shared values, social structures and symbolic meanings. Continuity and resilience unify these elements. The Georgian alphabet preserved language and knowledge through centuries of foreign domination, just as polyphonic singing and ritual practices safeguarded cultural memory. All five elements embody a distinct Georgian worldview - one that values harmony (in music), balance (between nature and human labour), honour and discipline (in wrestling), spirituality and literacy (in the alphabets) and abundance shared through hospitality (in bread and wine). Together, they tell a single story: of a nation whose identity is not defined by borders or monuments alone, but by living traditions that continue to shape everyday life.

Finally, it could be said, that the Georgia's story is one of resilience, cultural richness, and a deep commitment to peace and cooperation. With its rich history, cultural heritage and commitment to peace, Georgia stands ready to engage in dialogue on global and regional issues as the world navigates pivotal moments. There is a strong willingness to overcome challenges and unlock opportunities for future generations for a more stable and prosperous future in the Black Sea region and beyond.

As the country looks to the future, it does so with a sense of pride in its past and a vision for more harmonious tomorrow.

Cultural diplomacy and political science magazine *Polis*, from Iași

The aim of the coordinators of this issue of the political science journal *Polis* is to bring to the attention of the interested public at home and abroad a series of articles and scientific studies aimed at illustrating significant episodes in the history of Georgia. Located on the other side of the Black Sea, Georgia is an emblematic example of a country whose people, and later the nation, have manifested a constant European vocation over the millennia. It has been in direct contact with European civilization and culture, whether in its Greco-Roman, Byzantine or Western forms, but which, as a result of its geographical position, has been at-

tracted in different historical periods also to the sphere of oriental culture and civilization.

Of course, this latter space also experienced remarkable cultural and civilizational values, superior in certain historical eras to those of Europe. However, the emergence and development of humanism and the Enlightenment led, in Europe, to the configuration of a type of modernity that raised the individual to a new level of political and social existence, that of "citizen". Within a society characterized by a special cultural wealth, at the level of Georgian thought, an aspiration emerged over time that, at certain historical moments, transformed into necessity and political will: that of breaking away from a model of thinking perceived as excessively restrictive for the ideal of personal liberation.

In this sense, assuming the inherent limits of the knowledge of a cultural and civilizational space of particular complexity, spread over several millennia and marked by diverse historical experiences, one can identify a state of mind that explains why a significant part of the citizens of contemporary Georgia express their desire for integration into the European Union. The European space of thought, which was the basis for the establishment of nation-states and transformed the status of the individual from that of subject to that of member of a nation of citizens, has exerted a constant attraction on the peoples located on its borders. It is a reference model to which individuals animated by the desire for freedom and civic participation aspire.

Romanians and Romania have had a similar historical experience, facilitated by a geographical context that favored a closer proximity to Western Europe compared to Georgia. However, beyond the differences in context, what remains fundamental, regardless of the era, vicissitudes or difficult geopolitical circumstances, is the maintenance of this permanent thirst for freedom.

In the view of the members of the editorial board of *Polis* magazine, dialogue – in this case a cultural and scientific dialogue – represents one of the most effective ways of mutual knowledge. Only through knowledge can stereotypes generated by ignorance be overcome. Culture, regardless of its forms of expression, constitutes an essential tool for opening a dialogue that will facilitate, over time, a substantial political and economic integration.

The corpus dedicated to the history and culture of Georgia brings together 18 contributions, of which 15 come from the Georgian academic environment and 3 from the Romanian one. The approaches are diverse and cover fields such as historiography, philosophy, diplomacy, economics, geopolitics, bilateral relations Romania-Georgia, minority issues, religion, as well as other related areas. The ordering of the articles and studies was carried out according to chronological and thematic criteria.

The thematic issue dedicated to Georgia opens with the contribution of Professor Jaba Samushia, Doctor of History and Rector of the Ivane

Javakhishvili State University in Tbilisi. Right from the title – Georgia and Europe: A centuries-long tradition of relations – Georgia's aspiration to join the European family is explicitly formulated. This option, the author emphasizes, is anchored in a long historical process, shaped by factors such as geography, culture, religion and security imperatives. The geopolitical position of the Georgian state, located at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, has over time constituted a space of interaction between Eastern and Western civilizations; however, Georgia has constantly identified with the Western cultural and political sphere. Even though the same geographical position attracted periods of foreign domination, which determined a temporary distance from the European cultural and civilizational space, the European vector remained a central element of Georgian statehood. The conclusion of the article is that Georgia's contemporary approach to European integration represents the continuation of a deeply historically anchored civilizational choice.

Professor Demur Jalaghonia, PhD in Philosophy, is distinguished by an exceptional institutional career, among the positions held, the one of director of the Department of Political Philosophy is worth mentioning. His contribution, entitled „Georgian Philosophy from the Phasis Academy to the Present Day (Main Tendencies)”, highlights the fact that Georgian philosophy benefits from a long and consistent tradition, which ex-

tends over fifteen centuries, starting with the 4th century. This tradition reached remarkable levels in the 11th, 12th, 19th and, later, in the 20th century. Georgian thinkers often familiarized themselves, even simultaneously, with the philosophical heritage of Antiquity, the Middle Ages and the modern era, interpreting, translating and elaborating original works. Through these efforts, they integrated themselves into the dominant intellectual paradigms of their eras and actively contributed to addressing and developing fundamental issues of philosophy. The author's conclusion is that this multi-century tradition provides a solid basis for speaking, with full legitimacy, about the existence of a “Georgian philosophy”.

Professor and historian Dimitri Shvelidze proposes an article entitled „Diplomatic Structures of the Democratic Republic of Georgia (1918-1921)”, the subject addressed being in full accordance with his specialization in the modern and contemporary history of Georgia. The study is structured around three main thematic directions. The first one aims at the establishment of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of Georgia and its activity in the direction of establishing diplomatic relations with as many states as possible. The second theme analyses the network of embassies and consulates opened by foreign states on the territory of Georgia. The third research direction focuses on the identification and description of Georgian diplomatic missions abroad in the

period 1918-1921. The author demonstrates that the young and still insufficiently recognized Democratic Republic of Georgia managed, despite the difficult international context, to establish contacts and diplomatic relations with numerous countries. Its independence was recognized *de jure* only on January 27, 1921, just a few weeks before the invasion of Georgia by Soviet Russia.

Lela Tsiphuria, PhD in Arts, screenwriter, producer and film director, signs the article entitled „Becoming from Real Story in Surrealist Feature Film in the Most Anti-Soviet Film, in Tengiz Abuladze’s “Repentance””. This contribution provides access to a moment of political dissidence manifested in the midst of the Soviet period. Specialists consider the film *Repentance*, made in 1984 by Tengiz Abuladze, to be one of the most anti-Soviet cinematographic productions in the former Soviet Union. Although Soviet censorship was still extremely severe during the years the film was made, it was the first not only in Georgia, but in the entire USSR space, to openly and critically address the issues of Soviet totalitarianism and the Great Purge.

A landmark contribution, which makes the transition from the communist to the post-communist period, is the study signed by professor and economist Avtandil Silagadze, entitled *Contemporary Trends in the Georgian Economy*. The author is, among others, a member of the National Academy of Sciences of Georgia and the International Academy

of Sciences, Education, Industry and Arts of the United States of America. The paper analyzes the main contemporary trends of the Georgian economy, systematically examining the evolution of economic growth, the current state of various economic sectors, the dynamics of employment and unemployment, foreign investment flows, trade-related challenges, the level of international reserves, external public debt, remittance patterns, inflation, poverty, as well as other relevant aspects. According to the study's conclusions, the Georgian economy is on a positive growth trajectory in the post-pandemic period.

Tengiz Pkhaladze is a prominent political scientist and public opinion leader with extensive experience in governance, diplomacy, civil society, academia, and think tanks. His areas of expertise include foreign and security policy, geopolitics, Russia and the post-Soviet space, the Eastern Partnership, and European and Euro-Atlantic integration processes. His contribution, titled „Ideological Foundations of Russian Aggression in Georgia (August 2008)”, analyses the Russian Federation’s military aggression against Georgia in August 2008 as a watershed moment in the post-Soviet international order. The author highlights that this episode marked the first open, large-scale use of the regular armed forces of the Russian Federation beyond its national borders for offensive military purposes, leading to the illegal occupation of parts of the internationally recognized territory of a neighbour-

ing state. Another dimension of the analysis concerns the role of Eurasianist, understood both as a long-standing intellectual tradition and as a contemporary political discourse, in shaping the way Russian political elites interpreted Georgia, the Caucasus, and Russia's regional role. The author's position is that the 2008 aggression translated Eurasianist narratives into concrete political practice, through mechanisms of discursive legitimization, spatial reimagining, and symbolic restoration. In this sense, the Georgian case anticipated Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, as well as the large-scale military intervention in Ukraine, launched in 2022.

Professors Giorgi Gaganidze, Dean of the Faculty of Economics and Business, and Badri Ramishvili, both prestigious economists, sign the article entitled „The Importance and Economic Prospects of Strategic Relations between Georgia and Romania”. The central theme of the study consists in the analysis of the historical relations between Georgia and Romania, based on cultural-religious and commercial ties. The first element highlighted is represented by an emblematic figure that connects the two cultural spaces: Saint Antim the Ivirian, born in Georgia, who later became a major spiritual and cultural personality in Romania. The second element refers to the commercial dimension of bilateral relations. In the authors' view, economic cooperation between Romania and Georgia is based on solid foundations and is in

an upward trend, especially in the field of trade and emerging strategic projects.

Professor Ketevan Khutsishvili proposes the article entitled „The Strategies on Cultural Heritage: Challenges and Discourses in Urban Environment (The Case of Georgia)”. Although this contribution may seem, at first glance, atypical within the thematic corpus, it brings a particularly relevant angle of analysis to the issue of cultural heritage in Georgia and the challenges specific to the contemporary urban environment. In the context of modern Georgia, the theme of cultural heritage protection gains increased importance, and the proposed analysis pertinently complements the historical, political and economic perspectives brought together in this file.

The contribution entitled „Religious Challenges in the Georgian Socio-Political Environment” is signed by Professors Salome Dundua and Nika Gigauri. Salome Dundua is, among others, Dean of the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, within the Department of Political Science of the Ivane Javakhishvili State University of Tbilisi. Nika Gigauri is an Assistant Professor at GIPA – Georgian Institute of Public Affairs and Manager of the Quality Assurance Service.

The study aims to analyse a sensitive issue of contemporary Georgian society, that of religious conflicts. In this regard, the authors aim to identify the factors that generate tensions between Georgian Muslim communities and Orthodox Christians, as well

as to assess the effectiveness of the state response in the process of managing and resolving these conflicts. The conclusion of the research is that state institutions demonstrate a limited capacity to act as an “arbitrator” in the regulation of religious conflicts, and public policies are oriented more towards conciliating conflict situations than towards addressing the structural causes that led to their emergence.

Professor Otar Janelidze is a leading figure in the field of Georgian history and culture. A doctor of history, specializing in the history of Georgia, the history of Georgian emigration and the relationship between history and politics, he signs the article entitled „The Issue of National and Religious Minorities in the Democratic Republic of Georgia”. Although the Democratic Republic of Georgia existed for only three years, the author emphasizes that it constituted a notable precedent in modern political history, being the first case in which a government was led by a social-democratic party.

The central theme of the article is the analysis of the policies applied towards national and religious minorities during the existence of the Democratic Republic of Georgia. According to the author, the religious policy of the state leadership was characterized by tolerance, and minorities enjoyed the right and the effective opportunity to participate in political, economic and cultural life. Their rights were guaranteed by a coherent legislative framework,

which included the Law on the State Language, the Regulation on Citizenship and the Constitution.

The article entitled „Quota-Based Approaches to Ethnic Minority Integration in Higher Education: The Case of Georgia” concludes the series of three contributions dedicated to the issue of minorities. Signed by Tamar Karaia and Lika Kvinchia, the study approaches the integration of ethnic minorities in Georgia from the perspective of education and civic identity formation. Tamar Karaia is a doctor in political science, with specializations in the politics of memory, archival politics, social movements, identity transformation and civic education. Lika Kvinchia is a lecturer in political science at the Ivane Javakhishvili State University of Tbilisi and holds a master’s degree in public administration and public policy, as well as a bachelor’s degree in political science.

The article analyses the integration of ethnic minorities in Georgia through the lens of language education and strengthening civic identity, focusing on educational initiatives aimed at enhancing social cohesion. The authors argue that learning the official language and foreign languages by minority students is not only an educational process, but also an identity-forming one, which facilitates the promotion of a common civic identity, without affecting the cultural distinctiveness of these communities. Strengthening these dimensions contributes to building a more united and inclusive society in Georgia.

The article entitled “Two Important Episodes from the History of Relations between the Georgian and Romanian Orthodox Churches” is signed by historians Mikheil Kartvelishvili and Eter Bokelavadze.

Mikheil Kartvelishvili is a specialist in the history of religions, historiography and international politics, and Eter Bokelavadze is a researcher and guest lecturer at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the Ivane Javakhishvili State University of Tbilisi. The article signed by the two authors aims to analyse lesser-known episodes of Romanian-Georgian relations, which have not been the subject of dedicated scientific research to date. The subject of the study is the visit of the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Justinian, to Georgia in 1948, and the ecclesiastical relations generated by it, as well as the visit of the Georgian Orthodox Church delegation to Romania in 1986, in the context of a long history of Georgian-Romanian political and religious relations, which extends over several centuries.

Rozeta Gujejiani is an Associate Professor of Ethnology-Anthropology at the Institute of Ethnology-Anthropology of the Ivane Javakhishvili State University of Tbilisi. Her study explores two exemplary theological and moral approaches to repentance, reflected in the lives and writings of two major figures of Georgian and Romanian spirituality: Saint King David IV of Georgia, known as David the Build-

er, and Saint Antim the Ivirian, a hierarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Although they lived in different historical eras, the analysis highlights the fact that both thinkers belong to the same conceptual and intellectual tradition. In their view, repentance is not reduced to simple remorse for sin, but constitutes a conscious act of spiritual reorientation, an authentic return to God. Through their teachings, the two saints encourage constant examination of one's own life, the practice of moral self-evaluation, and the relentless search for divine guidance.

In a complementary perspective, Professor Anastasia Zakariadze proposes the article entitled “The Beginning of Renewed Life – A Code of Repentance (Saint David the Builder and Saint Anthim the Iberian)”. The author is, among others, the director of the Scientific Research Center for Philosophy and Theology “Antim Ivireanul” within the Institute of Philosophy. Her contribution discusses the correlation between traditional lifestyles and religious beliefs, while analyzing the social interactions associated with sacred places and sacred objects, in the context of religious practices and community identities.

Continuing the presentation of Antim Ivireanu's personality, the contribution of researcher Nicoleta Zagura, who built a career at the intersection of academic research, cultural management and heritage diplomacy, entitled “Constantin Brâncoveanu and Antim Ivireanul – Culture as a Strate-

gy of Resistance in the Orthodox World under Ottoman Domination”, is presented.

The author brings together two great Christian, Orthodox personalities of the first half of the 18th century; Constantin Brâncoveanu and Antim Ivireanu, who died as martyrs in 1714 and 1716. The work of these cultural personalities moved towards a theological and historical model of resistance based on faith, education and dignity. The Brâncoveanu era thus appears not only as a political episode, but as a fundamental moment in the articulation of Orthodox culture as a strategy of survival and resistance under Ottoman domination.

The last part of the thematic section, which addresses topics regarding politics, geopolitics, democratic governance, power and interest groups, etc., includes three articles.

The first of these is entitled “Slipping and Sliding Between Formalities and Informalities: Lobbying, Interest Groups, and Democratic Governance in Georgia” and is signed by Nino Machurishvili and Irakli Samadashvili.

Nino Machurishvili is an Associate Professor at European University, Tbilisi, and works at the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of Georgia.

Irakli Samadashvili, an Ph.D. candidate, is a political scientist specializing in governance, political systems, and institutional dynamics in post-Soviet contexts. The article analyses the complex interaction between formal regulatory frameworks and

informal political practices through the lens of lobbying in Georgia.

The analysis documents how formal lobbying mechanisms, designed to ensure transparency and accountability, may remain underutilized or bypassed in political cultures where influence is traditionally mediated through personal networks and informal channels.

Anton Carpinschi is Professor Emeritus of the “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași and Doctor Honoris Causa of the “Petre Andrei” University of Iași. His study, entitled „Politicoscopy and Interculturality in the Post-Soviet South Caucasus: Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan”, is an essay in applied political philosophy, which proposes a critical analysis of multiculturalism and interculturality in the post-Soviet South Caucasus, using an integrated theoretical framework of political analysis and comparative cultural studies. The central argument argues that the limits of interculturality in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan cannot be explained exclusively by institutional or geopolitical constraints, but must also be understood as the result of a specific configuration of cultural values, collective cognitive representations and political strategies oriented towards the securitization of difference.

The last contribution of the file belongs to two Romanian researchers in the field of sociology; Ciprian Iftimoaei is a sociologist and professor at the “Petre Andrei” University of Iași and Vicențiu-Robert Gabor is a statistician and assistant professor

at the Faculty of Geography and Geology of the “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iași and presents us with the contribution entitled „Geopolitical risks and insecurity in the South Caucasus. The role of geographical constraints in the case of Georgia”.

In the authors' opinion, the South Caucasus region is characterized by a high level of geopolitical instability, determined by the overlapping of frozen conflicts, the competition between regional and extra-regional actors and the structural vulnerabilities of the states in the area. In this context, the article analyses the role of geographical constraints in generating and perpetuating insecurity, taking Georgia as a case study. The premise from which the analysis starts is that geography is not a simple passive framework of international relations, but an essential explanatory variable that shapes the strategic choices, foreign policy behaviour and security vulnerability of small states.

Instead of conclusions

The intention of the coordinators of this issue was to identify special-

ists from various fields, capable of covering, through their contributions, a broad period of Georgian history and culture. In this endeavour, the role of Ambassador Tamar Beruchashvili was essential¹. The difficulties inherent in approaching a history that spans several millennia are obvious, and the present issue of Polis magazine did not aim to provide an exhaustive treatment of this vast thematic field, but rather to outline relevant analytical benchmarks and stimulate interdisciplinary academic dialogue. Through the 18 articles, studies and essays signed by professors and researchers with solid academic experience, the reader has access to relevant fragments of the history of Georgia. The history of a people, a nation or a state cannot be contained within the limits of a single issue of a magazine, and the intention of the coordinators of this thematic file was not, as previously stated, an exhaustive one. The intended approach was to open a broad perspective on a historical, cultural and political space insufficiently known in Romania, in an intellectual context often dominated by ethnocentric and Eurocentric landmarks.

Note

1. The Romanian coordinator of this issue would like to thank Ms. Mariam Tsereteli (Minister Extraordinary and

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GEORGIA. REPERE ISTORICE, CULTURALE ȘI POLITICE

Georgia and Europe: A Centuries-Long Tradition of Relations

Jaba SAMUSHIA

Abstract: *Georgia's aspiration to join the European family is rooted in a long historical process shaped by geography, culture, religion, and security needs. Located at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, the Caucasus has been a space of interaction between Eastern and Western civilizations, yet Georgia consistently identified with the Western cultural and political sphere. From antiquity and Christianization through the medieval era, Georgian elites repeatedly chose Western alliances, values, and institutions, despite persistent pressure from Eastern empires. Cooperation with Byzantium, European monarchies, and the Crusaders reflected this strategic and civilizational orientation. Although foreign domination and geopolitical constraints often hindered effective integration, the European vector remained central to Georgian statehood. The article argues that Georgia's contemporary European integration represents the continuation and restoration of a historically grounded civilizational choice.*

Keywords: *Caucasus, Georgia, Europe, Christianity, civilizational identity.*

Georgia faces a significant prospect of becoming a member of the European family¹. This aspiration is a logical continuation of the foreign policy trajectory developed by the Georgian state over the centuries. It should not be examined in isolation; this process has its roots in millennia of preconditions.

The Caucasus is a connecting link between Europe and Asia. Due to its geographical location, this region has

long attracted great empires striving to establish their control over this territory. The Caucasus functions as a juncture where the political and cultural areas of North-South and East-West intersect, thereby amplifying the importance of this seemingly small region in global political processes. This geopolitical location has and continues to determine the fate of the nations occupying the Caucasus for centuries.

Within the structure of global international relations, the Caucasus was mainly distinguished as a meeting point of multiple great powers. Multipolarity and bipolarity significantly decided the fate of this region. A significant role in the state and cultural evolution of the Caucasian people was played not only by the region's division into the spheres of influence of great empires but also by its position along the dividing line separating two major civilisations. Nowhere is the interaction of the Western and Eastern worlds more evident than in the Caucasus region. A distinct intercultural environment was formed as a consequence of the proximity of these two civilisations, in which Western values are merged with characteristics of Eastern culture. Politicians were also aware of this reality, since the phenomena such as David IV the Builder's visits to mosques, the presence of Muslim scholars at the courts of Demeter I and Queen Tamar, the appearance of Arabic inscriptions on Georgian coins, etc. caused no surprise². Despite this, Georgia has always remained part of Western civilisation, with Christianity creating a big gap between Georgia and the East. Modern researchers of civilisations (e.g., Samuel Huntington) unequivocally note that religion produces sharper divisions between people than ethnicity, whereas religious unity presents a stronger determinant of civilisational identity than any other factor³. Thus, after Christianisation, Georgia finally separated itself first from the Zoroastrian and later from the Islamic East.

It would, however, be incorrect to conclude that Georgia's European orientation was attributed to the adoption of Christianity. This tendency has much deeper roots. After Alexander the Great's campaign through the East in the 4th century BC, Georgia became part of the Hellenistic world. From the 1st century BC, Roman influence extended into the Caucasus, integrating Kartli and Egrisi into relations with the Roman world.

The establishment of the Christian faith on the territory of Georgia intensified ties with the Christian civilisation of Europe. Christianity was not just a faith; it functioned as an entire system of cultural values. The decision of King Mirian, to use modern political terminology, implied the integration of Georgia into the European cultural space. For this reason, it is reasonable to assume that the Christianisation of the country was, in part, politically motivated. Georgians adopted a distinctly pro-Western orientation and distanced themselves from the Eastern Zoroastrian world.

West or East?

This question has consistently confronted the Georgian political elite. The response to it shaped the country's foreign policy trajectory. One point requires clarification, namely, the last words spoken by Vakhtang Gorgasali before his death: "*Do not forsake the love of the Greeks*", did not particularly signify a pro-Byzantine stance, but rather support for Western, Christian values⁴. One of the clearest examples of

how the Georgian political elite resolved this dilemma is the dispute held at the Council of Nobles in 554 after the murder of the king of Egrisi, Gubaz. The nobles of Egrisi discussed whether to adopt a pro-Iranian or a pro-Byzantine orientation⁵. It is evident that this discussion did not concern the continuation of cooperation with one specific state. The issue was more global - East or West? From this dispute we may draw an important conclusion, which does not only apply to the 6th century but may be extended to the entire medieval era. The Georgian nation, in terms of its mentality, belonged to Western civilisation and found comfort in its cultural space. The aspiration to orient towards the West was not driven solely by political expediency.

In antiquity and the Middle Ages, the Georgian state possessed a national security doctrine that encompassed a comprehensive set of political, military, religious, economic, and cultural priorities. It was the co-occurrence of these factors that shaped the national values of the Georgians and determined the political interests of the country.

The Arab invasions and the spread of a new religion – Islam – once again divided the Near East into two parts. Georgia found itself under the pressure of the Arab Caliphate and the Byzantine Empire. Once again, Georgian society had to choose between the alliance with the Muslim East and Christian Byzantium.

Although Byzantium was never a classical European state, it represented one of the centers of Christian civilisation. This clarifies the motivation of King Ashot Kurapalates and a part of Georgian society in relocating the political and cultural center of the country from the Arab-controlled territory to Tao-Klarjeti, a region under Byzantine influence. This created the possibility for the national statehood and culture to flourish.

In the 11th century, Georgians fought the Byzantine Empire for almost half a century for supremacy in the South Caucasus. Notably, during this same period, Georgian monasteries operated within the Byzantine Empire, exporting the Western culture to Georgia.

The 11th-13th centuries represent a period of political strength for Georgia. The international interests of the Georgian state increased significantly, which facilitated the establishment of closer contacts with European powers. The Crusades demonstrated that the Near East lay within the scope of their interests. Georgia's military cooperation with European knights was conditioned by the aim of maintaining the balance of power in the Near East, from which the military threat to Georgia originated.

The relationship between Georgia and the Crusaders is a notably significant issue, and we will consider it in more detail.

In 1095, in the small French town of Clermont, Pope Urban II called on Christian believers to liberate the tomb of Christ. This event marked the beginning of the longest confrontation between the West and the East, known as the Crusades⁶. For nearly two centuries, Europe organized eight military campaigns against the Muslims of the East. For the first time in European history, a large-scale military-political coalition was formed, bringing together virtually all Western countries.

The arrival of the Crusaders in the East radically altered the regional balance of power. Byzantium and Georgia were no longer alone in the face of Muslim states. The certain impact of the Crusaders' appearance on the political life of Georgia is also acknowledged by the chronicler of King David IV the Builder. It is no coincidence that the historian links the capture of Jerusalem by European knights with David the Builder's decision to stop paying *kharaj* tax to the Seljuk Turks: "At this time, the Franks came, seized Jerusalem and Antioch... David gained more power, and gathering his forces, he stopped paying *kharaj* to the Sultan", the chronicler notes⁷.

At the beginning of the 12th century, two fronts emerged in the East – the Crusaders and the Georgians shared common military-political interests. This fact significantly accelerated the expulsion of the Seljuks from the Caucasus. For more than two decades, the unification of the Muslim world proved to be impossi-

ble, a situation that was advantageous for both Georgia and the Crusaders. The defeat of the coalition army of Najm al-Dīn Ilghazi near Didgori in 1121 brought relief not only to Georgia but also considerably improved the situation of the Crusaders in the East. Ilghazi earned the nickname "Nejm ad-Din" ("Star of Faith" Arab.) after defeating the Crusader knights on the so-called "Bloody Field" on the banks of the Orontes River in 1119. Naturally, elimination of such an opponent was the primary concern of the Crusaders⁸. Thus, the political motivation of the relationship between Georgia and the military coalition of the Crusaders is absolutely reasonable – they had a common enemy and plans in the East. In this context, the visit of the King of Jerusalem, Baldwin II, to Georgia appears entirely logical (Baldwin II's visit to David the Builder is recounted by a later chronicler and is therefore regarded as unreliable by some historians)⁹. It was evident that the European knights had a serious ally in the East in the form of Georgia. Later, in the XII-XIII centuries, when the situation of the Crusaders in the East had notably deteriorated, the legendary figure of the Savior of Christians, John the Presbyter, was created in Europe, whose prototype, according to several scholars, should have been David the Builder¹⁰.

After the initially intense phase of Georgian-Crusader relations, a partial shift occurred in the 1180s. Following the death of George III in

1184, the throne was taken by the young Queen Tamar. In fact, the kingdom was ruled by Tamar's aunt Rusudan - the wife of the Sultan of Western Iran, Ghiyath ad-Din Mas'ud, who returned to Georgia after his death. Rusudan appeared to have been well acquainted with Eastern politics and harboured a certain sympathy toward Muslim rulers. In any case, during her regency, the Georgians chose a neutral stance in the confrontation between the Crusaders and Muslims. In 1185, the Georgian royal court concluded a non-aggression pact with the Egyptian Sultan Salah ad-Din¹¹. Two years later, Salah ad-Din seized Jerusalem from the Crusaders. Owing to their miscalculated foreign policy, the Georgians practically contributed to the unprecedented consolidation of the Ayyubid Sultanate. Soon, the interests of Georgia and the Ayyubids in the Near East also intersected. Unfortunately, by this time the Crusaders no longer presented a significant force in the East. Georgian politicians quickly perceived this loss, and Lasha-George proceeded re-established close relations with the Crusaders. At the request of Pope Honorius III, the Georgian king resolved to join the Fifth Crusade (1219-1221). The principal goal of this campaign was the recovery of Jerusalem and the weakening of the Egyptian Sultanate in the Near East. Then Georgian and Western European interests aligned; however, the Mongol invasion of Georgia in 1220 prevented any practical implementa-

tion of this intention. Queen Rusudan wrote to Pope Honorius III: *"We received your noble advice and command from your legate in Damietta to go to the aid of my brother Christians. This was his sincere desire, and he was preparing to depart. Yet, as you have heard, a wicked tribe of Tatars has entered our land and caused great damage upon our people"*¹². Georgians were also actively preparing for the Sixth Crusade, but the organisation of this campaign was significantly delayed. In the meantime, Georgia was devastated by Jalal ad-Din, rendering its participation in the Pan-European coalition impossible.

In the 13th century, the Mongol invasions constrained Georgia's active foreign policy. Relations with European states weakened. The country became preoccupied with the domestic issues¹³.

In the 14th century, under George V the Brilliant, the situation changed drastically, and Georgian-European relations resumed their old pace. The Catholic world of Western Europe was interested in securing a strong ally in the East. In turn, Georgia also tried to establish a military-political alliance with European monarchies. Pope John XXII transferred the episcopal residence from Smyrna to Tbilisi in order to strengthen ties with Georgia¹⁴.

At the same time, King George V of Georgia proposed the creation of a coalition with the monarchs of Europe in order to protect Christianity. A letter from George the Brilliant to

the French King Philip VI of Valois has been preserved, in which he states: *"The divine sovereigns of France often incite the kings of the East to fight against the Saracens, but the fact is that they do not join them anymore, leaving them alone in this painful war. Therefore, I ask you to determine how and when you will cross the sea, and to meet me there, according to your good will, with thirty thousand soldiers"*¹⁵.

The style of this letter is particularly noteworthy. There is no plea or request for help; rather, the correspondence reflects negotiations between partners of equal standing and thus George V's reproach to Philip VI ("The divine sovereigns of France often incite the kings of the East... and leave them alone in this painful war") should be understood in this context. Evidently, the Georgian king sought a genuine military alliance with European states. However, soon France and England themselves turned against each other (the so-called Hundred Years' War), and the problems of the Middle East consequently lost their relevance in Western Europe.

The need for military-political cooperation between European states and Georgia re-emerged after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453. Europe now acutely perceived the growing Ottoman threat, and, at the initiative of the Pope, began to create a powerful anti-Ottoman coalition. The Georgians, for their part, were motivated by specific considerations: following the

fall of Constantinople, the principal route through which Georgia maintained contact with European civilisation was cut off. In 1456, the famous diplomat Ludovico da Bologna arrived in Georgia with the aim of persuading Eastern rulers to join the anti-Ottoman alliance. At the same time, Pope Pius II tried to transform the fight against the Ottomans into a shared European issue. He convened the Congress of Mantua in 1459 and appealed to the rulers of all major states to participate. He even sent a special golden rose to the French king and awarded him the title of "Defender of the Faith". Simultaneously, Ludovico of Bologna returned to Georgia, and King George VIII dispatched his envoy, Nikoloz Tbileli, to accompany him to Europe. Atabeg of Samtskhe Kvarkvare II also actively participated in the anti-Ottoman coalition¹⁶. Georgian envoys appeared before the Pope as well as other European rulers; however, the effort to create a unified European coalition was not successful. Georgia found itself alone in the face of the Ottomans and Safavid Iran.

In the Middle Ages, Western civilisation was associated with the Christian world. The religious factor certainly played a big role in shaping Europe as a coherent geo-cultural space. The Georgians' aspiration towards Europe was rooted in this factor. In the late Middle Ages, Georgians, surrounded by Muslim states, sought guarantees of national security within Western space.

Since the 15th century, after the division of Georgia into kingdoms and principalities, ties with Europe have not been severed; however, from this period onward, negotiations were conducted between unequal partners. Georgian rulers mainly appealed to Europe for assistance, although there were still instances in which initiatives for establishing a common military-political coalition originated from Georgia itself¹⁷. King Simon I of Kartli wrote to King Philip II of Spain: *"Therefore, we beseech your royal power that Caesar grant us an alliance and not make peace with the Turk, so that after the peace he may not rise up against us, against our people, and against all Christians indiscriminately, that destructive one..."*¹⁸. Simon I appealed to the Pope of Rome: *"Let us encourage the Christian kings to come out against the common enemy..."*¹⁹. Georgia faced the aggression of two great empires alone. In 1578, following the campaign of the Ottoman Grand Vizier Mustafa Lala Pasha, a large part of the Caucasus came under Ottoman control. Had the European powers opposed them, Georgia might have had a chance to free itself from foreign domination. However, if we realistically assess the international political situation of that period, Simon I's proposal could only be regarded as a dream. The embassy of Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani – sent to Europe in search of support – likewise ended in failure. The only thing that remained memorable from the visit of the Georgian diplomat at

the French court was Saba's witty exchange with Louis XIV. During the audience, when Sulkhan-Saba congratulated the French king on his recovery, "Sun King", Louis XIV complained that maintaining his health was no easy task at his age, being over sixty. Saba responded: *"Your Majesty lives this age with such grace that anyone would wish to be in your place..."*²⁰. This clever retort remained in the memory of those at the Louvre, while the request he presented was quickly forgotten.

Since the 18th century, a third major power – Russia – began to intervene actively in the politics of the Caucasus. Georgia's rapprochement with Russia was partly motivated by the hope that this would facilitate its return to the broader European space. At the same time, Georgian political entities sought security guarantees through a strong alliance with Russia. Initially, it seemed that Russia would serve as a shield for Georgia and act as a defender of our national interests. Georgia in turn also offered Russia an alliance in the fight against the common enemies – Iran and the Ottoman Empire. The conclusion of the Treaty of Georgievsk with Russia by Erekle II in 1783 was an attempt to halt the Iranian-Ottoman aggression through external force. The treaty clearly outlined the obligations of both parties - two full battalions, with four cannons, were to be stationed in Kartli-Kakheti, the costs of which Erekle II would bear²¹. However, this process soon took a different course. In the late 1780s Russia refused to

fulfill the obligations assumed by the treaty. Moreover, a plan for the annexation of the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti was drafted in St. Petersburg. By the late 1780s, Russia had effectively refused to fulfill its treaty obligations. Moreover, a plan for the annexation of the Kingdom of Kartli-Kakheti was drafted in St. Petersburg. Contrary to the terms of the treaty, after the death of Giorgi XII in 1800, a new king was not confirmed; instead, the monarchy in Kartli-Kakheti was abolished altogether. Shortly thereafter, Imereti and the remaining Georgian kingdoms and principalities shared the same fate.

The prospect of our country's integration into the European family existed in 1918-1921.

The foremost priority of the foreign policy of the independent Democratic Republic of Georgia was to establish cooperation with European states and institutions. In 1919, within the framework of the Versailles Peace Treaty, 44 countries founded the first intergovernmental organization – the “League of Nations”. The aim of this organization was to establish a system of collective security for the first time in Europe. Article 10 of its Covenant declared: “The Members of the League undertake to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all Members of the League. In case of any such aggression or in case of any threat or danger of such aggression, the Council shall advise upon the means by which this obliga-

tion shall be fulfilled”²². Moreover, the League of Nations laid the foundation for the formation of shared European foreign policy priorities. The government of the Democratic Republic of Georgia actively sought to join the League of Nations. On December 6, 1919, the Georgian organization of the League of Nations was founded in Tbilisi²³. Georgian politicians believed that integration into this European structure would strengthen the international authority of Georgia and provide at least a degree of security.

The first European delegation visited Georgia in 1920. With this visit, the Georgian government sought to gain international recognition. On September 15, 1920, at a session held in honor of European guests, the deputy of the Constituent Assembly, Giorgi Gvazava, laconically formulated the foreign policy priority of our country: “Over the course of a century, we have become disconnected from global culture, and some have even grown accustomed to the notion that Georgia must necessarily remain within the borders of Russia. Yet, you see that England and France are closer to Georgia than Russia. Georgia began its existence at a time when Mediterranean culture was flourishing. The turmoil of the Middle Ages cut Georgia off from this natural course. The most recent clash and war between nations have restored this original direction. Georgia has naturally separated from Russia, as it should have, and has regained the initial path that brings us

closer to and unites us with Western Europe. We have become closer to Belgium, France, England, and those countries where the modern human culture thrives”²⁴.

On November 15, 1920, at the first session of the League of Nations, Georgia’s membership was put to a vote. Sixteen votes were required for admission; Georgia received ten²⁵. This outcome, to some extent, accelerated the occupation and Sovietization of Georgia by Bolshevik Russia in February-March 1921.

To summarize, Georgian-European relations can be divided into several distinct periods: First, when the Georgian royal court maintained equal relations with European monarchies and participated in European military alliances. This mainly occurred during the era of the unified Georgian state, when Georgia had

higher international authority. Second, the period in which Georgian contacts with European powers were conducted indirectly, mediated by a third party – Rome, Byzantium, or Russia. Third, the most humiliating and fruitless period, during which Georgian politicians attempted connecting with European states, yet the latter took no effective steps in response. In such circumstances, Georgia, segregated into spheres of influence between the Ottoman Empire and Iran, did not have a single allied state capable of assisting its rapprochement to Europe. Considering this historical background, it becomes evident that in the event of joining the European Union, Georgia would integrate directly, without any external force or intermediary, into a large international economic and security system.

Notes

- ¹ The issue of relations between Georgia and Europe has been the subject of research for numerous Georgian historians. A summary of this scholarship is presented in D. Shvelidze’s article “Georgia and the West (The First Millennium of Relations),” in D. Shvelidze’s book *The Road to the West*, Tbilisi, pp. 145–190.
- ² History of the Jazira, 1100-1150, *The Contribution of ibn al-Azraq al-Fariqi*, Volume II, By Carole Hillenbrand, Thesis presented for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, University of Edinburgh, 1979, p. 279; 524. On the Arabic legend on the coins of Georgian kings, see G.

Dundua and T. Dundua, *Georgian Numismatics*, Part I, Tbilisi, 2006, pp. 199-203 (in Georgian).

- ³ Samuel P. Huntington, “The clash of civilizations?”, *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1993, Vol. 72, Number 3, p. 27.
- ⁴ Juansher Juansheriani, *The Life of Vakht'ang Gorgasali*, translated and commentary Dmitri Gamq'relidze, Kartlis Tskhovreba, *A History of Georgia*, Editor in Chief of the English edition, Professor Stephen Jones, Mount Holyoke College (USA), Tb. 2014, p. 105.
- ⁵ Agathias, *The Histories*, English translation with introduction and short explanatory notes by J. D. Frendo, *Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae*, vol. 2A, Series

- Berolinensis, Berlin-New York, 1975, pp. 76-80.
- 6 J.S.C. Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading*, London, 1986, pp. 20-30. R. Grousset, *L'épopée des Croisades*, Librairie Académique Perrin, Paris, 1995, pp. 10-17. A. B. Грановский, *Крестовые походы*, Т 1, С.П. 2013, pp. 24-41. Jean Richard, *The Crusades, c.1071–c.1291* (Cambridge Medieval Textbooks), Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 24-27. Steven Runciman, *A History of the Crusades, The First Crusade and the Foundation of the Kingdom of Jerusalem*, vol. I, Cambridge University Press, 1954. Marcus Bull, „Origins”, *The Oxford history of the crusades*, Edited by Jonathan Riley-Smith, Oxford University Press, 1999.
 - 7 The Life of David, King of Kings, translated and commentary Dmitri Gamq'elidze, Kartlis Tskhovreba, *A History of Georgia*, Editor in Chief of the English edition, Professor Stephen Jones, Mount Holyoke College (USA), Tb. 2014, p. 174.
 - 8 On Najm ad-Din Il-Ghazi and the Muslim coalition formed prior to the Battle of Didgori, see J. Samushia, *The Battle of Didgori: "The Wondrous Victory"*, Tbilisi, 2021 (in Georgian); see also G. Japaridze, *Georgia and the Islamic World of the Near East*, Tbilisi, 1995 (in Georgian).
 - 9 R. Metreveli, *David the Builder, Queen Tamar*, Tbilisi, 2002, p. 333 (in Georgian).
 - 10 For a detailed discussion of this issue, see A. Gogoladze, *On the Historical and Biblical Foundations of the Legend of Prester John*, Tbilisi, 2005, pp. 47–50 (in Georgian); see also Sh. Badridze, „The Crusader Legend about David the Builder and Demetre I”, in Sh. Badridze, *Georgia's Relations with Byzantium and Western Europe (10th-13th Centuries)*, Tbilisi, 1984 (in Georgian).
 - 11 The Georgian translation of the letter of pledge addressed to Salah ad-Din, see M. Todua, *Georgian-Persian Studies*, Vol. III, Tbilisi, 1979, pp. 26-27.
 - 12 I. Tabaghua, *Georgia in European Archives and Libraries (13th-16th Centuries)*, Vol. I, Tbilisi, 1984, pp. 176-177 (in Georgian).
 - 13 On the foreign affairs challenges faced by Georgia during the Mongol period, see J. Samushia, *David Ulu*, Tbilisi, 2019; and J. Samushia, *David Narin*, Tbilisi, 2020.
 - 14 M. Tamarashvili, *A History of Catholicism among the Georgians*, Tiflis, 1902, p. 33 (in Georgian).
 - 15 V. Kiknadze, “European Sources of Georgian History,” *Journal Mnatoobi*, 1983, no. 4, pp. 158-164 (in Georgian). Idem, *Georgia in the 14th Century*, Tbilisi, 1989, p. 96 (in Georgian).
 - 16 D. Paichadze, *The Anti-Ottoman Coalition of European Countries and Georgia in the 1460s*, Tbilisi, 1989, pp. 76-125 (in Georgian).
 - 17 On the anti-Ottoman activities of Georgian kings in the 16th century, see M. Papashvili, T. Karchava, T. Tsitlanadze, A. Gogoladze, N. Silagadze, *Georgia in 16th-Century European Sources*, Tbilisi, 2021.
 - 18 I. Tabaghua, *Georgia in European Archives and Libraries (13th-16th Centuries)*, Vol. I, p. 225 (in Georgian).
 - 19 *Ibidem*, pp. 229-230 (in Georgian).
 - 20 Idem, *Georgian-French Relations (First Quarter of the 18th Century)*, Tbilisi, 1972, p. 182 (in Georgian).
 - 21 *The Treaty of Georgievsk: The 1783 Agreement on the Entry of Eastern Georgia under Russian Protection*, text prepared for publication with an in-

- roduction and notes by G. Paichadze, Tbilisi, 1983, p. 37 (in Georgian).
- ²² „The League of Nations”, Old Colony Trust Company, Boston, 1919, p. 10.
- ²³ Newspaper *The Georgian Republic*, 9 December 1919, p. 1.
- ²⁴ „Documents of the Democratic Republic of Georgia”, 9 July – 31 December 1920, Volume VII, Editorial Board: akli Iakobashvili, Mzia Khositashvili, Emzar Jgerenaia, Tbilisi, 2019, p. 445 (in Georgian).
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Georgian Philosophy from the Phasis Academy to the Present Day (Main Tendencies)

Demur JALAGHONIA

Abstract: *Georgian philosophy has a long and rich tradition spanning over fifteen centuries, dating back to the 4th century. It reached particular heights during the 11th–12th and 19th–20th centuries. Georgian thinkers became familiar, often contemporaneously, with the philosophical heritage from antiquity to modern times, interpreting, translating, and producing their own original works. Through this, they engaged with the prevailing intellectual paradigms of their eras and contributed actively to the study and development of the fundamental problems of philosophy.*

There was a prolonged period characterized by a decline in philosophical thought (from the second half of the 13th century to the 17th century), which was primarily conditioned by the weakening and fall of Georgian statehood. Notably, the 20th century saw the rise of Georgian philosophical thinking, which fully integrated European intellectual traditions and gave rise to a new and original body of philosophical thought.

For a long time, the prevailing assumption was that philosophy could only be either German or Greek, as Wilhelm Windelband asserted, and that its study was confined to these two centers. Yet perhaps Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari were correct in suggesting that wherever philosophy emerges, it undergoes a process of territorialization. Philosophy, as the exchange of ideas, requires wandering across various “territories”, Thinking about the “geography of philosophy” has become relevant since the paradigm of a single philosophical center was abandoned. This provides a solid foundation for confidently discussing the existence of a “Georgian philosophy”.

Keywords: *Georgian philosophy, Phasis, Gelati, Areopagitic tradition, Eastern Renaissance.*

Introduction

The cultural affinity of Georgia with Western Europe is distinctly evident. The process of Georgian philosophical thought, which boasts a

history of over a millennium, originates from the intellectual interactions of Late Antiquity. In Georgian philosophy, during the late Middle Ages, human existence and the universe began to be interpreted through

and understanding of modern European transcendental idealism, particularly the classical German philosophical systems, and, more recently, toward the postmodern philosophical examination of human existence within an era of rapid change. Such is the intellectual journey and evolution of philosophical activity in Georgia.

The idea of a “Georgian philosophical school” emerged in the mid-19th century and became a subject of debate in the 20th century. In Judeo-Christian scripture, philosophy is referred to as “Hellenic wisdom”, Martin Heidegger considered philosophy to be a “mode of Greek thinking,” which later found renewal in modern Europe, especially within classical German idealism. During the 19th century, philosophy underwent a period of modernization once again, a process that continued throughout the 20th century with the establishment of several well-known philosophical schools.

The beginnings of Georgian philosophy coincide with the spread of Christianity, and it naturally developed in close connection with theology. From its origins to the present day, Georgian philosophy has traversed an intellectually engaging path. The development of Georgian philosophical thought can be conditionally divided into distinct stages, each encompassing specific centuries. In these stages, the influence, assimilation, and creative transformation of Western philosophical models are clearly observable processes that have collectively shaped what we

refer to as Georgian philosophy. These stages may conditionally be envisioned as separate epochs, each representing a distinct phase in the evolution of Georgian philosophical reasoning.

1. The Era of Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages (4th-9th Centuries). This period begins with the existence of the Phasis Philosophical Academy and the intellectual activity of Peter the Iberian. At this stage, it is still difficult to speak of a distinct “Georgian philosophy” in the strict sense. However, certain philosophical reflections can already be found in various types of Georgian literary monuments. It is therefore more appropriate to speak about the presence of philosophical thinking in Georgia during this time rather than about an original Georgian philosophical system. Nevertheless, it would not be unfounded to acknowledge the efforts of historians and specialists of philosophy who, in discussing the history of Georgian philosophical thought, analyze the particular characteristics of philosophical reflection within Georgia and examine the influence and intellectual legacy of philosophical-theological schools that existed within the framework of ancient Greek colonies in the region.

2. The Medieval Era (10th-12th Centuries). This period in Georgian philosophy is marked by the foundation of the Gelati and Ikalto Academies, as well as the translation and intellectual activity of the Athosite Fathers. It was during this era that philosophical literature and terminol-

ogy began to emerge, be translated, and develop in the Georgian language. The process is closely linked with the intellectual and spiritual work of the Great Athonite Monks (Mtatsmindeli Fathers), Ephrem the Minor, Arsen Ikaltoeli, and Ioane Petritsi. Georgian philosophical thought reached its peak of development through the philosophical synthesis and commentaries of Ioane Petritsi, whose works integrated Neoplatonic ideas with Christian theology. Unfortunately, from the second half of the 13th century, Georgian philosophical thought entered a period of decline, primarily due to political instability and foreign invasions that profoundly impacted the country's intellectual and cultural life.

3. The Early Modern Stage of Georgian Philosophy (17th–19th Centuries). During this period, Georgian philosophy experienced a revival marked by the establishment of significant educational and theological-philosophical centers such as the Tbilisi Seminary (1755) and the Telavi Seminary (1782). This era marked the beginning of a philosophical and intellectual awakening in Georgia, primarily driven by new educational initiatives and reforms that were taking place in the country. Georgian philosophical thought of this period became deeply engaged with classical European philosophy, translating and assimilating its ideas into the national intellectual context. Among the thinkers of this epoch, Solomon Dodashvili stands out as a distinguished philosopher whose

works exemplify the synthesis of European rationalism and Georgian intellectual heritage.

4. For Georgian philosophy, the 20th century marks an exceptional and formative stage, fundamentally associated with the founding of Tbilisi State University in 1918. The university's founders included eminent philosophers Shalva Nutsubidze, a figure of global significance, creator of the concept of the Eastern Renaissance, and the scholar who identified the true historical identity of Peter the Iberian, and Dimitri Uznadze, who later became world-renowned as a psychologist and the author of the Theory of Attitude.

In the 20th century, the world, along with Georgia, underwent profound social and political transformations. Georgia, in particular, came under the pressure of Marxist ideology, which heavily influenced intellectual and cultural life. Nevertheless, Georgian philosophers continued to produce highly original and intellectually rich works, demonstrating remarkable creativity and resilience. Contemporary Georgian philosophy is both diverse and multifaceted, in terms of both its thematic substance and its formal expression. On the one hand, there is a continuing study and reinterpretation of the finest examples of Georgian philosophical tradition; on the other hand, there is a pronounced aspiration to develop new perspectives and conceptual frameworks based on insights drawn from Western intellectual thought¹.

A separate category can be distinguished for the activities of Georgian philosophers abroad. During the Middle Ages, Georgian thinkers worked beyond the country's borders, in Constantinople, Palestine, Mount Athos, Bulgaria, and Romania, where they played an essential role in the development and transmission of theological and philosophical ideas. A second wave of Georgian intellectuals abroad emerged in the 19th and 20th centuries, when philosophers and scholars were active in Russia and various European countries, particularly Germany. Their works, published in Greek, German, and other local languages, contributed to enriching and expanding Georgian philosophical thought.

The topic presented, "Georgian Philosophy from the Phasis Academy to the Present Day (Main Tendencies)", by its very title, encompasses a broad and multifaceted spectrum. The epochs discussed include a significant number of Georgian philosophers, each representing a unique stage in the evolution of national philosophical thought. The scope and format of this work do not allow for a detailed examination of every influential thinker individually. Therefore, I will follow the four-stage structural framework outlined above and focus on the most prominent philosophers of each era, whose ideas best illustrate the intellectual continuity and transformation of Georgian philosophical reasoning from the time of the Phasis Academy to the present day. In addition to the

analysis of individual philosophers, I will briefly discuss the key philosophical-educational centers that shaped Georgian thought, namely, the Phasis Academy, the Gelati and Ikalto Academies, and, in the 20th century, the foundation of Tbilisi State University, which became the new nucleus for the revival of Georgian philosophy. The establishment of the university under the leadership of Shalva Nutsubidze laid the intellectual foundation for the modern Georgian philosophical school. Furthermore, special attention will be devoted to Metropolitan Anthim the Iberian (Antimoz Ivereli), a distinguished Georgian thinker active in Wallachia (modern-day Romania) during the early modern period, whose theological and philosophical concepts represent a remarkable synthesis of Christian spirituality and intellectual reasoning, and who occupies a distinctive place in the history of both Georgian and European philosophical thought.

The Phasis Academy – The Cradle of Philosophy and Rhetoric

In ancient times, the academic world knew Georgia by two names, both referring to its regions: Colchis and Iberia (Iveria). Colchis was the easternmost stronghold of the ancient world. Well-known Greek myths recount the expedition of the Argonauts to Colchis.

The southern border of the ancient world, the precursor to modern

Europe, was located in Colchis, which extended along much of the Phasis River (now the Rioni River). Colchis was the land of King Aeëtes and his daughter Medea, about whom Greek authors have written¹.

“Argonautica” by Apollonius of Rhodes is one of the earliest Greek sources in which the name “Colchis” appears. Apollonius describes an ancient kingdom and region located on the Black Sea coast, inhabited by the Colchians, an early Georgian (Kartvelian) tribe. According to Herodotus, the Phasis River in Colchis formed the boundary between Asia and Europe². The mythological figures associated with Colchis embody these cultural and geographical connections. According to some ancient accounts, King Aeëtes came to Colchis from Ephrya, a historic region of Greece; one of his sisters, Pasiphaë, was the wife of Minos, the legendary king of Crete, while his other sister, Circe, the famous sorceress, went to Italy, where she became the ancestress of several Italic tribes. Medea, the daughter of Aeëtes, first went to Hellas (Greece) and later returned to Colchis with her son Medus, symbolizing once again the enduring links between these civilizations³.

In Iberia, Christianity was proclaimed the official state religion in 327 A.D. In Late Antiquity, the name Iberia referred to the Kingdom of Eastern Georgia. According to Christian tradition, the first Christian communities in Georgia were founded by the Apostles Andrew and Simon the Zealot, also known as Simon the Canaanite⁴.

With the adoption of Christianity as the state religion, pagan Georgia, particularly Colchis, gradually lost its former power and influence. In the following period, Colchis became one of the earliest eastern strongholds of the European-Christian world and a supporting center of Byzantine civilization.

As Shalva Nutsubidze noted: “The difference between the economic life of Eastern Georgia (Iberia) and Western Georgia (Colchis) was inevitably reflected in the ideological and cultural life of both regions, and this distinction cannot be ignored”, Indeed, during the 4th-5th centuries, there were both similarities and differences in the content of philosophical thought in Colchis and Iberia. These distinctions were determined by both the nature of the ancient philosophical heritage and the specific environment in which that heritage was received and developed⁵.

As for Georgia, according to ancient Greek sources, it can be stated that a philosophical school existed on the Black Sea coast as early as the 4th century, in Colchis. This was the so-called Phasis Academy, a philosophical school that had a wide sphere of influence and dissemination⁶.

In one of his orations (XXVII), Themistius responds to a young provincial, noting that “near the River Phasis, where the Argonauts once came to Colchis, there is a perfect school of rhetoric and also a “school of the Muses,” whose participants come from various regions of the Hellenic world”, This information

may serve as evidence supporting the view that Georgian philosophy has a history of approximately 1,700 years.

During Antiquity, particularly in the 3rd and 4th centuries, Georgia possessed a highly developed philosophical culture, with its own advanced center of philosophical education. According to the Greek sources themselves, this center stood at such a high intellectual level that it even attracted Greek scholars who came to ancient Georgia to pursue philosophical studies⁷.

The Higher Rhetorical School of Colchis, also known as the Colchian Academy, existed in the 3rd-4th centuries near Phasis (present-day Poti) and represented an educational institution of the Greek type. Information about this academy comes from a single direct reference by the prominent Greek thinker of Late Antiquity, Themistius (who lived and worked approximately between 317 and 388 A.D.). Themistius advises a young man not to master the art of rhetoric in Athens, but rather in a lesser-known place near the River Phasis, specifically in Pontus. According to Themistius himself, it was there, near Phasis, that he studied the highest achievements of oratory. In this educational center, philosophy and rhetoric were inseparable disciplines, forming the intellectual foundation of what became known as the Colchian (or Phasis) Academy, a remarkable example of early philosophical and rhetorical education on Georgian soil.

There is a single direct reference to this school, found in the writings

of the great Greek thinker of Late Antiquity, Themistius (who lived and worked approximately between 317 and 388 A.D.). In one of his orations, Themistius advises a young man not to study the art of rhetoric in Athens, but rather in a lesser-known place near the River Phasis, specifically in Pontus. According to Themistius himself, he mastered the heights of oratory precisely there. In this educational institution, philosophy and rhetoric were inseparable disciplines.

"I, too, my dear friend, gathered the fruits of rhetoric in a place far more obscure than this not in a peaceful and Hellenic land, but at the end of Pontus, near the River Phasis, where Argus, having come from Thessaly, made his landing, as the poets recount with wonder and where he was taken up into the heavens. There lies Thermodon, the field of the Amazons, and Themiscyra. Yet this barbarous and gloomy land was made Hellenic and transformed into a temple of the Muses by the wisdom and virtue of one man a man who settled among the Colchians and Armenians, and who taught not archery, spear-throwing, or horseback riding according to the customs of neighboring barbarians, but rather how to be trained in the art of rhetoric and how to shine at the festivals of the Hellenes. Whether what I say is true will soon become evident if I add the following: I went there not by my own choice or decision, but was sent by a benevolent man, as loving as a father and as just in thought as a philosopher. Perhaps you will reproach

him because he himself acquired his renowned philosophy there, or reproach me even more, who from childhood have been initiated into its mysteries”, This passage illustrates not only the existence of a high-level rhetorical and philosophical school near Phasis but also its reputation as a Hellenic center of learning in what Greek authors otherwise described as a remote and “barbarian” land. It stands as a remarkable testimony to the intellectual vitality of Colchis and to the early integration of philosophical education within Georgian cultural space⁸.

According to Themistius, the history of Georgian philosophy begins in the period of Late Antiquity. During this time, within the territory of present-day Georgia, the Phasis Rhetorical School existed, attended by the renowned Greek philosopher Eugenius (3rd–4th centuries A.D.) and his son Themistius, a famous commentator on Aristotle's works.

It is known that both Themistius and his father, Eugenius, were distinguished for their philosophical writings, and that in the 4th century A.D., they worked at the Rhetorical School of Phasis. Themistius became a celebrated philosopher, orator, and statesman, earning recognition throughout the Hellenic world.

This figure is of particular interest because Themistius preserved valuable information about the Rhetorical School of Phasis in Greek sources. Among his contemporaries and correspondents were Libanius, a renowned teacher of rhetoric and phi-

losophy, and a close friend of Saint Gregory the Theologian (also known as Gregory Nazianzus). Of special note are Libanius' letters written in 394 A.D. to the Georgian philosopher and orator Bacurius the Iberian, which are preserved in the four-volume collection of Libanius' works. According to Shalva Nutsubidze, Bacurius the Iberian was active at the Phasis Academy⁹. Greek sources contain highly significant information about Georgian scholars, confirming that the Phasis Academy was among the oldest educational institutions in the world. Following Plato's Academy and Aristotle's Lyceum, the third such institution known to history was the Rhetorical School, which may rightly be referred to as the Phasis Academy. According to Greek and Latin sources, the Academy was attended by both local Colchians and young students who came specifically from the Byzantine Empire, that is, from the Eastern Roman Empire, to pursue their studies there. This underscores the international prestige of the Phasis Academy as a center of philosophical and rhetorical education, linking ancient Georgia with the broader Hellenic intellectual tradition¹⁰.

It is presumed that the curriculum and teaching methods of the Phasis Academy followed the programs and methodologies known from Greek academies. The Colchian Academy likely continued to function even after the closure of Plato's Academy in Athens in 529 AD. Thus, the Colchian (Phasis) Academy stands as the first center in Georgia to testify to the

existence of a highly developed philosophical culture.

At the Phasis Academy, Themistius studied the philosophical systems of Pythagoras and Plato, as confirmed by ancient sources. His father, Eugenius, held that there was no essential difference between Plato and Aristotle; somewhat, Aristotle had systematized Plato's ideas, thereby protecting his teacher from excessive criticism. Themistius continued his father's intellectual path and became, in the history of philosophy, one of the greatest commentators on Aristotle, being the first to introduce the method of paraphrastic interpretation of Aristotle's works.

In 355 A.D., Themistius was appointed a Roman senator, and later, upon the recommendation of Emperor Theodosius I, he became the Prefect of Constantinople (modern-day Istanbul) in 384 A.D..¹¹ We also have records from the Neoplatonist Libanius indicating that Prince Bacurius, the son of the King of Iberia (4th century), was highly educated in ancient philosophy.

In addition, during the period of Late Antiquity, the great Georgian church figure and scholar Peter the Iberian (5th century) lived, one of the most significant representatives of Christian philosophy, about whom further discussion will follow below.

The Mystery of Petre the Iberian

Philosopher Shalva Nutsubidze, while working on the problems of the

history of Georgian philosophy, elaborated two theories, which, due to their content, outcomes and importance, transcend the limits of the Qartvelological studies and belong to the sphere of the historical development of world thinking. One of them is a theory of the Eastern Renaissance, and the second is the theory of identity of Petre the Iberian and Pseudo-Dionysus the Areopagite¹².

Petre the Iberian (Murvan in the secular world; 411-491) is a Georgian theologian and philosopher who is considered the founder of Christian Neoplatonism.

Petre the Iberian's life is described in Ioane Rufus's work, though the original text did not reach our times, and only a Syriac translation is available¹³.

Petre the Iberian is a grandson of the king of Iberia, Bakur the Great. Bakur, who was an Iberian and of noble origin, is an outstanding figure of the second half of the 4th century; chronologically and ideologically, he was closely related to the Kolkha school. He was a person of strong intellect and talent, well-known in the East Roman Empire for his versatile activities. Interestingly, a famous Georgian philosopher, Mithridates the Laz from Kolkha, was invited as a teacher and tutor of Murvan. In 423, Murvan and his retinue were summoned as hostages to Constantinople by the Caesar of the Byzantine Empire, Theodosius II. At the court, the wife of Caesar Eudocia, together with Mithridates the Laz, supervised the education of the

Georgian prince. Murvan, from early childhood, showed great talent and received a brilliant education, “assimilating any knowledge, theological and philosophical” (Life of Kartli).

As conveyed, in Byzantium, Murvan listened to outstanding scholars and philosophers. His biographer Zakarias the Georgian witnesses that the prince astonished the Caesar and the court philosophers by his education, knowledge of Greek and acuteness. Later, together with several Georgians, he escaped to Palestine.

During his stay in Jerusalem, he mastered the Syrian language and literature. Here in Jerusalem, Murvan and Mithridates became monks, changed their names: Murvan became Petre and Mithridates – Ioane. They settled in Maiuma, near Gaza. In 452, Petre the Iberian was appointed to the episcopal see of Maiuma¹⁴.

Petre the Iberian is one of the most remarkable representatives of philosophical-theological thinking of the second part of the 5th century. He built a Georgian monastery and founded a school, the main contingent of which were Georgians living in Syria, though children of other nations – Greeks, Syrians, etc. studied in this school as well. Some authors think that part of the Georgians educated at this school returned to their homeland in the 6th century, and this event is known in the Georgian historiography as the arrival of the Assyrian Fathers to Georgia.

The so-called Corpus Areopagiticum, which consists of 10 epistles and four books, “On the Divine Names”, “Mystical Theology”, “On the Celestial

Hierarchy” and “On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy” – had been for centuries ascribed to Dionysius the Areopagite. These treatises are of particular importance for the theology of the Orthodox and Western European churches. Later, it was proved that it was impossible for St. Dionysius, who lived and worked in the 1st century, to be the author of this Corpus; therefore, an anonymous author was since then called Pseudo Dionysius the Areopagite¹⁵. In 1942, an outstanding Georgian scientist, Shalva Nutsubidze, proposed an idea of the identity of Pseudo Dionysius the Areopagite and a famous Georgian figure, Petre the Iberian. In 1952, a famous Belgian scientist, Ernest Honingmann, independently of Shalva Nutsubidze, arrived at the same conclusion. Since then, this theory has been called the Nutsubidze-Honingmann theory.

Petre the Iberian’s historical merit consists in forming a theory of negative theology and dialectics. According to him, it is impossible to give a positive definition of God as infinity since God is above any positive definition. Therefore, we do not know what God is, but we know what He is not. We cannot say that God exists because God is more than existence. God’s nature demands non-existence. Therefore, in contrast to Proclus, Petre the Iberian thinks that God’s negative definition is more appropriate than positive.

Petre the Iberian thinks that knowing God negatively serves to demolish the borders between the world and God. Through cognition of

the steps of the world and elevating to God, it is possible to state what God is not. At the same time, the border between God and what god is not is annihilated, and we will find ourselves elevated to God, but it is not the only way to comprehend God. There is another way – immediate contemplation of God through mystical ecstasis.

Founding of Gelati Academy – Ioane Petritsi

Exact data of birth and death of an outstanding Georgian philosopher of the Middle Ages, Ioane Petrirs, are unknown. We know that he went to Constantinople to get an education. At that time, the position of the leading philosopher was taken by Michael Psellos (1018-1077); later, his position as the head philosopher was taken by his pupil Ioane Itlus (born 1025). In 1083, Ioane Italus was put on trial as the church considered him a heretic, as he admitted the eternity of matter, the timeless existence of the world, etc.¹⁶ He violated the essential dogmas of Christianity.

Byzantine Ioane Petritsi studied philosophy, theology and the Greek language. Since circa 1083, Petritsi stayed at the Petritzonitissa Monastery, founded by Grigol Pakourianos. He took the name Petritsi from it. It seems that Petritsi left Constantinople after Italus's trial. It was not safe for him to stay there as he was Italus's pupil and shared his positions. Petritsi, as he himself admits, was persecuted by Georgians as well.

Petrtsi says regretfully that his fellow men impeded him from mastering philosophy and presenting theology in its pure form¹⁷. He explains it by envy and ignorance of his fellowmen¹⁸.

The research conducted by the 20th-century prominent linguists and philosophers (Nikoloz Marr, Korneli Kekelidze, Shalva Nutsidze) in the 20s-60s established a scientific and religious tradition to consider that “De Natura Hominis” by Nemesius and “Elementatio Theologica” by Proclus Diadochi were translated by a person who lived in the second half of the 11th century and the beginning of the 12th century (during the reign of the king David Aghmashenebeli). This person was Ioane Petritsi, one of the founders and rector of Gelati Academy as well as of a solid school of theology.

Ioane Petritsi praises the king Davis Aghmashenebeli, who founded Gelati Academy in 1106 and produced the conditions suitable for his work.

Petrtsi's colossal translational, philosophical and pedagogical activities were finished in Gelati Academy. He translated: two logical treatises by Aristotle, which did not reach our times, Nemesius of Emesa's “On Human Nature” and Proclus's “The Elements of Theology”. Petritsi's main and original work is “Comments on Proclus Diadochi's and Plato's philosophy”, which he added as vast comments to the translation of Proclus's mentioned work.

Petritsi enjoyed great recognition in Georgia. He was characterised as a learned man, like Plato. "A Georgian philosopher, Solomon Dodashvili, thought very highly of him and said: "Petritsi was a true philosopher, very dear poet of Georgia, a really great and wonderful man of his times ..."¹⁹.

Ioane Petritsi creatively reconceptualised "The Elements of Theology" by Proclus and managed to harmonise a deep knowledge and understanding of Proclus's philosophy with superb originality and depth of his own philosophical theory.

To scrutinise Ioane Petritsi's works and his originality seems possible only in the case of a detailed comparison of his treatise to the works by Proclus, since Petritsi, as the translator of "The Elements of Theology", is at the same time its interpreter. It is also a task for the historians of Georgian philosophy²⁰.

Opinions of the Georgian scholars on Ioane Petritsi's philosophy vary. Some of them (N.Marr, Sh. Nutsubidze, I. Fantskhava, Sh. Khidasheli) consider Petritsi as a continuator and developer of the Neoplatonic tradition, i.e. a Neoplatonic; M Gogiberidze characterises Ioane Petritsi's philosophy as scholastic. At the same time, it should also be noted that Sh. Nutsubidze considered Petritsi's philosophy from a different aspect. In particular, he thought it a Renaissance philosophy and associated the beginning of the Georgian Renaissance with it²¹.

As it has already been said, the comments attached to Proclus's "The Elements of Theology" constitute an

independent and original philosophical treatise. The originality of Petritsi's philosophy is underlined by various thinkers. An outstanding Georgian philosopher of our times, Guram Tevzadze, thinks that the originality of Ioane Petritsi's philosophy is evident with respect to one of the most important problems of the Middle Ages, that of analogy. According to a widespread position, the principle of analogy is for the first time given in the works of Alexander of Hales, a 13th-century English theologian; till the 13th century, this principle was not used either in the works of Arabian philosophers, nor in the works of Aristotle's commentators. But the understanding of "being" or existing and "kind", similar to the understanding given by Alexander of Hales, is present in its full form in Ioane Petritsi's doctrine, that is, not in the 13th century, but at the beginning of the 12th²². It is important as the problem of analogy is foremost in Medieval philosophy. It will suffice to say that "many consider it as the central problem of Thomas Aquinas' philosophy!"²³.

Considering Ioane Petritsi's world outlook in its wholeness makes the Neoplatonic character of his philosophical outlook evident.

It is true that Petritsi follows Neoplatonists, especially Proclus, but he is not a passive adherent of Neoplatonic philosophy. One of the problems taken by Petritsi from Neoplatonic philosophy is that of the triad, regarding which he formed his own original position. We can say that the

feature by which Sh. Nutsubidze classified Petritsi's philosophy as Renaissance (the idea of unity of the first cause and the species) is clearly seen in Petritsi's doctrine on the triad.

To understand perfectly the problem of the triad as well as other issues in Petritsi's philosophy, it is necessary to briefly characterise the main objective and task of his work.

Petritsi's objective is to state the first One or the first Cause. He thinks that if we understand the First Cause correctly, the nature of the species ensuing from it will also be seen correctly. In this respect, he, up to a point, develops the core principles of Neoplatonic philosophy. What is One, and how can it be characterised?

Petritsi thinks that the First Cause will be detected if we state One, though it is necessary to defend its purity. One can be only simple. Therefore, neither the sky, nor the soul, nor the spirit can be One and the First Cause since everything aforementioned contains parts and therefore is complex. One can be only simple (flawless): the flawless One is not linked to nature or species or parts but is above all these²⁴. Here we can see the main principle of Petritsi's philosophy, consisting in presenting One (the First Cause) as super-perfection in relation to other species.

The main principle of Petritsi's philosophy is derived from Neoplatonism. As we know, the First Cause is recognised as the most perfect and the highest among all the beings in Plotin's and Proclus's philosophy.

Petritsi discusses two ways of cognition – through the soul and through reason. Soul cognises step-by-step; it is a result of judgement and comparison of various aspects of the object of cognition. Cognition through reason differs from cognition through the soul. It instantly, immediately grasps the object. Its object is immediately given in mind, like the halo eternally attached to the sun²⁵. Just as the sun rays are always given with the sun, so the object of cognition is always given with the reason.

Aforementioned Aristotelian statement, Petritsi interprets based on Neoplatonic philosophy. In particular, he associates the ontological primacy and gnosiological minority of the first entities with a widely known statement of Neoplatonism according to which to reach the First Cause, it is necessary to pass every stage from the lowest to the highest up to the first Cause²⁶.

Thus, the main thing in Petritsi's philosophy is to state the One (First Cause). He resorts to a logical method that is necessary to state the One. The first One and the entities flowing from it are united in a one hierarchical order and ranged according to their perfection. The more perfect an entity is, the closer it is to the First Cause and vice versa, the less perfect is farther from it. The order between the entities is stated by the First Cause: each has its place assigned from the beginning²⁷.

In his Comments, Petritsi first refers to Proclus's statement and then interprets it. In the process of inter-

pretation, Petritsi usually expresses original ideas.

Petrtsi discusses Proclus's statement that beings originate from one cause – the First Cause. Here, as Petritsi notes, Proclus rejects Aristotle's and Alexander Aphrodisias's positions, who separated the creative Cause from the existents²⁸.

Petrtsi thinks that the first One is not to be understood as a force, or action or something comprehensible by reason. If we ascribe any of these characteristics to it, then it will not be pure, true or, using his terms, "flawless" One. Then Petritsi says that beings are endowed with existence by the supreme essence. He refers to Socrates, who insisted that every creator endows the created with their quality. Petritsi thinks that the first One is the highest - the Supreme. He uses a comparison with Apollo (Sun): as the Sun is above all that is created, just so is the first One. The first One, as the source of everything, is interpreted in the Neoplatonic manner: the One is the supreme Good as the highest expression of its perfection. If the first Cause is not Good, then there should be something else better than Good, supreme to it, and the existing should flow out of it as from the first Cause. And to it should they return as to the first Cause.

Petrtsi is a Medieval thinker, and the importance of his ideas is to be evaluated from the viewpoint of his epoch. Monotheism was a dominant theory in the Middle Ages. Petritsi develops the main idea of Neoplatonic philosophy. As it is known, Neo-

platonism opposes monotheism. Monotheism shares the idea of opposing God and the world. But in Neoplatonism, the world flows out of God, and it itself is also God, though at a certain stage of the development of God.

According to monotheism, God created the world from nothing; in Neoplatonism, the whole world exists eternally. Just because the essential difference between God and the world is annihilated in Neoplatonism, "Neoplatonism in the Middle Ages as well as in the Renaissance period remains a progressive theory and the monotheistic perceptions (Talmud, Bible, Islam) remain naïve childish superstitions". The main principles of Neoplatonic philosophy are retained and originally developed in Petritsi's philosophical world outlook.

Ioane Petritsi aimed to create a Georgian conceptual system which could equal the Greek philosophical terminology.

He formed the basic philosophical concepts: logos, cosmos, noema, nous, psyche, anima, ethos, theos, aletheia, dianoia, gnosis, etc²⁹.

Ephrem Mtsire, who translated "Corpus Areopagiticum" into Georgian, in his will, asked the Christians to pray for Ioane, "divine philosopher", because if he were not his mentor and assistant, he would never dare translate that work. It is thought that speaking of a "divine philosopher" Ioane, Ephrem Mtsire meant Petritsi.

Later, Ioane Petritsi was considered a teacher and a principal adviser of Ephrem Mtsire when he was trans-

lating Corpus Areopagiticum into Georgian. Scientists who share Shalva Nutsubidze's position think that "divine philosopher" was Ioane Petritsi's academic rank³⁰.

Comments as a genre of philosophical literature were widespread in the epoch of Ioane Petritsi [3]. The influence of Ioane Petritsi's version of Neoplatonism on Georgian culture was really profound, especially on the philosophical poem "The Knight in the Panther's Skin" by Shota Rustaveli, which was created in the epoch of early Renaissance³¹.

Return to the European Intellectual Space – Solomon Dodashvili

The Georgian philosopher Solomon Dodashvili (1805-1838) lived a brief yet profoundly complex and existentially challenging life, spanning only thirty-three years. He received his early education at the St. Nino Monastic School in Bodbe and later continued his studies at the Tbilisi Theological Seminary. At the age of nineteen, on the advice and recommendation of Metropolitan Ioane of Bodbe, Dodashvili traveled to St. Petersburg to further his education. In 1824, he was admitted to the Imperial University of St. Petersburg, where he pursued advanced studies in philosophy and the humanities. During this period, Dodashvili received significant support and intellectual guidance from the renowned Georgian theologian and philosopher, Monk Ioane Khelashvili (1778-1837),

whose influence greatly shaped his spiritual and philosophical worldview.

In 1827, after graduating from the Imperial University of St. Petersburg, Solomon Dodashvili returned to his homeland, where he became actively involved in public affairs and in the revival of Georgian culture and education.

During his studies at St. Petersburg University (beginning in 1824), the ideas and concepts of German classical philosophy had already gained vast influence across Russian universities. The university's professors of philosophy were eclectic thinkers, and this intellectual environment had a significant impact on Dodashvili's philosophical education and outlook.

While studying in St. Petersburg, Dodashvili had the opportunity to become acquainted with the works of the most prominent European philosophers and scholars freely. He thoroughly studied Kant's and Schaad's works on logic, Fichte's systematic treatise "The Science of Knowledge" (Wissenschaftslehre), as well as Friedrich Schlegel's "History of Ancient and Modern Literature", and the writings of Ludwig Tieck and Wilhelm Wackenroder.

Drawing upon these philosophical sources and the spiritual heritage of Georgian culture, Dodashvili developed an ontological concept based on the monistic principle of objective idealism, which closely resembles Schelling's philosophy of identity.

Solomon Dodashvili was among the first Georgian intellectuals to achieve notable success in the field of

European philosophy immediately after completing his studies at St. Petersburg University. He gained wide recognition for his "Logic", a philosophical textbook that established his reputation as a prominent philosopher and educator both in Georgia and beyond.

Dodashvili notes: "The realm of science extends only as far as the boundaries of activity marked out for the mind by nature; and since this faculty encompasses only what is subject to sensation and experience, logic may justly be called phenomenology, the science of phenomena. To apply the principles of logic to objects lying beyond the sphere of experience, to the very essence of things, means to attribute to them a value and power greater than they can actually possess; it means to confuse things that are entirely distinct and even opposed, and to give rise to dualism, skepticism, and other erroneous systems, which inevitably follow from such confusion between the two faculties of the soul and the two corresponding worlds that together make up the unity of existence. Phenomena do not constitute the essence of things; judgment is not the same as reason; logic is not metaphysics. These are the distinctions that alone can lead philosophy out of the labyrinth of confusions in which it had remained until the time of the philosopher of Königsberg³²," In 1827, at the age of twenty-two, Solomon Dodashvili published his principal work in Russian, *A Course in Philosophy*, Part One: *Logic*³³. Building

upon the foundations of German classical philosophy and the Georgian philosophical tradition, Solomon Dodashvili created a highly significant and systematic model of thought.

Dodashvili placed the human being at the very center of philosophical inquiry, making philosophical anthropology the core of his system. According to him, human reason is truly self-sufficient only when it finds a firm foundation in knowledge, for it is upon this foundation that the entire essence of the human being rests.

Thus, the human being is not only the principal object of cognition but also its cognizing subject; the knower and the known are the same essence. This is the fundamental structure that Dodashvili developed in accordance with the model of classical German philosophy, and it is precisely what distinguishes philosophy from the particular sciences³⁴.

The knowledge of one's inner world, he argued, can belong only to the person capable of disregarding the external and abstracting from it in the process of cognition. The investigation of the causes and grounds of one's own being (the Self) is possible only for one who can concentrate inwardly. Dodashvili thus made the inner world of man the central subject of philosophical investigation. In this context, he identified three principal objects and aims of philosophical inquiry, which will be discussed further below:

- (1) Abstraction and Reflection
- (2) Self-Knowledge
- (3) Self-Sufficiency through Self-Knowledge

Dodashvili developed his philosophical vision both methodologically and systematically. He devoted special attention not only to the foundation of philosophy itself, but also to the construction of his own philosophical system, grounded in the principles of German Idealism.

He presented the main ideas of his philosophy at the very beginning of his *Logic*, specifically in the section titled “General Introduction to Philosophy”. In the concluding part of this work, he proposed a systematic scheme of philosophy, dividing philosophical knowledge into distinct fields.

According to Dodashvili, the primary branches of philosophy are *Logic*, *Psychology*, and *Metaphysics*. These are followed by *Aesthetics*, and finally by the *Philosophy of Morality* and the *Philosophy of Law*.

This structure clearly demonstrates that, in Dodashvili’s system, philosophy begins with logic and psychology, expands through metaphysics and aesthetics, and culminates in moral and legal philosophy.

The core of his philosophical thought was philosophical anthropology. Dodashvili viewed the human being as a rational and thinking entity, and thus placed man and his essential faculties at the center of his philosophical framework. Morality and law, in his view, are the foundational existential principles that dis-

tinguish the human being from all other creatures and reveal humanity as the culmination of creation.

Unlike all other beings, humans alone appear as moral and just entities. Therefore, a philosophical system must not only adequately describe the essential aspects of human existence but also formulate the laws governing moral and just action.

Solomon Dodashvili’s philosophical system resembles the systematic undertakings of classical German philosophy, those of Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, although the Georgian philosopher’s attempt was less monumental in scope. Solomon Dodashvili was an original thinker, not a mere imitator³⁵.

As Shalva Nutsubidze aptly and accurately observed: “With this bold step, a new direction was opened – one that was inherent from the very beginning in Solomon Dodashvili’s philosophical thought, and which was linked to the turning point in Western European philosophy through the application of some aspects of Fichte’s philosophy.

Fichte was a disciple of Kant, and even after attempting to transcend the limits of Kant’s agnosticism, he retained certain Kantian elements of thought. In the history of Western philosophy, an erroneous view was established early on, namely, that Fichte was merely a continuator of Kant. This misunderstanding arose not only because Fichte’s book on religious questions was mistakenly attributed to Kant (since the actual author’s name was omitted), but also

due to a deeper reason: it was assumed that Fichte began his philosophical work where Kant had ended—namely, with the problems of practical philosophy.

This, however, reflected a profound misunderstanding in Western philosophy, which failed to grasp the novelty introduced by Fichte's thought, that he began his philosophical inquiry through action itself³⁶,

Solomon Dodashvili died prematurely, and as a result, he was unable to complete his philosophical system. He finished only the first part of his system, "Logic", This circumstance must necessarily be taken into account when reconstructing the specific nature and characteristics of his philosophy.

According to Dodashvili, logic is no longer merely an organon of philosophy, that is, an instrument or tool for philosophical reasoning, but rather a science concerned with the general and necessary laws of thought.

His philosophy had a broad resonance, not only in the national but also in the international context. Thus, Dodashvili belongs to the group of Georgian philosophers whose work became the subject of detailed and specialized study. Upon its publication, Dodashvili's *Logic* received wide recognition in Russia. Major Russian journals and periodicals — such as *Moskovskiy Vestnik* (Московский вѣстникъ), *Moskovskiy Telegraf* (Московский телеграфъ), and *Severnaya Pchela* (Сѣверная пчела) — reviewed the work and praised the Georgian author for his

achievements. Noteworthy references to this work also appeared in major Russian-language lexicons and encyclopedias, including E. L. Radlov's "Philosophical Dictionary" (St. Petersburg, 1904) and the Brockhaus and Efron Encyclopedia (St. Petersburg, 1893), which further attest to the intellectual significance and lasting influence of Dodashvili's contribution to philosophy.

According to Shalva Nutsubidze, when the rhetorical question is raised about the place Solomon Dodashvili occupies in the history of Georgian philosophy, it is essentially equivalent to asking what place he holds within the broader context of world philosophical thought³⁷.

Dodashvili's invaluable intellectual work coincides with one of the most momentous epochs in human history, a period marked by profound revolutionary transformations and intense socio-political upheavals, during which the formation and consolidation of national and state political systems were actively taking place.

**Nutsubidze, Shalva.
Aletheological Realism and the
Theory of the Eastern
Renaissance.**

Shalva Nutsubidze (1888-1969) was one of the most distinguished Georgian philosophers and intellectual figures of the twentieth century. For more than five decades, he profoundly influenced Georgian society, establishing himself as a renowned philosopher, founder of the Georgian

philosophical school, author of the theory of the Eastern Renaissance, translator, co-founder of Tbilisi State University, Rustvelologist, brilliant orator, and a man of exceptional intellect and talent.

He graduated from the Faculty of Philosophy at St. Petersburg University in 1910, where he studied under prominent professors such as A. Vvedensky, N. Lossky, and I. Lapshin. As part of his academic work, he twice visited Germany, where he conducted research under the guidance of famous philosophers W. Wundt, I. Volkelt, and K. Barth.

Shalva Nutsubidze was one of the founders of Tbilisi State University (1918). At that time, two major ideas were competing in Georgia – the establishment of a technical institute and that of a humanities-oriented university. Nutsubidze succeeded in upholding and realizing the humanistic vision, ensuring the creation of a true university of knowledge.

He was not merely one of the founders but the spiritual architect of the idea itself. From the very beginning, he worked to revive the philosophical traditions of the Gelati Academy within the new university. This aspiration is exemplified by his monumental two-volume work, “History of Georgian Philosophy,” which stands as a cornerstone of modern Georgian philosophical thought.

At the initiative of Shalva Nutsubidze, a philosophical society was established in Tbilisi in 1918, the “Ioane Petritsi Philosophical Society”. The society’s primary goal was

to revive the philosophical tradition that had been lost over the preceding centuries. In Petritsi’s era, the language of philosophy was Greek, which gave rise to extensive translation activities. By contrast, at the beginning of the 20th century, German philosophy had assumed a leading position worldwide, and Neo-Kantian philosophical schools had come to dominate the intellectual landscape.

In Europe, phenomenology and existentialism were taking their first steps, marking a new stage in the development of philosophy. At that time, a need arose for a new system of articulating Georgian philosophical concepts, one that would address themes relevant to the broader field of philosophy and serve as an equivalent counterpart to the conceptual frameworks of German philosophy³⁸.

Shalva Nutsubidze began to work in this direction, formulating a new philosophical framework. In his monographs “Truth and the Structure of Cognition”³⁹ (1926) and “Philosophy and Wisdom”⁴⁰ (1931), he developed the fundamental principles of Alethiology.

He called his original philosophical conception “Alethiological Realism”. According to Nutsubidze, Alethiology occupies an intermediary position, somewhere between philosophy and what may be called wisdom”.

If the first work (*Wahrheit und Erkenntnisstruktur*) represents the “First Introduction to Alethiological Realism,” the second, *Philosophie und Weisheit* (“Philosophy and

Wisdom”), was conceived as a “Special Introduction to Alethiology⁴¹”,

Shalva Nutsubidze’s writings attracted wide recognition among Western scholars. His studies published in Germany received twelve reviews in various German, French, and English journals. Although the reviewers’ positions on Alethiological Realism were not entirely uniform, their discussions reveal a deep interest in the issues raised, and most offered high praise for the originality of his thought.

As early as 1911, Nutsubidze delivered a lecture in Leipzig entitled “*On the Principles of Alethiology*,” which was later published in 1913 in the journal ‘Вопросы философии и психологии’.

Nutsubidze’s academic activity can be divided into two significant periods. The first period, often referred to as the metaphysical period, is characterized by his original thinking and his attempt to construct a new philosophical system. The second period is devoted to the history of Georgian philosophy and to the formulation of the concept of the Eastern Renaissance within the framework of Georgian intellectual culture. Ultimately, these two periods represent two stages in the realization of one incredible intellectual journey in Nutsubidze’s philosophical development.

Within the framework of Alethiology, Nutsubidze wrote: “Philosophizing is solely and exclusively a human activity. On a higher level of being, it would not be necessary; on a

lower level, it would not be possible”,

At the center of philosophy, he places the human being, not as an end in itself, but as a path and a search, endowed with an endless potential for striving and inquiry. Approaching truth, for Nutsubidze, means a gradual limitation of this potential and a detachment from the human. The ultimate goal, therefore, is to approach truth and, in doing so, to transcend the merely human condition.

Cognition, according to Shalva Nutsubidze, is a process that unfolds between the human being and the object of knowledge. Within human cognition, it is essential to distinguish between what is “specifically human” and what is “especially human”,

Special sciences do not aim to uncover truth as revealed within phenomena, because their task does not lie on the alethiological (truth-revealing) plane of reality. Science investigates the objects of truth, whereas philosophy studies truth itself as a domain. It is essential, Nutsubidze writes, to maintain two key principles: “We affirm existence not as untrue, but as truly existing. Therefore, our realism is Alethiological Realism”⁴².

According to Shalva Nutsubidze, within Aletheological Realism, understood as a form of “first philosophy,” substance is defined as Truth itself, that which exists beyond being, or more precisely, outside the sphere of oppositional logic, the “pre-logical” realm. The central question

for Nutsubidze is: How is it possible to grasp the pre-logical, Truth “in itself”, which constitutes the unconditional precondition of cognition? In response, Nutsubidze introduces the concept of “directionless seeing” (*Richtungsloses Sehen*). He explains that “Truth in itself” is not a concept about an existent, but rather exists together with the existent. The existent as such is not “Truth in itself”,

Shalva Nutsubidze presented an original theory, elaborated in several of his significant works, including “*Rustaveli and the Eastern Renaissance*”⁴³ (1947) and the two-volume “*History of Georgian Philosophy*”⁴⁶ (1956-1958). Through these studies, Nutsubidze became acquainted with the mystical author of the 5th century, known under the name Dionysius the Areopagite. Nutsubidze advanced the bold hypothesis that this name was, in fact, a pseudonym of Peter the Iberian, a Georgian theologian and philosopher who lived and worked in Palestine, conducting highly significant theological and philosophical research and composing his works in Greek. Scholars of the time believed that all of Peter the Iberian’s writings had been lost. Still, Nutsubidze’s theory reopened the question of their identity and authorship, offering a groundbreaking interpretation that connected Georgian intellectual heritage with the roots of Christian Neoplatonism.

Shalva Nutsubidze’s most significant achievement lies in his contribution of two ideas of immense significance to the global intellectual heritage. First, Nutsubidze demonstrated

that the author of the well-known *Corpus Areopagites* was none other than the 5th-century Georgian thinker, Peter the Iberian. Second, through the creation of his theory of the Eastern Renaissance, he introduced an entirely new concept into the study of world philosophical and cultural history. According to Nutsubidze, the Eastern Renaissance preceded the Western Renaissance by several centuries, and indeed, the foundations of Western culture are deeply rooted in the East. As he wrote: “The mystery of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite is the symphony of the fifth century”.

A direct analogy can be drawn between Peter the Iberian’s doctrine and the methodological approaches he employed, particularly the apophatic (negative) and cataphatic (affirmative) methods. These two approaches, Nutsubidze noted, became the fundamental methods of philosophical inquiry during the Renaissance era of humankind.

Nutsubidze broke through the darkness. He discovered that within Ioane Petritsi’s “Georgian reception” and the *Corpus Areopagites* lie all the necessary prerequisites for understanding a new ontological theory of truth. According to Nutsubidze, the study of Alethiology is also of great importance from a phenomenological perspective. He sought to construct his own version of ontological phenomenology, which can be interpreted as a post-secular theory of humanism. Shalva Nutsubidze’s conception remains highly vital and relevant within the space of Georgian culture.

It has become a model for the philosophical interpretation of culture, providing a framework that can be actively applied to the study of contemporary philosophical problems and the analysis of spiritual conditions in modern society⁴⁴.

Prof. Gigi Tevzadze notes that Shalva Nutsubidze's works are also of great importance for identifying the points of connection between ancient and Christian cultures. He writes: "More than two centuries have passed since *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* entered the field of vision of intellectuals interested in the Middle Ages, first in Europe, and later throughout the entire world". Through Nutsubidze's research, these connections between antique and Christian worldviews became clearer, allowing scholars to trace the continuity of philosophical and cultural thought that unites the classical, medieval, and modern traditions within both Georgian and global intellectual history.

Georgians, despite the rich heritage of medieval, colonial, modernist, postmodern, and even post-post-modern literature, "*The Knight in the Panther's Skin*" remains the central text, the foundational work around which intertextual annotations, allusions, deconstructions, and reconstructions continue to unfold. In the modern world, it isn't easy to find another cultural context in which the living backbone of national literature is still formed by a text written nine centuries ago".

As Shalva Nutsubidze wrote, the Renaissance represents "one of the

most debated issues in Western scholarship". What may appear, at first glance, to be a purely academic question has in fact provoked heated controversy, for, as he observed, "It has become a question of the very roots of Western European culture,"⁴⁹ touching upon matters of national cultural interests and attempts to justify claims of national superiority. A large number of prominent Western scholars, including Jules Michelet, Voigt, and Burckhardt, among others, have maintained that the Renaissance was an exclusively Western phenomenon, with its origins concentrated entirely within Europe itself. Shalva Nutsubidze considers this view a clear manifestation of Eurocentrism. He not only provided its immanent critique, but also sought to refute it through factual evidence demonstrating the existence of a Renaissance culture in the East⁴⁵.

One of the central propositions of Shalva Nutsubidze's theory of the Eastern Renaissance concerns the philosophical grounding of the Renaissance as a distinct cultural phenomenon.

In Western scholarship, it is widely held that Renaissance philosophy is based on Neoplatonism. Nutsubidze extended this concept to the Eastern (and specifically Georgian) Renaissance culture, enriching and expanding its philosophical content. He argued that the monotheistic form of Neoplatonism, known as the Areopagite doctrine and historically associated with Dionysius the Areopagite, played a decisive role in shap-

ing the Renaissance worldview and humanism. It is well established that both Neoplatonism and the Areopagite tradition were well known in Georgia during the 11th and 12th centuries, profoundly influencing the development of Georgian philosophical and theological thought⁴⁶.

This line of thought led Shalva Nutsubidze to confront the question of the actual authorship of the works attributed to Dionysius the Areopagite, resulting in his identification of Pseudo-Dionysius with Peter the Iberian. Nutsubidze's research on this issue later received strong confirmation through the discovery of the Belgian scholar Ernest Honigmann, whose findings caused a sensational reaction within Western academic circles, lending significant support to Nutsubidze's groundbreaking hypothesis.

The view that Neoplatonism forms the philosophical foundation of the Western Renaissance and Humanism is well established both in Western and Russian scholarship. It had also long been recognized that the philosophical worldview of Shota Rustaveli was rooted in Neoplatonism, a view that Shalva Nutsubidze not only deepened and substantiated with further arguments but also extended to the phenomena of the Eastern Renaissance.

However, the founder of the study of Georgian philosophy's history soon faced an unexpected and serious challenge, one that was, in part, artificially amplified. This difficulty arose from the fact that within Soviet scholarship, Neoplatonism was sub-

jected to a highly nihilistic and pessimistic evaluation, as it was often seen as a reactionary and religiously dogmatic doctrine, incompatible with the officially sanctioned materialist worldview⁴⁷.

Conclusion

The work "Georgian Philosophy from Phasisi Academy up to the Present" (the Main Tendencies) proved rather bulky. But did we answer the problem posited? Formation of the Georgian philosophical world outlook begins at the Phasisi philosophical academy, and as historical sources witness, even Greeks strived to get an education in this school. As a result of the conceptual analysis of various situations related to Phasisi academy, it was found that a mystical person known under the name of Petre the Iberian was associated with it.

Shalva Nutsubidze created an absolutely new conceptual field to substantiate and solve the mystery of the authorship of the Areopagitical works. Dionysus the Areopagite, a figure of the 5th century, was known as the author of these treatises. Nutsubidze argued that the author of the Areopagetical works is a Georgian, Petre the Iberian, an ecclesiastic hierarch who lived and worked in Palestine.

Georgian theologian and philosopher Petre the Iberian is considered a founder of Christian Neoplatonism, and it is very important.

As it is shown, in 1942, a famous Georgian philosopher, Shalva

Nutsubidze, introduced into the world scientific sphere the issue of identity of Pseudo Dionysus the Areopagite and an outstanding Georgian figure, Petre the Iberian. In 1952, independently of Nutsubidze, a famous Belgian scientist, Ernest Honigmann, arrived at the same conclusion, and since then, the theory is known as the Nutsubidze-Honigmann theory.

The Neoplatonic direction was continued in Ioane Petritsi's works. Discussion of his world outlook makes the Neoplatonic character of his philosophy evident.

Petrtsi, though he follows the Neoplatonics, especially Proclus, is not a passive adherent of Neoplatonic philosophy. He is a creator and forms a new original theory. According to Nutsubidze, it is the philosophy of Petre the Iberian and Ioane Petritsi that can be considered Renaissance. This tendency is partially continued by Solomon Dodashvili, who attempted to profoundly reconceptualise Western thinking, in particular, German philosophy.

Shalva Nutsubidze placed the ideas of Georgian philosophers working

in different epochs in a new thinking context. Nutsubidze's greatest achievement is that he stepped into the world intellectual sphere with two exquisite discoveries: Shalve Nutsubidze proved that the author of the famous Areopagitical Corpus is a 5th-century Georgian ecclesiastic and philosopher, Petre the Iberian; by creating the theory of Oriental Renaissance, Nutsubidze opened an absolutely fresh perspective in the scientific studies of the world thinking and culture proving that the Oriental Renaissance outruns the western Renaissance for centuries.

In the work, ideas of eminent Georgian philosophers are pushed to the foreground, thus demonstrating the whole united line of philosophical thinking that builds the landscape of Georgian philosophical thought. After Nutsubidze, the tradition continued and embraced phenomenological, existential and other modern developments. The contemporary philosophical world is acquainted with eminent Georgian philosophers.

Notes

- ¹ Tengis Iremadze, *Medieval Georgian Philosophy: A Systematic Outline for Understanding Its Specificity*, Favorite Style, Tbilisi, 2019, pp. 123-124.
- ² Apollonius of Rhodes, *Argonautica*, Translated and annotated by Akaki Urushadze, Ganatleba Publishing House, Tbilisi, 1972, pp. 247-249 (in Georgian). See also: Akaki Urushadze,

The Argonauts in the History of Ancient Colchis, Ganatleba Publishing House, Tbilisi, 1964.

- ³ Rismag Gordeziani, *The World of Greek Mythology: The Argonauts*, Logosi Publishing House, Tbilisi, 1999, pp. 109-123.
- ⁴ Nodar Lomouri, *Relations Between Georgia and the Byzantine Empire. Part I (4th-9th Centuries)*, TSU Press, Tbilisi, 2011, pp. 85-90.

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- ⁶ For information about Georgia in Byzantine sources, see GEORGICA, Vol. I.
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Diplomatic structures of the Democratic Republic of Georgia (1918-1921)

Dimitri SHVELIDZE

Abstract: *The article covers three main topics: The first concerns the establishment of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Democratic Republic of Georgia and its activities aimed at establishing diplomatic relations with as many foreign countries as possible. The second topic discusses and clarifies the embassies and consulates that foreign states opened in Georgia. The third research topic focuses on identifying and specifying the Georgian diplomatic missions that existed abroad.*

The paper focuses on the extremely difficult geopolitical conditions under which the above-mentioned institutions were established – conditions created by Soviet Russia, which, compared to the old monarchical Russia, pursued even greater expansionist goals.

The present article is the initial part of a broader research work. It is based on materials from 1918-1921 found in the press and scattered throughout scholarly literature. Its purpose is to collect and systematize these materials, with further research to continue through the study of archival sources.

As the research shows, the young and still unrecognized Democratic Republic of Georgia managed to establish contact and diplomatic relations with many countries. Its independence was recognized de jure only on January 27, 1921 – just a few weeks before Georgia was invaded by Soviet Russia.

Keywords: *South Caucasus, Diplomatic recognition, embassy, consulate, First Democratic Republic.*

Introduction

After the declaration of independence, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia began the process of establishing diplomatic relations with foreign countries. In the scholarly literature reflecting the relations between Georgia and other nations, the relevant materials are scattered. The aim of this article is to collect and

briefly present information about which countries had Georgian embassies, consulates, and representative offices between 1918 and 1921. It also lists the diplomatic missions of foreign states that existed in Georgia during that period. During its three years of independence, Georgia managed to establish diplomatic relations of various levels with several dozen countries.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia

Before the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the independent republics of the South Caucasus were established, these bodies already had predecessor structures. In the Transcaucasian Commissariat, Evgeni Gegechkori, in addition to serving as chairman, also held the position of Commissar for Foreign Affairs and Labor. When the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic was formed and declared its independence, Akaki Chkhenkeli became both the head of government and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. When, on November 26, 1917, the Executive Committee of the National Council of Georgia was created, several commissions were also established to perform the functions of various parliamentary committees. Among them, the Foreign Affairs Commission was headed by Akaki Chkhenkeli. These few facts are recalled here to show that both Akaki Chkhenkeli and Evgeni Gegechkori had already gained experience in diplomatic service before they successfully assumed the responsible post of Minister of Foreign Affairs of independent Georgia.

Akaki Chkhenkeli held the position of "Foreign" Minister in the first coalition government and was the one who took the initial steps toward establishing the structure of the foreign affairs office. However, starting in June, he was already in Europe, dealing directly with Germany's po-

litical circles to resolve urgent and high-priority diplomatic issues. In Georgia, the ministry's activities were in practice directed by Noe Ramishvili.

From November 1918, after the Germans left Georgia and the country's foreign policy orientation shifted toward the Entente, Chkhenkeli was replaced as minister by Evgeni Gegechkori. Akaki Chkhenkeli wrote the following in his diary: "The day before yesterday I received a radio message from N. Zh. – the head of government – informing me that Evgeni Gegechkori has been appointed as Minister of Foreign Affairs in my place, while I am to remain here as ambassador... My replacement is quite appropriate; this had to happen, and I myself was thinking of suggesting it. Indeed, now that the victorious Entente stands at Georgia's doorstep, it is only fitting that someone else should hold the portfolio of Minister of Foreign Affairs. This parliamentary practice is certainly proper. In such a case, the cabinet itself should also be reshuffled, but that is probably impractical, as suitable candidates are not so easy to find"¹.

During the three years of independence, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia conducted highly active and energetic work. It established direct relations with both neighboring and distant countries; carried out extensive efforts to achieve *de facto* and *de jure* recognition of the country; organized embassies, consulates, and representative

offices in many states; and made numerous attempts to establish normal or at least peaceful relations among the Caucasian states within the region, among other significant initiatives.

An essential part of the ministry's structure consisted of the Deputy Ministers: Konstantine Gvarjaladze, Konstantine Sabakhtarashvili, and Nikoloz Kartsivadze. Former Minister Akaki Chkhenkeli wrote in his diary entry dated November 6, 1919: "Kotsia Gvarjaladze – he has matured and broadened, though he still lacks salt; he is not yet capable of playing the role of a statesman. "At that time, "Kotsia" (Konstantine) was a 35-year-old diplomat. In one of his letters, Akaki Chkhenkeli listed Gvarjaladze's intensive diplomatic activities throughout 1919, carried out personally and often together with Avalishvili and Ghambashidze. These included meetings with the British Foreign Secretary; the delivery of a memorandum to the Japanese Ambassador to the United Kingdom; meetings with the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Italian delegation, and the U.S. delegation; as well as with representatives of several other countries and the chairman of the Paris Peace Conference etc.

The Social Democrat K. Gvarjaladze was described in an interesting way by the Socialist-Federalist émigré Niko Urushadze: "He was undoubtedly distinguished by his worldview, by his personal approach to fundamental issues, and

by his own understanding of them... He had never been a devotee of the Russian spirit – that legacy inherited from Asia, which denies the individual and corrupts the human personality. Moreover, and fortunately, none of the spineless variants of Russian Menshevism had any influence on him. He found his spiritual and intellectual nourishment in European humanist socialism, which he saw as devoted to the freedom of both the individual and the nation... Konstantine Gvarjaladze was, without question, a Georgian national figure; at the same time, an unwavering Georgian Social Democrat... For two or three decades he moved within influential European socialist circles, where, to the best of his ability and with tireless energy, he defended the interests of Georgia"².

Konstantine Sabakhtarashvili came to the position of Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs by a different path. In 1917, he was elected Mayor of Batumi as a result of local self-government elections. Afterwards, Sabakhtarashvili was appointed Deputy Minister. He also served as Georgia's Ambassador to Italy and played an important role in establishing friendly relations between Georgia and Italy. He led the Georgian governmental mission that arrived in Italy at the end of 1920 and was instrumental in securing financial and economic assistance for Georgia. K. Sabakhtarashvili actively participated in many other diplomatic and political processes carried out by Georgian representatives working in Europe. In

October 1918, Akaki Chkhenkeli advised Noe Zhordania whom the head of government should send to the upcoming Paris Conference and, more broadly, to represent Georgia on the European diplomatic stage. He wrote that Karlo Chkheidze and Kaki Tsereteli were essential choices, as they had a “great reputation” in Europe: “Even small children in Europe know Tsereteli and Chkheidze,” he remarked, and continued: “It may also be possible and useful to send Kolia Kartsivadze – he knows the language, is well educated, and would be a good assistant in the work”, N. Kartsivadze was also a Social Democrat, but he belonged to the dissident group of Alioni (“The Dawn”) members.

The remaining Georgian figures active on the diplomatic and political stage were appointed as ambassadors, consuls, or held various positions within diplomatic structures in different countries. They did not all belong to the Social Democratic Party – in fact, many were National Democrats or Socialist-Federalists. However, as was acknowledged at the time, party affiliation played only a minimal role in their work abroad. Diplomats operated under the instructions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Minister, following the general state policy and orientation.

The number of direct employees of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was around 50 people, or perhaps slightly fewer. The Ministry was composed of the following structural units: The Minister, the Director of the Ministry, the Vice Director, the

Legal Adviser, and the Minister’s Secretary; The Personal Department, which included the Head of the Minister’s Personal Office, a Clerk, and a Typist; The Political Department, which consisted of the Head of Department, the Head of the European Section, and the Head of the Asian Section. These sections included clerks, administrative staff, and translators; The General Department, which had a Head, a Clerk, an Assistant, and a Chancellery; The Information Bureau, which consisted of a Head, a Clerk, a Chancellery, and translators. In addition, the Ministry included Diplomatic and Economic Divisions, an Accountant, an Assistant, a Registrar, a journalist, and Diplomatic Couriers (Messengers). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was accountable to the Parliament and later to the Constituent Assembly.

Georgia’s Diplomatic Services Abroad

Earlier, and especially after Georgia’s de facto and de jure recognition of independence, our country opened embassies and diplomatic missions in many foreign countries. First and foremost, it was crucial to establish embassies in leading states and appoint ambassadors.

In Germany, following Akaki Chkhenkeli, Vladimir Akhmetelashvili was appointed as Georgia’s Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador. The embassy was located on “Brückenallee” in Berlin. Thanks to Vladimir Akhmetelashvili’s energetic

and patriotic efforts, the embassy also became a center of Georgian culture. Let us briefly recall a few characteristic episodes from the activities of Georgian representatives working abroad.

On February 22, 1921, when the Red Army was attacking Tbilisi, Vladimir Akhmetelashvili met with the President of the Weimar Republic and requested that “he and the German government immediately (of course, in secret correspondence) intervene in the war between Georgia and Soviet Russia and exert appropriate influence on Moscow”. Akhmetelashvili and the Georgians asked Ebert to summon the Russian ambassador from Berlin and demand a cessation of the war in Moscow; they also requested that the German ambassador visit Lenin in Moscow and influence him, among other measures³.

In neighboring Ottoman Turkey, in Constantinople, the government commissioner was Konstantine Gvarjaladze, the consul was Ioseb Gogolashvili, and the economic representative was Ivane Chavchanidze. Earlier in Ottoman Empire, Georgia’s first ambassador was a well-known leader of the Socialist-Federalist Party, Grigol Rtskhiladze (May-October 1920). After the Republic of Angora emerged on the political scene, Georgia’s ambassador was appointed as the second Socialist-Federalist, Svimon Mdivani (from December 17, 1920).

Georgia was the first state to recognize Mustafa Kemal’s Turkey. The embassy was distinguished by a large

staff: military adviser – General Alexandre Eristavi; administrative officer – Aristo Chumbadze; attachés – Meliton (Osman-Bey) Kartsivadze and Zia-Beg Abashidze; two officers – Emkhvari and Lieutenant Dimitri Shalikashvili; and two soldiers – messengers. Dimitri Shalikashvili was the father of Generals John-Malkhaz and Otar Shalikashvili. The famous John-Malkhaz Shalikashvili served as the Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff from 1993 to 1997. It was natural that for Georgia, normalizing relations with the main Entente powers and establishing representations in those countries was of utmost importance. Opening an embassy in France was perhaps the most ambitious, notable, and at the same time – almost a historical irony. Georgia’s plenipotentiary ambassador, Akaki Chkhenkeli, handed over his credentials to President Alexandre Millerand in Paris, at the Élysée Palace, on the very day the army of Soviet Russia entered Tbilisi – February 25, 1921. Perhaps the French did this as a form of subtle protest against Bolshevik Russia. However, as one member of the Georgian delegation, S. Asatiani, recalled, in practice, “the country’s representation presented to the President of France represented nothing and no one”.

Although the Georgian embassy in France and other European countries operated after the fall of Georgia’s First Republic, it still embodied independent Georgia in diplomatic terms for many years. Akaki Chkhenkeli, as ambassador, was granted broad pow-

ers. His representation was not limited to France alone. He was:

“Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Representative of the Democratic Republic of Georgia before the governments of France, Great Britain, and Italy. He is tasked with defending Georgia’s interests before all allied governments. He is also responsible for protecting Georgia’s interests at all international conferences, sessions, and other forums. Akaki Chkhenkeli is authorized, if necessary, to sign treaties, conventions, decisions, and protocols on behalf of the Georgian government, except in cases requiring special approval or subsequent ratification by the government. Akaki Chkhenkeli is also mandated, on behalf of the Democratic Republic of Georgia and the Georgian people, before the governments of His Majesty in Sweden, Spain, Romania, Portugal, Norway, Denmark, Greece, the Netherlands, France, Great Britain, Belgium, and Italy. In this capacity, he is authorized to conduct negotiations on all political, economic, financial, and other matters, and to sign all agreements and treaties. His credentials give him the right to affix the proper signatures and seals. The government of the Democratic Republic of Georgia fully entrusts Akaki Chkhenkeli to sign all declarations on behalf of the Georgian government”, This was all reported in the document outlining A. Chkhenkeli’s mandate⁴.

Members of Georgia’s embassy in France also included Sosipatre Asatiani – secretary; advisers Zurab

Avalishvili and Mikheil Sumbatashvili; and others: A. Zhorzholiani, A. Kutateladze, M. Skobelev, N. Jugheli, and V. Voitinsky. The Georgian embassy in France existed until 1933.

The process of appointing Georgia’s ambassador to Great Britain was complicated and somewhat delayed. Akaki Chkhenkeli sent credentials to Davit Gambashidze as early as November 1918; Gambashidze was well known in Western European diplomatic circles. He had published several works promoting Georgia’s strategic relevance for the West, and particularly for Britain. On March 14, 1919, D. Gambashidze sent his credentials to the British Foreign Office, requesting recognition as the official representative of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, but he was refused. After Georgia’s de facto independence was recognized, a renewed request was again denied. The Georgian diplomat was consoled with the explanation that he was still considered Georgia’s unofficial representative in His Majesty’s kingdom. In fact, Davit Gambashidze, Mikheil Sumbatashvili, and Konstantine Gvarjaladze acted as Georgia’s unofficial representatives, but none were recognized by London at the level of ambassador.

Only Akaki Chkhenkeli was recognized by Great Britain with the status of plenipotentiary ambassador, after Georgia’s de jure independence was acknowledged. In this capacity, Chkhenkeli was received by the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Curzon, on March 17, 1921, at the same time

when, on the night of March 17–18, the government of the First Democratic Republic of Georgia left the fallen and occupied country to go into exile abroad.

In Italy, the Democratic Republic of Georgia was represented by Konstantine Sabakhtarashvili; the embassy's first secretary was Giorgi Machabeli; the economic representative was Mikheil Qaukhchishvili; and the consul was Giorgi Apkhazi. Machabeli's contribution was significant in concluding beneficial financial and economic agreements with Italy.

Mikhako Tsereteli wrote about him: "Giorgi Machabeli entered diplomatic service as soon as his liberated homeland had its own diplomacy. Specifically, he first worked in Austria, and then became the consul and soon thereafter the diplomatic representative (ambassador) of independent Georgia in Italy. His work in Rome will remain invaluable and unforgettable in the history of our country's final period"⁵.

As for Georgia's representations in other countries around the world, Giorgi Guramisdze Sharadze, listing the ambassadors and representatives appointed abroad, names Andria Dekanozishvili, one of the contemporary leaders of the Socialist-Federalist Party, as Georgia's representative in Argentina⁶.

In many countries, opening diplomatic missions was hindered by the state's lack of funds. In this regard, the example of the Scandinavian countries is noteworthy. A state in

severe economic difficulty could not maintain its diplomatic missions. Initially, Mikhako Tsereteli was appointed as Georgia's representative in the Kingdom of Sweden in October 1918. For several months, Aristio Chumbadze also worked in the mission with him, and he soon became Georgia's representative in Sweden. He also tried, through his representation, to cover Norway. As it appears, for a certain period, Aristio Chumbadze also performed the functions of Georgia's representative in Denmark. At least, on December 15, 1918, Akaki Chkhenkeli wrote to the Georgian government that Konstantine Gvarjaladze had received the necessary consent from Denmark's Foreign Minister, noting: "Chumbadze will go there – that is, to Copenhagen"⁷.

Moreover, Chkhenkeli believed that Georgia should maintain its representation in the Scandinavian countries.

He wrote on October 17, 1919: "The Scandinavian states and our representation with them is an entirely positive matter, which I do not think is worth less than what is spent on the representative (2,000 francs per month)"⁸.

However, soon the Georgian government was forced to close its missions in the Scandinavian countries. This function was assigned to Georgia's ambassador in Germany, Vladimir Akhmeteli⁹.

However, soon the Georgian government was forced to close its missions in the Scandinavian countries. This function was assigned to Geor-

gia's ambassador in Germany, Vladimir Akhmeteli.

Switzerland did not recognize Georgia's independence, but a Georgian mission existed there, and a designated diplomatic representative, Mikheil Sumbatashvili, was active. His work was first based in Bern and later in Geneva. Sumbatashvili's special activity was connected with the League of Nations, which unfortunately did not end successfully. After the League of Nations refused to recognize Georgia, the government recalled Sumbatashvili from Switzerland – first to Britain, then to France, and finally back to Britain. It should also be noted that Vladimir Gurjidge served as the mission's first secretary, while Khariton Shavishvili represented the government before the League of Nations.

In Belgium, Georgia's representative was Anton Zhorzholiani, and the attaché was Alexandre Kutateladze.

In Manchuria, Harbin – Nikoloz Jishkariani.

In the United States – Ilia Goldman.

In Czechoslovakia – Giorgi Aiolo.

In addition, Georgia had economic representatives in Europe and America: Ioseb Eligulashvili, Nikoloz Jaqeli, Mate Skobelev, and Simon Shifrin¹⁰.

The First Republic of Georgia maintained particularly close relations with newly independent post-imperial states and had diplomatic missions of various levels in almost all of them.

Among neighboring countries, in the Republic of Azerbaijan, the first official representative of Georgia was

the Social Democrat Nikoloz Kartsivadze, who served briefly as Georgia's plenipotentiary ambassador. Kartsivadze was succeeded in the ambassadorial post by Grigol Alshibaya. His tenure lasted from 1919 until November 1920, after which Gabriel Khundadze took over in December. Throughout the three-year period, the position of Consul General was held by Levan Tumanishvili.

In the Ukrainian People's Republic, Georgia's ambassador from 1919 to 1921 was the Social Democrat Bictor Tevzaia. Apparently, his performance in this post did not satisfy Akaki Chkhenkeli. Tevzaia did not send sufficient information to Tbilisi about the political developments taking place in Ukraine. Moreover, he demonstrated wavering regarding the question of Georgia's independence. Chkhenkeli's patience was finally exhausted when the Georgian diplomatic representative attended some Russian unification conference. In November 1918, Chkhenkeli sent a letter to Tevzaia, accusing him of "betraying Georgia's interests". Indeed, there were also wavering elements among the Georgian Social Democrats. At least, Chkhenkeli held similar opinions about Irakli Tsereteli and Karlo Chkheidze.

In Poland, the diplomatic mission of the Democratic Republic of Georgia was headed by Giorgi Sidamon-Eristavi. The mission enjoyed the great patronage of the Polish authorities, as was fitting given the mutual solidarity between the Georgian and

Polish peoples. The mission included: secretary – Sergo Kurulishvili, and legation attaché – Nikoloz Feradze.

Foreign States' Representatives in Georgia

As for representatives of foreign states in Georgia, a probable list was published by the newspaper “Sakartvelos Respublika”, which listed those who congratulated the Chairman of the Georgian government, Noe Zhordania, on the de jure recognition of the country's independence. Specifically, the newspaper reported that:

“On February 6, at the palace, the following representatives of foreign states visited the Chairman of the Republic's government and congratulated him on the legal recognition of the Republic of Georgia:

1. The High Commissioner of Great Britain, Stkos (likely Stoks),
2. The High Commissioner of France, Chevalier,
3. France's military representative, Colonel Corbeil,
4. Representative of the German diplomatic corps, Rauscher,
5. Ambassador of Italy, Cerutti,
6. Consul of Italy, Franzoni,
7. Diplomatic representative of the RSFSR, Sheinman,
8. Representative of the American Relief Committee, Elverg,
9. [Number missing],
10. Representative of the Ottoman Grand National Assembly, Kiazim Bey,
11. Representative of the Republic of Poland, Ostrowski,

12. Vice-Consul of the Netherlands, von Allen Stein,
13. Consul of Norway, Sonlom,
14. Vice-Consul of Spain, Barsegian,
15. Representative of Greece, Skeferis,
16. Diplomatic representative of Finland, Colonel Berkvist,
17. Representative of the Czechoslovak National Council, Svatosh,
18. General Consul of Persia, Moda-Zet Dovleh,
19. Diplomatic representative of the Azerbaijani Soviet Republic, Najafov,
20. Diplomatic representative of the Armenian Soviet Republic, Shaverdov,
21. Diplomatic representative of Armenia, Katzen,
22. Consul of Estonia, Paul,
23. Consul of Latvia (likely Lithuania), Dailide,
24. Representative of the Assyrian Soviet Committee”¹¹.

According to this list, the Chairman of the Georgian government was congratulated on de jure independence by representatives of 19 foreign states. Among them, three states had two representatives each: France, Italy, and Armenia. In addition, the 9th number is missing from the list, and at the very end, it was the representative of the Assyrian “Council” who congratulated Georgia – not the “Soviet Council,” as written by Giorgi Sharadze on page 146 of his work.

For greater accuracy, below is a list of foreign state representatives compiled according to contemporary scholarly sources. Alongside this, we briefly note some of the foreign representatives who played an important

role in developing positive relations with Georgia, regardless of the fact that the First Georgian Republic ultimately ended poorly.

Ulrich Karl Paul Rauscher – Representative of the Weimar Republic (Germany) in Georgia, arrived in December 1920, and was present on January 8, 1921. A minor clarification is necessary here, as the reception of foreign representatives at the Tbilisi palace and the official congratulations took place on February 6. It is noteworthy that during the war waged by the Soviet occupiers, Rauscher “constantly stood alongside the democratic authorities of Georgia”¹². Prior to him, the German Empire’s Caucasian expedition had a diplomatic representative in Georgia, Count Friedrich Werner von Schulenburg (October 20, 1918), and a military representative, General Kressenstein. Before Rauscher’s arrival, the Weimar Republic’s representative was Count Driifer (1920).

Claude Bayfield Stokes – Arrived in Tbilisi in September 1920 as the British High Commissioner. Colonel Stokes was a pro-Georgian figure, which he reflected in reports sent to London. On arrival, he was met in Tbilisi by the future Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, who requested Britain’s support for Georgia. Before Colonel Stokes, the British High Commissioner was Sir John Oliver Wardrop¹³ (from August 1919 to spring 1920).

France’s High Commissioner in Georgia and the South Caucasus – Initially, this was Damien de Martel (February 1920). Before him, a tem-

porary French mission operated in the region. De Martel served as France’s High Commissioner in Transcaucasia for several months. Prior to him, the post was held by Colonel Chardin and then by de Noncour.

The new French commissioner to Georgia and the South Caucasus, Abel Chevalier, arrived in Georgia on December 2, 1920. It is important to emphasize the French diplomat’s friendly attitude and support for Georgia. Chevalier remained in Georgia until the days of the Soviet occupation, leaving the country only on March 13. “This is the murder of a small socialist country by Moscow communism,” Abel Chevalier wrote to the French Foreign Minister regarding the fall of the First Georgian Republic.

Compared to Great Britain, the other Entente powers played a smaller or secondary role in the Caucasus region. Nevertheless, France, Italy, and the United States – which joined the anti-German bloc the latest – had certain interests in Russia and the South Caucasus. President Wilson’s administration did not recognize the right of the South Caucasus states to independence except for Armenia. However, the U.S. High Commissioner, Colonel Haskell, considered it necessary, upon his arrival in Azerbaijan, to make clear that he would treat the Transcaucasian republics on an equal footing and was not solely focused on supporting Armenia. “I treat all the republics in the South Caucasus¹⁴ equally,” he

stated in Azerbaijan. "My goal is to prevent conflicts among the republics in the South Caucasus", Nevertheless, Haskell's position – which did not involve other notable support – could not counterbalance his and his country's pro-Armenian tendencies.

The U.S. consuls were replaced sequentially as follows: Felix Willoughby Smith (1918-1919); John Quimby Woody (May 1919); John Randolph (1919-1921); Charles Krath Mozier (1921).

Representatives of other states can be listed in alphabetical order:

- Argentina – Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Ambassador: Lucas Eiregeira.
- Belgium – Consul: Mellery.
- Spain – Representative, Vice-Consul: Barsegian.
- Kingdom of Italy – Envoy: Vittorio Cerutti (1920-1921), Military Representative: Colonel Gabba.
- Kingdom of the Netherlands – Consul: von Aldenstadt; Vice-Consul: von Allen Stein.
- Norway – Consul: Konrad Sundlo (1919-1920); Gurski.
- Ottoman Empire – Ambassador: Abdul Kerim Pasha (from September 3, 1918); Kiazim Bey (from November 13, 1920, until the occupation).
- Papal States / Representative of the Pope in Georgia – Bishop Gabriel Morionti.
- Greece – Consul: Manuilis Stefanos' son, Manuilidis; Skeferis (January 1921).
- Persia / Iran – General Consul: Zoka-ed-Dowleh; Taga Khan (1920).

- Finland – Representative in Georgia: Colonel Henrik Björkquist (1918-1921).

- Switzerland – Consul in Georgia: Berlemont.

- Czechoslovakia – Consul in Georgia: Jaroslav Svatosh (1918-1921).

Among the states that emerged on the territory of the former Russian monarchist empire, Georgia always had difficult relations with Soviet Russia and Armenia, which was also reflected in the activities of these countries' representatives in Georgia. The Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Diplomatic Representative of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, Sergey Kirov (May 29, 1920 – October 12, 1920), who was a personal friend of Stalin, was known for making statements that reflected a double standard toward Georgia. He was later succeeded by Aaron Sheinman (October 12, 1920-1921), who provided intelligence information to his government's agencies while simultaneously assuring Georgian leaders that in February 1921, Georgia faced no threat from Soviet Russia.

The ambassador of the Democratic Republic of Armenia was initially Arshak Jamalian (1918-1920). During the Armenia-Georgia conflict, the Georgian Minister of Foreign Affairs delivered a note of protest to him. After a brief representation by Evangulov in March 1920, Tigran Bekzadian was appointed as the Armenian ambassador to Georgia (April 1920 – November 1920).

Georgia's First Republic, in particular, maintained especially supportive relations with post-imperial independent republics: Poland, Ukraine, the Baltic states, and the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan.

The ambassadors of the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan, in succession, were Mamed Yusuf Jafarov (June 1918 – May 1919) and Faris Bey Vekilov (May 1919 – April 1920).

Václav Ostrowski¹⁵, son of Viktor, had already been Poland's representative in Georgia since 1918. It is clear that he sympathized strongly with independent Georgia; however, he was "forced not to take firm steps until the decision of the Supreme Allied Council". In March 1920, the Polish government appointed Titus Filipowicz as the head of the mission in the South Caucasus, to whom Ostrowski was to report. In 1921, Filipowicz was succeeded by Wiktor Białobrzeski. Successively, the representatives of the Ukrainian People's Republic in Georgia were: Oleksiy Kulynskyi (July 20, 1918 – November 1, 1918) and Lev Lesniak, from November 11, 1918, until the fall of the Democratic Republic of Georgia.

By May 26, 1918, the Regional Council of Lithuanians in the Caucasus was already functioning in Tbilisi. It congratulated the National Council of Georgia on the declaration of independence through a special resolution. The resolution was signed by the Chairman of the Lithuanian Regional Council in the Caucasus, F. I. Dailid. Frants Ivanovich Dailide,

also known as Pranas Dailid, was among those who congratulated the Chairman of the Georgian Government, Noe Zhordania, on de jure independence. At that time, Pranas Dailid was the head and consul of the Lithuanian Republic's representation in Georgia, which had been operating since August 30, 1918¹⁶. As noted above in a previous remark, in the February 10 issue of "Georgia's Republic", the congratulator was mistakenly listed as a representative of Latvia instead of Lithuania.

The consul of the second Baltic state, Estonia, in Georgia remained Johannes Kirkmann until December 1920. From December 1, 1920, he was succeeded by Sergei Paul, who was among those congratulating Georgia on the de jure recognition of its independence on February 6, 1921¹⁷. An excerpt from the congratulatory text of the Estonian diaspora to the Presidium of Georgia's Constituent Assembly reads: the Estonian community wishes Georgia "the best future and the strengthening of the freedom already achieved, while also expressing full confidence that the Georgian people will advance toward progress and civilization". The message further states: "This highly solemn day is all the more joyful for Estonians because Estonia also celebrates such a political victory today. Both liberated peoples move forward hand in hand toward the consolidation of their independence"¹⁸.

Georgia also hosted the consulate of the third Baltic state, the Republic of Latvia, which was opened in March 1920¹⁹. The first consul was

Oskars Bumanis, who served until June 5, 1920, and was succeeded by Jānis Purinš (until May 1921).

Conclusion

The materials presented in this article once again demonstrate that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs actively ensured and expanded the Democratic Republic of Georgia's relations with the outside world. Georgia's diplomatic missions abroad were composed of personnel with high levels of state responsibility.

Notes

- ¹ Akaki Chkhenkeli, *Diaries*, Volume One, 1918–1921, Edited by Zurab Gaiparashvili, Commentaries by T. Kakhetlidze, M. Bakhtadze, S. Chanturidze, D. Chumburidze, G. Javakhishvili, T. Khetashvili, TSU Publishing, 2021, p. 29.
- ² Lela Saralidze: “Konstantine Iagorisdze Gvarjaladze”, *Encyclopedia-Lexicon the Democratic Republic of Georgia*, 2018, p. 97.
- ³ Dodo Chumburidze, *Akaki Chkhenkeli – Statesman, Diplomat, Patriot*, “Universal”, 2018, p. 158.
- ⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 238.
- ⁵ Lela Saralidze, “Georgia’s Representation in Western European Countries”, *The Democratic Republic of Georgia. Encyclopedia-Lexicon*, Chief Editor: Dimitri Shvelidze, TSU Publishing, 2018, pp. 378–381.
- ⁶ Giorgi Sharadze, *The First Democratic Republic of Georgia and Foreign Policy*, Tbilisi, 2003, p. 251.
- ⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 155.
- ⁸ Dodo Chumburidze, *op.cit.*, p. 173.

During its brief period of independence, the Georgian government and political class managed to establish diplomatic relations of various ranks with several dozen foreign countries, both near and far. At the same time, the new Georgian state presented itself to the international community as a peaceful country with high democratic values and cultural standards, founded on interesting humanitarian principles – a state whose full potential, unfortunately, could not be fully realized.

- ⁹ I. Kv. E., p. 196.
- ¹⁰ Lela Saralidze: “Georgia’s Representation in the Scandinavian Countries”, *The Democratic Republic of Georgia. Encyclopedia-Lexicon*, p. 383.
- ¹¹ Lela Saralidze, “Recognition of Georgia’s Independence”, in *the encyclopedia-lexicon, mainly*, pp. 371–372.
- ¹² Sakartvelos Respublika [“The Republic of Georgia”], On the legal recognition of Georgia’s independence. Greetings, February 10, 1921.
- ¹³ Giorgi Astamadze, “Ulrich Rauscher”, *Encyclopedia-Lexicon*, p. 329.
- ¹⁴ Irakli Iremadze, “Claude Stokes”, *Encyclopedia-Lexicon*, pp. 419–420.
- ¹⁵ *Ibidem*.
- ¹⁶ Idem, “Ostrovsky Vaclav”, *Encyclopedia-Lexicon, op.cit.*
- ¹⁷ Nikolay Javakhishvili, *Essays on the History of Georgian-Baltic Relations*, Tbilisi, 2019, pp. 138–144.
- ¹⁸ *Ibidem*, Preface, p. 159.
- ¹⁹ “The Republic of Georgia”, “Greetings”, February 8, 1921.

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Real and Surreal in the First Anti-Soviet Film: Tengiz Abuladze's *Repentance*

Lela TSIPHURIA

Abstract: *Tengiz Abuladze's (1924-1994) film Repentance (1984) is still regarded as one of the most anti-Soviet films produced within the former Soviet Union. While Soviet censorship was still harsh in the years when the film was made, it was the first, not only in Georgia but in the whole USSR, to openly and critically address the issues of Soviet totalitarianism and the Great Purge.*

The article suggests viewing the film from multiple angles, recalling the facts and circumstances that affected its production, including political support and/or censorship, fatalities, and artistic difficulties. The article demonstrates how the film director, aiming to reconstruct and reflect on the real history of one of the most brutal periods of the recent past, seeks artistic forms and approaches that will represent reality also through surreal and phantasmagorical scenes. The decision to blend the aesthetic elements of realism and surrealism in the film can be seen as an emphasis on the dual nature of Soviet history: it was real, yet so unbelievably brutal and illogical that it acquired surreal features. This fusion made the story somewhat eclectic but allowed us to see it as timeless, a struggle between good and evil. Repentance was precisely the first cinematic victory in the battle against the 'empire of evil'.

Keywords: *Anti-Soviet, film, Abuladze, brutal, phantasmagorical.*

Introduction

Tengiz Abuladze's (1924-1994) film *Repentance* (1984) is still regarded as one of the most anti-Soviet films produced within the former Soviet Union. While Soviet censorship was still harsh in the years when the film was made, it was the first, not only in Georgia but in the whole USSR, to openly and critically address the issues of Soviet totalitarianism and the Great Purge. A more intense process of revealing the taboed moments of Soviet history and

reflecting on suppressed, unrepresented collective traumas related to them began in Georgian culture during the Perestroika (1985-1991) and, even more strongly, after the fall of the USSR in 1991, when Soviet ideological censorship was cancelled, and the dark side of Soviet history had to be understood. A large body of literary texts, films, public essays, and research works began to appear in Georgia, aiming to rethink Soviet reality. A little later, the independent Georgian state banned Soviet symbols (by law in 2011) and established

the Museum of Soviet Occupation (2006) to declare its stance on the Soviet past. However, Tengiz Abuladze's *Repentance* remains unsurpassed in Georgia and in former Soviet countries for both the sharpness of its civic position and its artistic quality.

Soviet Politics as a Supporter and/or Censor

At the beginning of the 1980s, labelled by Soviet propaganda as the period of 'developed Socialism', it would seem still very early to openly address such a ruthless and tabooed moment of Soviet history as the Great Purge. However, Georgian literature and film have been pushing the limits of representation for a couple of decades. In the background of these achievements, Tengiz Abuladze decided to speak out about the issues that, until then, had only been hinted at by Georgian writers, theatre directors, and film directors.

The film was made with the agreement of Eduard Shevardnadze (1928-2014), then the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Georgia. He, apparently, understood very well what influence a work of art – and most of all, a film – can have on society. From the very beginning of his party career, Shevardnadze established relations with Georgian cultural figures, supporting their projects within the limitations imposed by the Soviet centre, thereby building his own social capital. At that time, the young generation of Georgian filmmakers indeed benefited from this

attitude. Among them was young director Rezo Chkheidze (1926-2015), who was directing *The Soldier's Father* (1964) at Georgian Film [Kartuli Filmi, the only state-owned film studio in Georgian SSR], and Shevardnadze, then not a high-ranking party official, the head of the Tbilisi district where the film studio was located, personally took on the role of patron. Although the theme of the Great Patriotic War (as World War II was known in official Soviet discourse) was a high priority for Soviet propaganda, there were few Georgian films about it. *The Soldier's Father* turned out to be an award-winning film, acclaimed throughout the USSR. At the award ceremony in Moscow, Rezo Chkheidze spoke of the contribution of young party official Eduard Shevardnadze, and this became the beginning of Shevardnadze's career ascent. In the early 1980s, already serving as the head of the Georgian SSR, or the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia, Shevardnadze began to humanise his image, also by supporting various cultural initiatives and seeking contacts with Georgian cultural figures. He sought to make three major films – the first portraying the patriotically minded and dedicated Georgian party official, whose prototype would be himself (the film *Earth, This Is Your Son* (1980), directed by Rezo Chkheidze); the second about the Great Purge – Tengiz Abuladze's *Repentance*; and the third, unrealised, a film about the

most powerful medieval Georgian King David the Builder (1073-1125). The film scholar Giorgi Gvakharia wrote: "We should think that Shevardnadze knew — *Repentance* would help his rise as a politician... He felt what would happen in the country, so he found the film supportive of his goals - that after the premiere, Georgian society would mention him as a co-author of *Repentance*, as well as 'Perestroika,' and credit him for the collapse of the Communist system. In that sense, Georgia's then First Secretary of the Central Committee, who by the time of the premiere of *Repentance* was already the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR, was ahead of his time... unlike his colleagues, who from the beginning perceived *Repentance* as an anti-Soviet film"¹.

Despite Shevardnadze's patronage, Tengiz Abuladze was aware of the possibility that the film might never appear on screens, or that he and the production team might even be sent to the "den of the white bears," that is, to prison in Siberia. He often joked about this during the production process. Yet there was some truth in the joke. It is a known fact that the head of the Georgian KGB, Aleksii Inauri (1908-1993), reported to Moscow that Abuladze was making an anti-Soviet film. He even demanded the destruction of the filmed material. This happened after the dramatic and controversial events, the attempt of a small group of young Georgians to escape the USSR by aircraft hijacking (18-19

November 1983). After the challenge failed, the hijackers were imprisoned and soon executed. Gega Kobakhidze (1961-1984), a young actor initially playing the role of Tornike Aravidze, was among them. The premises of his house were searched, and the screenplay of the film was seized. Although many episodes of Tornike Aravidze's parts in Gega Kobakhidze's performance had already been filmed, he was, of course, unable to continue with the role. The young actor was outstanding in this role: great spiritual strength emanated from his presence; he was seen as a descendant of the Aravidzes, who was ready to take moral responsibility for the brutalities committed by fathers and grandfathers. It must be said that the film would have been entirely different with the participation of Gega Kobakhidze.

Preparing the Story to Tell

Private consultations concluded with an agreement on the themes of the films. There were many stories describing the cruelty of the repressions of the Purge. Tengiz Abuladze, together with the second director and co-author of the screenplay, Nana Janelidze (b. 1955), researched in detail the biographies of outstanding repressed figures of the Georgian intelligentsia — "Nana Janelidze met repressed people (or their relatives) and heard their stories. Nika Agiashvili, Nita Tabidze, Ketevan Javakhishvili, Lali Akhmeteli, Nino Uchaneshvili ... — these are just a

few of the people on whose personal histories this brilliant film was woven”². It should be noted that, in addition to meeting with descendants of the repressed, during the preparatory period, the film’s production team studied the press, literature, and posters of that time in detail. As an assistant of director, film’s crew member, I was personally responsible for this part.

The main intrigue, on which the film’s plot is built, is exhuming the corpse from its grave. This is the axis, the “intellectual skewer” of the film, as Tengiz Abuladze himself called it. “The film is based on a true story that happened in one of the villages in the Samegrelo region. Tengiz Abuladze was told this by his close friend Akaki Bakradze [literary scholar, 1928-1999]: writer Nodar Tsuleiskiri [1932-2015] has an interesting idea, and was told how a young man dug up the corpse of a deceased prosecutor, and placed it, watching over it, by the gate of the mourner. The young man’s father was an accountant. One KGB man made advances to his mother, sent his father into exile to the Gulag, and forced the mother into becoming his mistress. The insulted woman committed suicide. The boy grew up, and the KGB officer became a distinguished prosecutor; when he died, the young man took revenge by digging him up”³. The real story seemed more personal, but in the end, everything still came to the ugliness of the Soviet system — the use of power for evil goals, the Gulag, suicide, and exhu-

mation of the dead. In Abuladze’s film, unlike the real story, an impressive, generalised image of evil is created, in the form of the Aravidze family, which opposes and destroys all that is good and valuable, whether it be a historic medieval Georgian church or notable members of society. In the film, the Soviet official Varlam Aravidze is the one who does not deserve to be buried.

The film’s original title was *Memory*. The title of the novel by Nodar Tsuleiskiri was *Hyenas* [Aptrebi] (1985) and was considered as one version for the film’s title. The title *Repentance* belongs to the second director [now this position is called the first assistant] of the film, Neli Kutateladze. “The film’s vision is Orwellian, Varlam’s power is based on absurdity and ambiguity. The surrealism of his world is nothing other than the ambiguity of 1984”⁴.

Representing the Real, yet Surreal Soviet History

Together with the stories of their victims, the film tells the story of three generations of the Aravidze family: the grandfather, Varlam Aravidze, is the Soviet party official, responsible in Georgia for the exile and execution of innocent sufferers of the Great Purge – the most brutal repressions of the Soviet Stalinist totalitarian regime performed in 1936-1938 all over the Soviet state; his son, Abel Aravidze, is a respected and quite influential member of the Soviet, post-Stalin Georgian society,

who – like the whole society - never questioned the deeds of his father and his generation, and continued their living in an atmosphere of Soviet false values; the grandson, Tornike Aravidze, is a young man who was raised in complete ignorance about the recent past, but, when encountered with the story of the victims of the purge, desperately tries to take the responsibility critically, and, eventually, takes his own life. When generalized, Varlam Aravidze's character can be related to any dictator, foremostly, the central figure of Soviet totalitarianism, Joseph Stalin (1878-1953). Still, Varlam also carries clear features of Lavrenty Beria (1899-1953), Georgia's Communist leader and a hangman, personally responsible for the deaths and exiles of thousands of Georgians during the Purge⁵.

In the Georgian cinematography of the 1980s, as well as in literature and theatre, allegorical audio-visual storytelling was firmly established. The existence of a double layer in literature and film was obviously determined by Soviet censorship. In the screenplay of *Repentance*, based on a true story, the protagonist was intended to be a man seeking vengeance. During the preparatory period for filming, Tengiz Abuladze sought a form for the film — one that would convey the true story, but also allow for alternative interpretations and readings in case of necessity. Theatre director Robert Sturua (b. 1938) writes about *Repentance*: “The union of grotesque and the theatrical is bro-

ught to its maximum. It isn't easy to turn into an object of art that which is the theme of this film... I think Abuladze managed to unite an authorial, poetic cinema with real life, so that he did not entirely cross over to the other side. I look at life already through his eyes — this is his world, moreover, transferred into a somewhat poetic world by force. Through metaphors and strange comparisons, one can see psychological drama, lyrical scenes, farce, and grotesque elements. Everything was blended and never departed from real life”⁶.

The decision to blend the aesthetic elements of realism and surrealism in the film can be seen as an emphasis on the dual nature of Soviet history: it was real, yet so unbelievably brutal and illogical that it acquired surreal features.

The search for a surrealistic form began with a completely realistic alteration – the vengeance-seeking protagonist, Ketevan Baratelli, a daughter of the artist and the victim of the Purge, Sandro Barateli, was portrayed as an eccentric confectioner; she learns the news of Varlam Aravidze's death through a newspaper announcement read by the character of the driver, played by Georgian film director Rezo Esadze (1934-2020); throughout that episode, he ravenously eats the creamy models of the churches placed on top of the cakes baked by Ketevan. It is here that two connotative layers interact — the real and the phantasmagorical. The beginning and the finale of the film are built on the principle of a

classical tragedy. The whole course of the film can be taken on one hand as a true story and on the other as Ketevan Barateli's fantasy. The tragedy that unfolds could be taken as a dream. Thus, the film, a fusion of real and phantasmagorical, was born. Gogi Mikeladze (b. 1946), the film's production designer, has a boundless imagination, inventiveness, and taste, which permitted Tengiz Abuladze to unite apparently incompatible details in a single whole. One of the episodes of the film depicts iron-armoured knights, some on horseback and some in vintage Mercedes cabriolets, searching for artist Sandro Barateli (Edisher Giorgobiani, b. 1955) buried alive; his wife Nino (Ketevan Abuladze, b. 1959) is also desperately looking for him; a white-shirted peasant turns out to be a betrayer; victorious Varlam Aravidze (Avtandil Makharadze, 1943-1987) sings an aria of Mephistopheles; and all these appear to be Nino's dream. In a dream, you know, everything is compatible.

The film's cinematographer, Mikhail Agranovich, wrote: "A good director is someone who has idiotic ideas come to his head. Ideas that seem ridiculous to a discerning and rational person. Then it turns out the film stands precisely on that. That is, a masterpiece is often founded on idiotic ideas... To this day, I still dislike the white grand piano episode in *Repentance*. But in the end, such ideas win and the films are built on them, just like Fellini's pictures, which are built on icons and archetypes. Tengiz had only these types of

ideas come into his head. I recall a group of young people on set who were constantly carving out something new, inventing. And Tengiz collected the most exact ideas from them. As it turns out, it is very exact. Yet *Repentance* is characterised by a certain eclecticism, unlike the preceding two films, which are stylistically amazingly precise and cohesive"⁷.

The Director and the Crew

Tengiz Abuladze's special attitude toward the creative group's members is also noteworthy: he always took every valuable idea into account. He used to say "our film" and never referred to it as "mine." By this, the director constantly emphasised the importance of every role in the filmmaking process. It must be said that the creative group was indeed extremely devoted throughout the film-making process. I was fortunate to be part of the film crew, as the director's assistant, alongside young members, including future film directors Zaza Khalvashi (1957-2020) and Paata Milorava (1959-2014), as well as Gocha Abashidze, Tzitsi Jervalidze, and others.

After the director had to replace Gega Kobakhidze, the role of Tornike Aravidze was given to young Merab Ninidze (b. 1965), then still a student of the Institute of Theatre and Film, Tbilisi, who grew into one of today's most successful and internationally established Georgian actors. He recalls getting into *Repentance* as follows: "It is strange that my story,

and the beginning of the film, resemble each other — I too read in a newspaper about the audition for the role of Tornike. The newspaper reported that, for certain reasons, director Tengiz Abuladze had to replace the actor mid-way through filming and is now announcing a competition to select a new actor. That was it, without any additional information or explanation of reasons. Very soon, Abuladze's assistants came to the Institute to find candidates for the role. At that time, I was already a second-year student. Nino Tarkhan-Mouravi suggested to Malkhaz Aslamazishvili and Lela Tsiphuria that I also go through auditions. Indeed, I was called and I went"⁸.

Mikhail Agranovich was the third cinematographer whom Tengiz Abuladze hired for the film. The filming was started by Giorgi Gersamia (b. 1939). Unfortunately, the material shot with an old Soviet camera, Konvas, due to its insufficiency, was technically flawed. Solomon Shengelia, a cameraman from Batumi with an exciting vision, replaced Gersamia. Many shots he filmed made it into the film: the rally scene; Varlam Aravidze's madness scene, when, in a white shirt, in the closed circle of the bunker, he attempts to eclipse the sun; the dance of Varlam's daughter-in-law (Ia Ninidze, b. 1960) around Varlam's coffin, and others. Solomon Shengelia, as a cameraman for film chronicles, was most successful while filming outdoors, where he did not use artificial lighting. While interiors, where setting up lighting was crucial,

were an unconquerable difficulty. For consultation, Tengiz Abuladze brought two cinematographers, Lomer Akhvlediani and Alexander (Kukuri) Gvasalia, to Batumi, as a significant part of the film was shot there. Tengiz Abuladze had worked with Lomer Akhvlediani (1934-2022) on the previous, award-winning film *The Wishing Tree* (1977) and was eager to cooperate with him again on *Repentance*. Still, Lomer Akhvlediani was busy making Rezo Chkheidze's film from Shevardnadze's project *Earth, This Is Your Son*. Another candidate for the role of cinematographer was Alexander Antipenko (b. 1938), with whom Abuladze had cooperated on his film *The Plea* (1967), but he was busy with another film too. Finally, Mikhail Agranovich arrived from Moscow with the dream film camera, a reflex, and the shootings continued with Kodak as well. It can be said that due to these consequences, the tragic fate of Gega Kobakhidze, and technical problems, filming was done virtually three times.

Avtandil (Avto) Makharadze, the actor playing the roles of both Varlam and Abel Aravidze, wrote: "Tengiz often repeated one phrase — 'art is creation of harmony from chaos.' Why did he say that? Because his creation was that, from chaos he created harmony. He could take from a hundred words the one word that was most important for him. Tengiz took only what was necessary for his particular work - not just for the film, but even for a single scene or a single frame. Only he did this with astonis-

hing lightness, and you would not guess how many things he was interested in things people told him or those happening around him”⁹.

The Trilogy

Repentance was intended as the third part of a trilogy, together with *The Plea* and *The Wishing Tree*. Tengiz Abuladze planned to incorporate the characters from his two previous films. The beautiful Georgian actress Lika Kavjaradze (1959-2017) was invited to Batumi, and the episode replicating her famous scene from *The Wishing Tree* was even shot, as she lies dying, dirtied with mud, humiliated. She would symbolise the victim of the Purge, the beauty smeared in mud, insulted and degraded. However, this episode did not make it into the film.

Another character from *The Wishing Tree*, Pupala (Sopiko Chiaureli, 1937-2008), was to be transferred into *Repentance*. Tengiz Abuladze contacted the actress and offered to transform her into an aged Pupala with the help of sophisticated makeup. Sopiko Chiaureli's answer was a counterproposal — her mother, the famous Georgian actress Veriko Anjaparidze (1897-1987), should be filmed instead, while the resemblance with the younger character from the previous film was also achieved through the outfit. Ultimately, it was decided so. The episode featuring

Veriko Anjaparidze was filmed in front of her house, located on what is now Veriko Anjaparidze Street in Tbilisi. However, the final walk of ‘Pupala’ into the depths of the city’s streets was performed by a stunt. Since the makeup was mentioned, it is inevitable to note the contribution of makeup artist Soso Barnabishvili to the filmmaking process. The portrait transformations of Varlam and Abel are also a testament to his mastery.

Conclusion: Good and Evil

The Plea, *The Wishing Tree*, and *Repentance* form a trilogy, which can be called so only because of its conceptual unity: the eternal struggle between good and evil. Tengiz Abuladze noted in one of his interviews: “Our – and not only our – greatest mistake of any time, the fateful sin is that a huge part of society perceives the difference between evil and good in comparative terms, whereas in reality this difference is absolute.” *Repentance* was precisely the first cinematic victory in the battle against the ‘empire of evil’, the USSR, and remained so even in the 21st century. Huge success followed the film’s release, which happened only after a two-year imprisonment ‘on the shelf’ by Moscow’s censorship. In 1986, its rise began. *Repentance* remains the most artistically elevated anti-Soviet film.

Notes

- ¹ Goiorgi Gvakharia, “Tengiz Abuladze – 80 (Part Two)”, *Radio Liberty*, March 1, 2004 (in Georgian) <https://www.radiotavisupleba.ge/a/1533940.html> (accessed October 23, 2025) (All citations from Georgian are made by the author of the article).
- ² Tamar Otiashvili, “Repentance – The Film Tengiz Abuladze ‘Returned from the Afterlife’ to Shoot”, *Nostal.ge*, August 14, 2018 (in Georgian) <https://nostal.ge/2018/08/14/monanie-ba-filmi> (accessed October 23, 2025).
- ³ *Ibidem*.
- ⁴ Gogi Gunia, “1984 in Cinema”, *Digital Culture*, October 19, 2013 (in Georgian) <https://digitalculture.ge/1984kinoshi/> (accessed October 23, 2025).
- ⁵ On the Great Purge and Beria’s role, see: Donald Rayfield, *Stalin and His*

Hangmen: The Tyrant and Those Who Killed for Him, Random House, New York, 2005.

- ⁶ Robert Sturua, “About Tengiz Abuladze”, In Tengiz Abuladze, *Reflections*, (Eds. Nana Janelidze and Nino Natroshvili), Cezanne Publishing, Tbilisi, 2009 (in Georgian) pp. 48-49.
- ⁷ Mikhail Agranovich, “On Tengiz Abuladze”, In Tengiz Abuladze. *Reflections*, (Eds. Nana Janelidze and Nino Natroshvili), Cezanne Publishing, Tbilisi, 2009, p. 210 (in Georgian).
- ⁸ Merab Ninidze, *The Main Thing Is Not to Become an Actor*, Intelekti, Tbilisi, 2015, p. 34 (in Georgian)
- ⁹ Avtandil Makharadze. “Tengiz Abuladze”. In: Tengiz Abuladze. *Reflections*. Eds. Nana Janelidze and Nino Natroshvili. Cezanne Publishing, Tbilisi, 2009, p. 206-207 (in Georgian).

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Contemporary Trends in the Georgian Economy

Avtandil SILAGADZE

Abstract: *The paper explores key contemporary trends in the Georgian economy. Specifically, it examines economic growth, the current state of various economic sectors, employment and unemployment dynamics, foreign investment flows, trade-related challenges, international reserves, external public debt, remittance patterns, inflation, poverty, and other relevant issues. According to the study's conclusion, the Georgian economy in the post-pandemic period is marked by a positive growth trajectory. More specifically, the following trends have been identified: the overall GDP volume – particularly in the tourism sector – has nearly returned to pre-pandemic levels; GDP per capita has risen sharply; employment has increased, including in the private sector, though not substantially; inflation has declined; absolute poverty has decreased; and unemployment has dropped significantly. Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has remained relatively stable, primarily due to reinvestment. Remittances continue to play a vital role in supporting the population. Exports of goods (largely driven by re-exports), trade turnover, trade in services, and the traditionally problematic trade deficit have all increased. The ratio of external public debt to nominal GDP has declined, and international reserves have grown. The national currency exchange rate remains stable. Looking ahead, key challenges for the Georgian economy include sustaining high economic growth; boosting investment in the real sector and generating new employment opportunities; enhancing the production of competitive domestic goods; promoting exports and import-substituting industries; expanding and diversifying export markets; further reducing poverty and unemployment; maintaining low inflation and currency stability; and strengthening mutually beneficial relations with neighboring countries, particularly the European Union.*

Keywords: *Economy, tourism, FDI, GEL, unemployment.*

Introduction

Georgia was an independent democratic republic from 1918 to 1921, a period marked by promising institutional reforms that were ultimately left unfinished due to the country's forcible incorporation into the Soviet administrative system.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, and amid a challenging political and economic environment, Georgia regained its independence.

In the development of a market economy in Georgia, five conditional stages can be distinguished.

The first stage (1991-1995) marked the initial construction of an independent economy, progressing at a relatively rapid pace. This period was characterized by the collapse of the planned economy, disruption of supply chains, cessation of centralized financing, hyperinflation, and the complex formation of new institutional structures – amid civil war, territorial conflicts, and a severe energy crisis. As a result, Georgia's gross domestic product (GDP) declined by 60.3% between 1991 and 1994. During this time, close cooperation with international financial organizations began.

The second stage (1995-2003) was defined by relative stabilization of the Georgian economy. Economic conditions began to improve, and effective steps were taken toward market reforms. Key developments included monetary reform – the introduction of the national currency, the Georgian Lari (GEL), on September 25, 1995 – cessation of hyperinflation, the establishment of an independent two-tier banking system, price liberalization, large-scale property transformation, the creation of independent economic institutions, and the laying of foundations for macroeconomic stabilization. GDP growth reached 11.2% in 1996 compared to the previous year, one of the highest indicators since independence. During this period, groundwork was laid for the construction of international transit oil and gas pipelines and highways across Georgian territory. However, the Asian financial crisis of 1998 and a slowdown in reform momen-

tum led to a decline in economic growth to 2.9% in 1999, followed by a change in government.

The third stage (2004-2012) followed the “Rose Revolution” and was marked by deregulatory and anti-corruption measures, which were unfortunately often accompanied by aggressive encroachments on property rights. This stage saw a significant inflow of foreign direct investment in 2007 and high economic growth, peaking at 12.6%. However, the global financial crisis and the war with Russia led to a sharp economic contraction, with GDP falling by 3.7% in 2009.

The fourth stage (2013-2020) began after another change in government. Economic growth during this period fluctuated between 5.1% and 5.4%, but was severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in a contraction of -6.3% in 2020. Regional risks also intensified. Overall, the pandemic sharply curtailed economic activity and employment – particularly in the tourism sector – and led to increased spending on social programs¹.

The fifth stage of economic reforms (2021–present) is the focus of this paper, which aims to examine the key trends shaping the Georgian economy.

Literature Review

The scientific literature on Georgia's economic development trends situates this phenomenon within the broader context of post-Soviet socio-economic fluctuations. Tamar Atanelishvili² has examined the re-

forms undertaken by the Democratic Republic of Georgia (1918-1921) across the agrarian, trade, and industrial sectors, as well as the establishment of key institutional bodies – including the State Bank of Georgia, the customs administration, the State Control Institute, the Statistical Service, and the Economic Council. Her work also addresses the challenges posed by the circulation of various monetary units, including the Georgian “bon.”

The reforms implemented in the Georgian economy during the 1990s – covering stages of transition, the role of the state, macroeconomic stabilization, institutional restructuring, privatization, financial and monetary systems, labor market dynamics, poverty, and foreign economic relations – are analyzed in the work of Temur Basilia, Avtandil Silagadze, and Tamaz Chikvaidze³.

Vladimer Papava⁴ explores both theoretical and applied aspects of macroeconomics during Georgia’s post-communist transition, with particular attention to the achievements and shortcomings of the International Monetary Fund’s activities in the country.

The prospects for Georgia’s socio-economic development through 2030, including the challenges of fostering conditions conducive to industrial and agricultural growth, are discussed in the work of Aleksandre Tvalchrelidze, Avtandil Silagadze, and colleagues⁵.

Labor emigration has had a significant impact on Georgia’s demographic and economic development. Remittances from emigrant workers

contribute to mitigating demographic challenges and fostering economic growth⁶. The complexities surrounding remittance flows in Georgia are also explored in the work of Elguja Mekvabishvili and Tamar Atanelishvili⁷.

The liberal economic doctrines dominant in the late 1920s proved insufficient to prevent the severe consequences of the Great Depression, prompting a shift toward a new paradigm – strengthening the role of the state in economic affairs. The COVID-19 pandemic has once again brought renewed attention to the importance of state involvement in the economy⁸.

Post-Soviet countries, including Georgia, continue to face challenges related to reform implementation, resource constraints, and integration into the European Union. Nonetheless, some have begun to make tangible progress in areas such as energy transformation, digital development, and regional cooperation⁹.

This body of literature offers valuable insights into the reforms undertaken in independent Georgia. Building on this foundation, the present paper examines emerging economic realities and current trends in the country’s development.

Methodology

The research methodology draws upon data and guidance from authoritative sources, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the United Nations (UN), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the National Statistics Office of

Georgia (Geostat), the National Bank of Georgia (NBG), and the Georgian Ministries of Economy, Finance, and Agriculture. It also incorporates materials from the World Bank and other relevant statistical and policy documents, alongside the works of prominent economists addressing the research topic. The study employs a combination of data collection, analytical, and comparative methods.

Contents

Georgia’s modern economic development has been marked by several notable trends, among which we have analyzed key issues.

Dynamics and Structure of Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

In recent years, the scale of the Georgian economy has expanded significantly. In 2024, the country’s

real gross domestic product (GDP) reached \$33.8 billion, while GDP at purchasing power parity (PPP, current international \$) stood at \$104.4 billion – representing a 79% increase compared to the corresponding figure in 2021¹⁰.

This expansion was strongly influenced by rising domestic investment, particularly state-led infrastructure projects. Additionally, economic growth was largely driven by advancements in the service sector. When dividing GDP into two broad categories – the “real” sector (agriculture, industry, construction) and the “service” sector (trade, real estate, transport, communications, financial services, tourism, etc.) – the latter accounted for approximately 65% of Georgia’s GDP in 2024. Nevertheless, the agriculture, industry, and construction sectors also contributed meaningfully to economic growth, albeit to a lesser extent (see Table 1).

Table 1. Structure of GDP (%) in Georgia

	2021	2022	2023	2024
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	8.3	7.6	6.9	6.2
Industry	16.9	16.5	14.1	13.5
Construction	7.3	8.0	7.6	8.4
Trade	15.4	15.1	16.0	15.2
Real estate	9.8	9.7	10.6	9.9
Other branches	42.3	43.0	44.8	46.9

Source: <https://www.geostat.ge/media/71257> 21.10.2025

High economic growth is, by its nature, a reflection of progress across economic sectors. According to data from Geostat¹¹, the largest

contributions to the sectoral structure of GDP were made by wholesale and retail trade (15.2%), repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles

(15.2%), real estate activities (9.9%), manufacturing (9.3%; down from 19.6% in 2023), construction (8.4%), public administration and defense including compulsory social security (7.0%), information and communication (6.4%), agriculture, forestry and fishing (6.2%), transport and storage (5.9%), education (5.7%), and financial and insurance activities (5.2%). A notable exception to this upward trend was the electricity, gas, steam, and air conditioning supply sector, which experienced a decline of 8.3% in 2024. This downturn is likely attributable to hydrological conditions, shifts in export-import structures, changes in domestic consumption, or broader fluctuations in economic activity.

Despite the progress achieved, Georgia must accelerate the development of its real economy – particularly in industry and agriculture. The country continues to underutilize its industrial and agricultural potential. With targeted government support, these sectors could significantly reduce import dependency and generate tens of thousands of new jobs¹². Such a strategy would also contribute to a substantial reduction in emigration flows.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture of Georgia (<https://1tv.ge/news/soflis-meurne-obis-saministro-2024/>, 21.10.2025), agri-food products accounted for 26% of the country's total exports in 2024, reaching 107 international markets. The leading export items included wine

(\$276 million), alcoholic beverages (\$186 million), mineral and fresh waters (\$163 million), non-alcoholic carbonated drinks (\$139.1 million), and nut crops (\$106.2 million), among others. Georgia's primary export destinations for agri-food products were Russia, the European Union, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan.

Despite this export performance, domestic agricultural production remains insufficient to meet internal demand. Georgian agricultural products often lack competitiveness and productivity, hindered by chronic underinvestment, land fragmentation, outdated equipment, and low yields. Consequently, the country's self-sufficiency in agri-food products remains low – approximately 40% – while reliance on imports is substantial. The range of imported agricultural and related products is broad and includes:

a) **Basic foodstuffs and raw materials** – cereals and cereal products (e.g., wheat, wheat flour), fats and oils, sugar and confectionery, alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages (e.g., spirits, beer, coffee);

b) **Animal-origin products** – meat, dairy products, fish, eggs;

c) **Other agri-food items** – tobacco products, various food additives, animal feed, nut crops, live plants, and seedlings.

Although the volume of Georgian agri-food exports has increased, the country remains heavily oriented toward food imports. As a result, the share of imported products in do-

mestic consumption remains significantly high.

Among the various sectors of the economy, tourism warrants particular attention. Georgia is a highly attractive destination, and tourism serves as a vital source of employment and income. In 2024, tourism-related sectors accounted for 7.3% of GDP (compared to 7.2% in 2022), while the number of international visits reached 6.5 million – 78.8% of which were classified as tourist visits. This represents a 4.6% increase over the corresponding figure in 2023. The largest share of visitors originated from the Russian Federation (22.4%), Turkey (19.0%), and Armenia (12.7%) (geostat.ge, 20.10.2025).

It is worth noting that leading global economies do not typically prioritize tourism as a central pillar of economic development. In contrast, countries that have adopted tourism as a primary economic strategy often face heightened vulnerability during global crises – such as

the financial downturn or the COVID-19 pandemic – and risk economic default. In the absence of viable alternatives, such dependence can lead to systemic collapse¹³.

**Economic Growth
and GDP per Capita**

The expansion of Georgia’s economy has been propelled by sustained high growth trends. Notably, the post-pandemic period witnessed robust economic performance, with Georgia recording some of its highest growth rates. In the context of ongoing geopolitical and global challenges, these figures reflect the country’s resilience to external shocks. International institutions forecast continued strong growth for Georgia over the next five years. Current GDP growth rates already surpass those of many other countries, underscoring Georgia’s competitive economic trajectory (see Table 2).

Table 2. GDP growth (annual %)

		2021	2022	2023	2024
Georgia		10.6	11.0	7.8	9.4
Moldova		13.9	- 4.6	1.2	0.1
Armenia		5.8	12.6	8.3	5.9
Azerbaijan		5.6	4.7	1.4	4.1
Poland		6.9	5.3	0.2	2.9

Computed
from:<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG>,accessed
18.10.2025.

In recent years, Georgia has experienced robust economic growth, driven by increased domestic output and the diversification of foreign markets. This upward trajectory is also reflected in the dynamics of GDP per capita, which has shown a

marked growth trend. In 2024, Georgia's GDP per capita reached \$9,191 (or \$28,418 in purchasing power parity terms), surpassing the corresponding figures for Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Moldova (see Table 3).

Table 3. GDP per Capita in Georgia, 2021–2024

	2021	2022	2023	2024
GDP per capita (current US\$)	5 084	6 730	8 284	9 194
GDP, PPP (current international \$)	18 916	22 461	25 072	28 418

Source: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.PP.CD?locations=GE>, accessed 21.10.2025.

In recent years, Georgia has recorded a substantial increase in GDP per capita – rising by 81% – driven by several key factors. These include sustained real economic growth, the strengthening of the national currency (the lari), rising employment and wage levels, and the continued development of core economic sectors.

Employment and Unemployment, Inflation and Poverty

Employment and Unemployment. Between 2021 and 2024, the total number of employed individuals in Georgia increased by 15%, including a 7% rise in employment within the business sector. Over the same period, the national unemployment rate declined from 20.6% in 2021 to 13.9% in 2024. However, unemployment remains particularly high among young people aged 18–24¹⁴. Persistent job shortages and

inadequate wages continue to drive emigration, as many citizens seek better employment opportunities abroad.

Inflation and Poverty. In the immediate post-pandemic years, Georgia experienced elevated inflation rates – 9.6% in 2021 and 11.9% in 2022 – driven by a combination of global and regional factors. These included disruptions in global supply chains, a sharp rise in food prices, and the inflationary effects of the Russia–Ukraine war, which led to increased energy and food costs. Additionally, the influx of migrants from Russia and Ukraine heightened domestic demand, while a record surge in remittances from Russia contributed to the appreciation of the Georgian lari, raising the cost of imported goods. By 2023, inflation had moderated to 2.5%, largely due to tighter monetary policy and the gradual restoration of supply chains. In 2024, inflation further declined to

1.1%, falling below the National Bank of Georgia’s target rate of 3%¹⁵.

The recent sharp decline in inflation in Georgia has been primarily driven by the following factors: the weakening of external pressures (including the normalization of commodity prices), the tight monetary policy implemented by the National Bank of Georgia, and the stabilizing effect of a relatively steady exchange rate.

Poverty levels – defined as the proportion of the population living below the poverty line –represent a key socio-economic indicator closely linked to the broader macroeconomic environment. In Georgia, the share of the population living below the absolute poverty line has decreased significantly, from 17.6% in 2021 to 9.4% as of the latest data¹⁶.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)and Remittances

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) remains one of the most important drivers of Georgia’s economic development. It plays a key role in attracting capital, fostering technological advancement, creating jobs, in-

creasing capital stock, and supporting the stability of the national currency exchange rate. In recent years, the inflow of FDI to Georgia has shown volatility. However, the volume of reinvestments – exempt from taxation – and government investments in infrastructure projects has increased, contributing positively to the national economy.

FDI rose by 24.1% in 2024 compared to 2021, although similar indicators were higher in the two preceding years¹⁷. A significant portion of FDI consists of reinvested earnings, which are not subject to taxation. The largest share of foreign direct investment (FDI) in Georgia this year was directed toward the finance and insurance sector (56.4%), followed by real estate (11.4%), energy (9.4%), transport (7.2%), and manufacturing (7.2%). In contrast, investment in agriculture declined. The leading investor countries were the United Kingdom, Turkey, the Czech Republic, and the United Arab Emirates. The share of EU countries in total FDI stood at 28.2%, down from 35% in 2023, while FDI accounted for 4.0% of Georgia’s GDP (see Table 4).

Table 4. Foreign Direct Investment, net inflows (% of GDP)

	2021	2022	2023	2024
Georgia	6.7	9.2	6.8	4.0
Armenia	2.6	5.0	2.5	0.5
Azerbaijan	-3.1	-5.7	0.3	0.3
Moldova	2.8	4.0	2.1	1.8

Source: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.KLT.DINV.WD.GD.ZS>, accessed 25.10.2025

In recent years, foreign direct investment (FDI) in Georgia has exhibited fluctuating dynamics. A substantial portion of FDI consists of reinvested earnings, while the share of EU countries remains significant. Only a small fraction of these investments has flowed into agriculture, although state investment in infrastructure projects has notably increased.

Remittances. Personal remittances received in Georgia are substantial, amounting to \$4.06 billion – equivalent to 12% of GDP. This figure compares to 13.7% in 2023, 15.4% in 2022, and 14% in 2021. For comparison, remittances as a share of GDP in the same year were 10.5% in Moldova, 5% in Armenia, and 1.8% in Azerbaijan¹⁸.

The scale of remittances highlights Georgia's considerable dependence on income sent by emigrants, which is primarily used for household consumption. Although remittances are not a newly generated domestic product and are not directly included in GDP calculations, they exert a significant indirect impact. When households spend remittance income on goods and services, it stimulates economic activity. If remittances are channeled into investments, they are directly reflected in GDP.

Foreign Trade, Foreign Debt, and International Reserves

Foreign trade. One of the defining features of Georgia's economy is

its persistent trade deficit, which underscores the need to promote exports, substitute imports, and fully leverage free trade agreements such as the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) with the European Union. Despite this challenge, Georgia's foreign trade has shown a clear upward trend: between 2021 and 2024, exports of goods increased by 35%, imports by 67%, total trade turnover by 39%, the trade deficit widened by 44.1%, and trade in services grew 2.8 times between 2021 and 2023.

In the current period, Georgia's major export goods include cars (38.9% of which are re-exported to neighboring countries), precious metals and concentrates (5.4%), alcoholic beverages (3.9%), natural grape wines (3.7%), and ferroalloys (3.0%). The leading export destinations are Kyrgyzstan (33.7%), Kazakhstan (20.6%), Russia (17.0%), and Azerbaijan (16.6%). European Union countries account for 11.9% of Georgia's total exports and 25.1% of its imports. The main import partners during the same period are the United States (15.4%), Turkey (15.1%), China (10.7%), Russia (10.1%), and Germany (6.7%)¹⁹.

Reducing Georgia's chronic trade deficit remains one of the country's key economic challenges. Addressing this issue requires a sound economic policy that promotes diversified exports of domestically competitive products, encourages import substitution, strengthens the use of local infra-

structure and transit potential, enhances macroeconomic stability, and attracts foreign investment.

External debt. The dynamics of Georgia's state external debt between 2021 and 2025 have been relatively stable. The ratio of external public debt (in US dollars) to nominal GDP declined to 36.7% in the first quarter of 2025, down from 51.4% in 2021 and 36.7% in 2024. This improvement is largely attributed to robust economic growth and the appreciation of the national currency, the lari. Georgia's external debt is primarily sourced from multilateral creditors – including the Asian Development Bank, European Investment Bank, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund – as well as bilateral partners such as France, Germany, and Japan²⁰.

Georgia's public external debt has shown a declining trend relative to nominal GDP, reflecting improved macroeconomic conditions.

International reserves. International reserves managed by the National Bank of Georgia, have experienced notable growth between 2021 and 2025 – driven by rapid economic expansion, foreign exchange inflows, and central bank interventions. These reserves, composed primarily of foreign currency and supplemented by 7 tons of gold purchased since 2024, increased by 27% in 2025 compared to 2021²¹.

Overall, Georgia's external sector is marked by an expanding foreign trade balance – including growth in exports, imports, and the

trade deficit – a consistently high volume of remittances, a declining ratio of public external debt to GDP, and a rising trend in international reserves.

Conclusion

In the post-pandemic period, the Georgian economy has shown a steady growth trend, with GDP expanding across nearly all service and real sectors – tourism has nearly returned to pre-pandemic levels, and GDP per capita has risen sharply. Employment has increased modestly, particularly in the private sector, while inflation has declined and the absolute poverty rate has improved. The unemployment rate has dropped significantly, and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has remained relatively stable due to reinvestment, with EU countries contributing a substantial share. Only a small portion of FDI flows into agriculture, while a significant part of the population relies on remittances from emigrants. Exports of goods – largely driven by re-exports – along with trade turnover, the trade deficit, and trade in services have all increased. The ratio of external public debt to nominal GDP has decreased, international reserves have grown, and the national currency exchange rate has remained stable.

The future challenges facing Georgia's economy include sustaining high economic growth, increasing investment in the real sector, and generating new employment oppor-

tunities. Key priorities involve attracting foreign investment, boosting the production of competitive domestic goods – particularly to meet internal demand – and promoting the development of export-oriented and import-substituting products. Expanding and diversifying export markets, making fuller use of domestic resources, and establishing an effective employment system are essential for further reducing pov-

erty and unemployment. Maintaining low inflation and a stable national currency remains critical, alongside fostering the emergence of regional financial markets and centers. Strengthening mutually beneficial relations with neighboring countries – especially with the European Union and other international partners – will also be vital to long-term economic resilience and integration.

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Ideological Foundations of Russian Aggression in Georgia (August 2008)

Tengiz PKHALADZE

Abstract: *The August 2008 Russian military aggression against Georgia constitutes a landmark episode in the post-Soviet international order, marking the first open, large-scale use of the Russian Federation's regular armed forces beyond national borders for offensive military purposes and resulting in the illegal occupation of parts of neighbouring country's internationally recognised territory. Beyond its immediate military and diplomatic consequences, this aggression illuminated the deeper ideological and civilizational assumptions shaping contemporary Russian foreign policy.*

The article examines how Eurasianism, understood both as a long-standing intellectual tradition and as a modern political discourse, provided a framework through which Russian political elites interpreted Georgia, the Caucasus, and Russia's regional role. Tracing the genealogy of Eurasianist thought from classical authors to late-Soviet and post-Soviet reinterpretations, the article demonstrates how the Caucasus has been constructed as the "southern gate" of Eurasia and as a civilizational boundary zone whose loss, from a Russian perspective, would threaten the integrity of a Eurasian whole.

Within this ideological imaginary, Georgia's post-Soviet political transformation and European orientation were not perceived merely as a foreign policy divergence, but as a challenge to Russia's civilizational self-conception. The article argues that the 2008 aggression translated Eurasianist narratives into concrete political practice through discursive legitimization, spatial re-imagination, and symbolic restoration. In this sense, the Georgian case anticipated the later Russian annexation of Crimea (2014) and large-scale military intervention in Ukraine (from 2022), where civilizational geopolitics has similarly been mobilised to justify territorial domination.

Keywords: *Russia; Georgia; aggression; Eurasianism; critical geopolitics.*

Introduction

The August 2008 Russian aggression against Georgia marked a turning point in the post-Cold War European security order. It represented the

first openly acknowledged, large-scale use of Russian regular armed forces beyond national borders for offensive military purposes, rather than peacekeeping operations or indirect intervention through proxies.

Unlike earlier post-Soviet engagements framed as peacekeeping missions or conducted through paramilitary and proxy actors, the August 2008 aggression involved the open and large-scale deployment of the Russian Federation's regular armed forces in offensive military operations against a neighbouring sovereign state and resulted in the de facto occupation of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region (South Ossetia)¹.

A significant portion of existing analyses explains Russian aggression in August 2008 through realist frameworks, interpreting it as a response to NATO enlargement, shifting regional balances of power, or immediate security dilemmas². While such interpretations capture important strategic dimensions of the conflict, they tend to underestimate the role of ideology, identity, and civilizational narratives in shaping Russian foreign policy behaviour.

This article advances the argument that the August 2008 aggression cannot be fully understood without reference to Eurasianism as an ideological framework that structures Russia's perception of space, sovereignty, and civilizational hierarchy. Drawing on constructivist theories of ontological security³ and insights from critical geopolitics⁴, the article conceptualises Russian aggression as an act of civilizational securitization, an attempt to frame Georgia's political transformation and European orientation as an existential threat to a putative Eurasian civilizational order.

From this perspective, Georgia's western-oriented trajectory did not

merely challenge Russia's regional influence but undermined its self-image as the core of a distinct Eurasian world. Constructivist scholarship emphasises that such challenges to identity generate ontological insecurity, prompting states to engage in practices aimed at restoring a stable sense of self⁵. The August 2008 aggression thus functioned not only as a strategic intervention, but also as an identity-restoring act through which the Russian state sought to reaffirm its geopolitical and civilizational ambitions, and symbolic centrality in the post-Soviet space.

Georgia in Eurasianist Thought: Civilizational Hierarchy and Spatial Control

Georgia in Classical Eurasianism

The intellectual foundations of Russian aggression against Georgia can be traced to the classical Eurasianist movement that emerged among Russian émigré intellectuals in the early 1920s. Reacting both to the collapse of the Russian Empire and to what they perceived as the cultural and political exhaustion of Western liberal modernity, Eurasianists such as Nikolai Trubetskoy and Petr Savitsky rejected the dominant opposition between Westernism and Slavophilism. Instead, they advanced the claim that Russia constituted a distinct civilizational entity – *Eurasia*, whose historical development, cultural logic, and spatial organisation were fundamentally different from those of Europe⁶.

At the core of Trubetskoy's thought lay a critique of Eurocentric universalism and linear models of historical development. In "*The Legacy of Genghis Khan*", he argued that Western civilization had falsely elevated its own historical experience to a universal norm, delegitimising alternative civilizational trajectories⁷. Against this logic, Trubetskoy insisted on the plurality and incommensurability of civilizations, each rooted in a specific territorial and cultural environment. Russia, in this framework, was not a peripheral or "incomplete" European society, but the historical and political heir to a Eurasian continental synthesis shaped by Slavic, Turkic, and Mongol elements⁸.

Crucially, Trubetskoy's vision of Eurasia was not egalitarian. Although he frequently spoke of synthesis and integration, his conception of Russia's role vis-à-vis neighbouring regions was explicitly hierarchical. In a series of early Eurasianist texts, he emphasised that political stability and cultural integration within Eurasia required the active exercise of Russian power in adjacent regions such as the Caucasus and Central Asia⁹. Unlike simplified imperialist frameworks, Trubetskoy did not frame Russian expansion as domination for its own sake. Instead, he presented it as a strategic and civilizational imperative, linking geopolitical control to a purported mission of cultural integration and systemic stability. In doing so, he constructed an ideological justification for Russian authority

over neighbouring territories grounded not in coercion alone, but in claims of historical responsibility and civilizational necessity.

This logic is particularly explicit in Trubetskoy's 1925 text "*About the Peoples of the Caucasus*", which offers direct recommendations to Russian authorities on how the region should be governed¹⁰. With regard to Georgia, Trubetskoy acknowledged that the autonomy acquired by Georgians after the 1917 Revolution could not simply be revoked without provoking intensified separatism. Nevertheless, he argued that any form of Georgian independence posed a strategic danger that Russian authorities were obliged to suppress by all available means. According to Trubetskoy, Georgian sovereignty would deprive Russia of control over Baku's oil resources and, subsequently, over the entire South Caucasus, thereby undermining Moscow's ability to retain the North Caucasus as well¹¹.

Equally significant is Trubetskoy's assessment of Georgian nationalism. He characterised it as particularly resilient and deeply infused with European ideas, which rendered purely coercive solutions insufficient. As a result, he proposed that the "final solution" to the Georgian question could only be achieved through the creation of a specifically Georgian variant of Eurasian ideology – re-encoding nationalism within a Eurasian civilizational framework rather than eliminating it outright¹². This approach reveals a sophisticated strategy of ideological governance,

combining coercion, fragmentation, and normative adaptation.

More broadly, Trubetskoy advocated the dismantling of large territorial units in the South Caucasus – Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia, and their replacement with smaller administrative districts¹³. This reorganisation, he argued, would prevent the consolidation of strong national identities capable of sustaining separatism. In Georgia, for example, Trubetskoy supported the promotion of Megrelian and Svan languages, provided that such cultural differentiation did not result in the emergence of new autonomous national entities. At the same time, he explicitly opposed the assimilation of smaller peoples by larger ones and warned against the “Georgianisation” of Abkhazia and South Ossetia¹⁴.

This dual logic – simultaneously encouraging internal fragmentation while preventing upward national consolidation – reveals a governance strategy aimed at preserving Russian centrality by managing diversity through controlled differentiation. Far from contradicting one another, Trubetskoy’s opposition to both separatism and assimilation reflected a coherent civilizational hierarchy in which Russia functioned as the indispensable arbiter and stabiliser of Eurasian diversity.

Trubetskoy also rejected the notion that ideological cohesion alone, such as adherence to socialism, was sufficient to sustain a unified state across the post-imperial space. In his 1927 article *On Eurasian National-*

ism, he argued that shared socio-economic ideals did not necessitate political unity¹⁵. Instead, he maintained that the territories of the former Russian Empire, now constituting the Soviet Union, required a stronger unifying principle: the creation of a new, multi-ethnic Eurasian nation, centred on Russia as its core and organising nucleus¹⁶.

Taken together, the works of Trubetskoy and Savitsky established a durable ideological template that linked space, culture, and political authority within a hierarchical civilizational framework. By conceptualising the Caucasus as the “southern gate” of Eurasia and by assigning Russia a protective, supervisory, and integrative role, classical Eurasianism provided a normative foundation for subordinating regional sovereignty to civilizational unity. Although these early formulations did not advocate military aggression in a modern sense, they normalised the idea that Russian intervention in the Caucasus could be framed as a defensive, restorative, and even ethical act undertaken in the name of a higher civilizational order. This intellectual legacy would later be reactivated and politicised in ways that directly informed justifications of Russian aggression against Georgia.

Georgia in Late-Soviet and Post-Soviet Eurasianism

The next stage in the evolution of Eurasianist thought unfolded in the late Soviet and early post-Soviet periods, when earlier civilizational con-

cepts were reintroduced, reformulated, and ultimately politicised. This phase is crucial for understanding how abstract cultural hierarchies and spatial imaginaries were translated into a language capable of legitimising concrete foreign policy practices, including military aggression.

A pivotal role in this transition was played by Lev Gumilev, whose theories of ethnogenesis and *passionarity* reactivated Eurasianist assumptions under the guise of natural science. Although Gumilev avoided explicit ideological commitments, his work reintroduced civilizational determinism into Soviet academic discourse at a moment when Marxist-Leninist explanations were losing credibility¹⁷. By conceptualising ethnic communities as quasi-biological organisms shaped by geography, climate, and energetic impulses originating in the biosphere, Gumilev provided Eurasianism with a veneer of scientific objectivity¹⁸.

Central to Gumilev's framework was the notion of *passionarity*, defined as an excess of vital energy that enabled certain ethnic collectives to expand, dominate, and organise broader political spaces¹⁹. Within this schema, Russia emerged as the core of a coherent Eurasian *super-ethnos*, formed through the long-term interaction of Slavic, Turkic, and Finno-Ugric peoples within the continental steppe zone²⁰. Western Europe, by contrast, was portrayed as an aging and entropic civilization, exhausted by excessive individualism and de-

tached from the ecological conditions necessary for sustained vitality²¹.

The Caucasus occupied a particularly significant place in Gumilev's ethnological geography. He described the region as part of Eurasia's "passionary belt," where ethnogenetic energy manifested itself with exceptional intensity and volatility²². Such regions, according to Gumilev, were inherently unstable and prone to conflict unless integrated into a larger civilizational system capable of regulating and harmonising their excess energy. Only the Russian super-ethnos, as the stabilising core of Eurasia, possessed the capacity to perform this function²³. Russian dominance in the Caucasus was thus reframed not as imperialism, but as an ethno-biological necessity required to preserve systemic equilibrium.

By naturalising civilizational hierarchy through biology and geography, Gumilev transformed normative Eurasianist claims into descriptive "laws of nature." Russian authority over peripheral regions appeared not as a political choice, but as an objective requirement dictated by the structure of the Eurasian biosphere²⁴. This justification of domination proved highly influential. Gumilev's ideas circulated widely among historians, geographers, and military intellectuals in the late Soviet period, particularly through his lectures at Leningrad State University and works such as *Ethnogenesis and the Biosphere of the Earth*²⁵. In this way, Eurasianist spatial thinking re-

entered Soviet strategic culture with renewed legitimacy.

In the post-Soviet period, these quasi-scientific foundations were explicitly politicised by neo-Eurasianist thinkers, most notably Aleksandr Panarin and Aleksandr Dugin. Panarin reframed Eurasianism as a moral and civilizational response to globalization, which he interpreted as a form of Western spiritual imperialism aimed at eroding cultural plurality²⁶. Liberal universalism, in his view, threatened the Orthodox and communitarian foundations of Eurasian society. Russia was therefore assigned a defensive civilizational role as the guardian of cultural diversity and spiritual sovereignty.

Within Panarin's framework, the Caucasus acquired a distinctly moral significance. He depicted the region as Eurasia's "southern moral frontier," where the confrontation between Western liberalism and Eurasian spiritual values was particularly acute²⁷. Georgia's post-Soviet turn toward European integration was thus framed not merely as a geopolitical realignment, but as a civilizational defection that endangered the ethical coherence of the Eurasian space. Preserving Russian influence in the Caucasus became synonymous with defending *sobornost'* – spiritual unity – against Western atomisation²⁸.

Aleksandr Dugin completed the transformation of Eurasianism into a comprehensive geopolitical doctrine. In *The Foundations of Geopolitics* (1997), he synthesised classical Eurasianist thought, Gumilev's ethnologi-

cal concepts, and Western geopolitical theory into a strategic blueprint for Russian power²⁹. Drawing on Halford Mackinder's Heartland theory, Dugin identified Russia as the core of a continental civilization locked in an existential struggle with Atlanticism, represented by the United States and its European allies.

In Dugin's geopolitical vision, the post-Soviet space constituted Russia's natural sphere of civilizational responsibility. The Caucasus, and Georgia in particular, was conceptualised as the southern bastion of the Eurasian Heartland. Western political and normative influence in Georgia was portrayed as a direct threat that would "open the gates" of Eurasia to Atlantic domination³⁰. Within this framework, Georgian sovereignty was subordinated to Eurasian strategic necessity, and Western alignment was treated as an inherently hostile act rather than a legitimate foreign policy choice.

Crucially, neo-Eurasianism erased the distinction between aggression and protection. Military force, territorial control, and political intervention were reframed as morally justified instruments for defending Eurasia's ontological integrity and civilizational balance³¹. By the mid-2000s, this ideological repertoire had migrated from intellectual circles into the semi-official language of Russian strategic culture. Concepts such as multipolarity, civilizational plurality, and sovereign democracy echoed core neo-Eurasianist assumptions, even when explicit references were avoided³².

This intellectual evolution provided a ready-made framework for interpreting Georgia's Europeanization as an existential civilizational threat and for legitimising coercive measures. The August 2008 Russian aggression against Georgia thus represented the first major instance in which this worldview was translated into open military action, marking the institutionalisation of what has been described as "state Eurasianism" – the fusion of civilizational ideology with state power³³.

Georgia's European Path and Russia's Eurasianist Expansion

Georgia's orientation toward Europe and the Euro-Atlantic world represents a long-term civilizational and political choice articulated in the aftermath of the Soviet Union's collapse. From the moment of restored independence, Georgian statehood was defined in opposition to imperial and post-imperial structures of Russian dominance and grounded in an explicit aspiration to "return to Europe." This orientation was not merely instrumental or tactical, but existential: it concerned the foundational question of where Georgia belonged politically, normatively, and civilizationally³⁴.

Throughout the 1990s, despite acute internal instability, armed conflicts, and economic dislocation, Georgian political elites consistently articulated Western integration as the primary framework for securing sovereignty and state survival. Cooperation with European institutions,

alignment with liberal conceptions of sovereignty, and engagement with Euro-Atlantic security structures were framed as mechanisms for escaping the post-Soviet sphere of influence and consolidating independence³⁵. These commitments were embedded in early foreign policy doctrines, constitutional discourse, and diplomatic practice, long before Georgia possessed the institutional capacity to implement comprehensive reforms.

Georgia's Europeanization should therefore be understood as a **continuous process**, rather than as the product of discrete political events. While the depth and effectiveness of institutional transformation varied over time, the underlying strategic and civilizational orientation remained consistent. The persistence of this orientation is analytically significant, as it underscores that Georgia's Western path was not a reactive choice shaped by short-term political shifts, but a sustained attempt to redefine national identity and international belonging outside Eurasian frameworks.

From Moscow's perspective, this long-term trajectory constituted a challenge that exceeded conventional geopolitical competition. Constructivist scholarship on ontological security emphasises that states rely on stable identity narratives to maintain a coherent sense of self, purpose, and legitimacy in international politics³⁶. When these narratives are disrupted, particularly by actors located within a state's perceived civilizational space,

ontological insecurity emerges, producing anxiety over historical mission, moral authority, and status³⁷.

Georgia's Europeanization was unacceptable precisely because it unfolded within a space that Russian Eurasianist discourse defined as inherently belonging to a Eurasian civilizational order. As a former imperial periphery and a key component of the imagined "southern gate" of Eurasia, Georgia's refusal to conform to this spatial and cultural hierarchy undermined Russia's self-conception as the natural centre of the post-Soviet world. The possibility that a post-Soviet state could pursue sovereign development outside Eurasian civilizational frameworks challenged the narrative that Russian leadership was historically necessary, culturally legitimate, and normatively justified³⁸.

This challenge was ontological rather than merely realistic. Georgia's Western orientation called into question the presumed naturalness of Eurasian boundaries by exposing their contingent and constructed character. If Georgia - considered by Russia as the traditional zone of influence, predominantly Orthodox, and geographically embedded in the Caucasus - could define itself as European, then the Eurasian civilizational project appeared neither inevitable nor universally compelling. In this sense, Georgia functioned as a symbolic counter-example that undermined Russia's civilizational self-image³⁹.

Russian political discourse increasingly framed this process in securitized terms. Georgia's European-

ization was not acknowledged as a legitimate sovereign choice, but was instead portrayed as the product of external ideological expansion. Western political norms, democratic institutions, and liberal conceptions of sovereignty were represented as instruments of "civilizational intrusion" designed to extract Georgia from Russia's normative orbit and weaken Eurasian unity⁴⁰. This framing transformed normative divergence into an existential threat.

Such representations align with what critical geopolitics describes as **civilizational securitization**: the construction of ideological and normative difference as a danger to collective identity that necessitates extraordinary measures⁴¹. Within this logic, Russia's policies toward Georgia, including economic pressure, diplomatic isolation, and the manipulation of unresolved territorial conflicts, functioned not simply as tools of coercion, but as identity-restoring practices aimed at reaffirming Russia's civilizational centrality.

By the mid-2000s, Georgia had become a focal point of Russia's ontological insecurity. Its persistent Western orientation symbolised the erosion of post-imperial hierarchy and the failure of Eurasian integration to function as a natural gravitational force. The August 2008 Russian aggression must therefore be understood as the culmination of a longer process in which Russia sought to resolve this ontological crisis through coercive action. Military aggression offered a means of

reasserting civilizational boundaries, disciplining deviation, and restoring a sense of historical continuity disrupted by imperial collapse and the defection of a former periphery.

2008 – From Civilizational Discourse to Military Aggression

The August 2008 Russian aggression against Georgia constituted the moment in which Eurasianist ideology was most clearly and decisively translated into concrete foreign policy practice. Rather than representing a reactive response to immediate security concerns, the aggression functioned as an act of civilizational securitization through which long-standing ideological narratives about space, identity, and historical mission were operationalised by means of military force. In this sense, the events of August 2008 marked the culmination of a process in which Eurasianist thought migrated from intellectual discourse into the domain of state action.

Civilizational securitization differs from conventional security logics in that it frames normative, cultural, and ontological challenges as existential threats. Georgia's long-standing Western orientation was represented within Russian political discourse not simply as a geopolitical divergence, but as a danger to the moral and civilizational integrity of the Eurasian space. The aggression was thus aimed at resolving an ontological crisis by reasserting boundaries, hier-

archies, and meanings that Eurasianist ideology had long portrayed as natural and historically justified⁴².

In the discursive sphere, Russian political elites systematically framed the use of force through a vocabulary that closely mirrored Eurasianist assumptions. Official statements by President Dmitry Medvedev and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov avoided the language of war or invasion and instead portrayed Russia's actions as the defence of compatriots, the prevention of humanitarian catastrophe, and the restoration of historical justice⁴³. This rhetoric positioned Russia as a moral guardian acting on behalf of a broader civilizational community, while Georgia's sovereignty was implicitly delegitimised by representing the Georgian state as either incapable of governing responsibly or as a conduit for external civilizational intrusion. Western political and normative support for Georgia was thus reframed as aggressive interference rather than assistance to a sovereign state.

Such discursive strategies correspond to what critical geopolitics identifies as the moralisation of space, whereby geopolitical actions are justified not through international law but through appeals to cultural authenticity and civilizational duty⁴⁴. Through this inversion, Russia appeared as a force of order and stability, while Georgia and its Western partners were cast as agents of disruption. The legitimising function of this discourse was crucial, as it allowed military aggression to be pre-

sented as a defensive and ethically necessary response to an existential threat.

At the same time, the aggression involved a profound re-imagination of political space. Russian political discourse and media narratives systematically privileged symbolic civilizational borders over internationally recognised state boundaries. Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region (South Ossetia) were increasingly described as organic components of the Russian or Eurasian civilizational space, whose separation from Georgia was portrayed as both natural and historically justified⁴⁵. This reflected what critical geopoliticians describe as imaginative geography—the production of spatial meanings that render certain territories inherently belonging to a particular civilizational order regardless of legal status⁴⁶.

Within this spatial imaginary, Georgia's internationally recognised borders appeared artificial and imposed, while Russia's military presence was framed as a corrective act restoring an authentic civilizational configuration. Neo-Eurasianist commentators articulated this logic explicitly. Aleksandr Dugin described the conflict as a test of Eurasia's metaphysical boundaries, arguing that failure to intervene would result in the opening of Eurasia's "southern gate" to Atlantic domination⁴⁷. Public demonstrations organised by Eurasianist movements reinforced this imagery by framing South Ossetia as a civilizational outpost, further en-

trenching the idea that the conflict concerned civilizational space rather than sovereign territory.

Beyond discourse and spatial redefinition, the 2008 aggression performed a deeper symbolic function. From a constructivist perspective, the collapse of the Soviet Union produced a rupture in Russia's national narrative, generating what ontological security theorists describe as a crisis of continuity and purpose⁴⁸. The loss of empire undermined Russia's self-understanding as a great power and civilizational centre, creating a persistent sense of historical dislocation. Georgia's sustained Western orientation intensified this rupture by demonstrating that former imperial peripheries could reject Eurasian integration and define themselves outside Russia's normative orbit.

The aggression against Georgia functioned as an empire's identity-restoring act through which the Russian state sought to repair this narrative rupture. By intervening militarily and imposing control over contested territories, Russia reaffirmed its capacity to act decisively, enforce hierarchy, and shape regional outcomes. As ontological security scholarship suggests, such practices serve as identity performances through which states reaffirm who they believe themselves to be⁴⁹. In this sense, the occupation of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali region was less about territorial expansion than about symbolic confirmation of Russia's historical

mission as the organiser and protector of a Eurasian civilizational order.

This moment marked the institutionalisation of what has been described as state Eurasianism – the fusion of civilizational ideology with state power⁵⁰. Eurasianism ceased to function merely as a discursive resource and became embedded in strategic practice, providing a template for future interventions. The Georgian case thus served as a laboratory in which civilizational narratives were translated into military and diplomatic action, establishing a precedent later replicated in Crimea in 2014 and in the large-scale aggression against Ukraine from 2022.

Taken together, the discursive, spatial, and symbolic dimensions of the August 2008 aggression reveal it as more than a regional conflict. It constituted a transformative moment in which Eurasianist ideology achieved operational coherence, enabling Russia to convert civilizational claims into practices of territorial domination. Through this act of civilizational securitization, the Russian state temporarily resolved its ontological insecurity by reaffirming its self-image as a distinct civilizational pole capable of resisting Western normative expansion. In this sense, August 2008 represents not only a turning point in Russian–Georgian relations, but a foundational episode in the emergence of civilizational geopolitics as a guiding logic of Russian foreign policy in the twenty-first century.

Conclusions

The August 2008 Russian aggression against Georgia illustrates how ideological frameworks can shape, enable, and legitimise the use of military force in contemporary international politics. Strategic and material factors formed part of the broader context, but they are insufficient to explain the symbolic intensity and normative framing of Russia's actions. The aggression unfolded within an ideological environment in which Eurasianist narratives structured perceptions of space, sovereignty, and civilizational hierarchy.

The long-standing construction of the Caucasus, and Georgia in particular, as a civilizational boundary zone rendered Georgian sovereignty conditional within Eurasianist thought. Georgia's persistent Western orientation questioned this hierarchy by challenging Russia's self-conception as the natural centre of the post-Soviet space. From an ontological security perspective, this challenge generated anxiety over historical mission, moral authority, and imperial - civilisational ambitions, creating incentives for revanchist, identity-restoring practices.

The events of August 2008 reveal how Eurasianist discourse was converted into political practice through civilizational securitization. Discursive strategies reframed aggression as moral obligation; spatial imaginaries privileged symbolic civilizational borders over internationally recognised state boundaries; and military

intervention functioned as a ritual of symbolic restoration following the disruption caused by imperial collapse. Together, these processes transformed ideological claims into concrete acts of territorial domination.

Importantly, identifying the ideological foundations of Russian aggression does not confer legitimacy upon it. On the contrary, the analysis highlights how civilizational narratives served to mask violations of international law, the erosion of Georgian sovereignty, and the use of force against a neighbouring state. Appeals to historical destiny and cultural responsibility functioned as mechanisms of justification that obscured coercion and normalised violence. Such narratives may explain behaviour, but they cannot excuse it.

The Georgian case underscores the dangers inherent in civilizational geopolitics when claims of cultural authenticity are elevated above the principles of sovereign equality and

territorial integrity. By recasting normative divergence as an existential threat, civilizational securitization transforms political disagreement into grounds for military action. The August 2008 aggression therefore stands as a clear breach of the foundational norms of the international order.

Finally, the patterns observed in Georgia foreshadowed subsequent Russian interventions in Crimea in 2014 and in Ukraine from 2022 onward, where similar civilizational framings were mobilised to justify territorial seizure and prolonged warfare. Recognising the ideological mechanisms at work in the Georgian precedent is essential for understanding how civilizational narratives continue to pose risks to regional stability and international peace. Sovereign choices made by independent states cannot be subordinated to civilizational claims without undermining the international legal order itself.

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The Importance and Economic Prospects of Strategic Relations Between Georgia and Romania

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Abstract: *The historical and cultural-religious basis of relations between Georgia and Romania has roots in the depths of centuries. A key figure connecting both cultures is Saint Antim Ivireanul (Antimoz Iverieli 1660-1716), a Georgian-born metropolitan who became a major spiritual and cultural figure in Romania. Romania is the largest Orthodox country in the European Union. More than 85% of its population are Orthodox. Approximately the same percentage of Orthodox Christians in Georgia. This is an important positive factor for all types of relations.*

A new era in relations between Georgia and Romania began after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The countries have maintained diplomatic relations since 1992. Since then, Romania has been an important partner for Georgia. Romania strongly supports Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity and is an active advocate of Georgia's EU integration and Euro-Atlantic aspirations.

Trade between Georgia and Romania has two strategic directions. The first is trade in nationally produced goods between these countries for local consumption. In this regard, Romania is a particularly interesting partner, as its economic potential significantly exceeds Georgia's. The second direction is the movement of transit cargo between Georgia and Romania which will have a greater economic impact, which is consistent with the concept of the Middle Corridor.

Romania-Georgia economic cooperation has solid foundations and is growing, especially in trade and emerging strategic projects. There's untapped potential in transport, energy, and deeper business linkages, supported by Romania's political backing for Georgia's EU integration. With sustained effort, bilateral economic ties can deepen significantly in the coming decade.

Keywords: *Romania. Georgia. Strategic relations. Trade and economic collaboration. Black Sea collaboration. Georgia's EU integration.*

Introduction

Romania is a very important economic, political and cultural partner of Georgia. This country is a member of the European Union and NATO, which is fully consistent with the ge-

ostrategic orientations declared by the Constitution of Georgia. In the future, in addition to the above, these states can even be considered the axis of cooperation in the Black Sea Basin, as important contributors to the security and stability of the region.

The convergence of political courses is an important prerequisite for economic cooperation and that is why the economic integration of Romania and Georgia has good prospects. This is obviously largely due to the fact that both states are located on the Black Sea coast and have regionally important ports on the Black Sea, between which important maritime cargo routes have already been launched.

Regional cooperation between Georgia and Romania is on the rise, although its acceleration is desirable. There are several promising directions where regional cooperation can be deepened. The first of these is, of course, trade. This includes both the direct exchange of goods and services between the two countries, as well as re-export. Romania has the most optimal location for Georgia for transporting goods to the EU countries, just as Georgia is the gateway to the Caucasus and Central Asia for European countries.

Romania stands out for its energy potential in the region. In addition to the fact that this country has sufficient oil reserves, it also has significant oil refining potential, which is of particular interest to Georgia. In the first seven months of 2025, oil products worth \$132.6 million entered Georgia from Romania, which is the second largest indicator in this regard after Russia¹.

Romania's agricultural sector is on the rise and most importantly, the country has developed agricultural production facilities industries. Geor-

gia can import agricultural machinery and chemicals from this region. In turn, Georgia has accumulated significant potential in agricultural production, especially in viticulture, which will be interesting for Romanian entrepreneurs.

Cooperation between Georgia and Romania in the development of transport infrastructure on the Black Sea is particularly promising. We have touched upon this issue above and noted that the ports of Georgia and Romania create the most optimal maritime corridor connecting the Transcaucasus and the European Union. Transport and communication cooperation requires particularly close cooperation and concentration of efforts in terms of synchronization of legislation, technologies and business activities.

The development of transport and communication ties will certainly accelerate the deepening of cultural and educational relations, which in turn will contribute to the expansion of economic cooperation. These processes should be carried out in a mutually reinforcing manner, which will create the best conditions for Georgia's preparation for EU membership. Romania can also be considered a gateway to the EU for Georgia and the entire Transcaucasus.

Historical and cultural-religious basis of relations between Georgia and Romania

We have mentioned above that political compatibility greatly contri-

butes to the development of economic relations. In this regard, cultural ties, religious identity and traditional relations are of no less importance, which increases the acceptance between nations. Romania is the largest Orthodox country in the European Union. More than 85% of its approximately 19 million population are Orthodox. This is an important positive factor for all types of relations.

In the modern world, when states set a goal to deepen cooperation, at the initial stage they always strive to identify a common ideological basis and if this is not possible, they try to create it. A common religious context is extremely important, although it is gratifying that in this regard the relations between the two nations also have deep historical roots and all this can be freely used as a cornerstone of relations. What would otherwise require great effort and material costs, in our case already exists.

When discussing the relations between Georgia and Romania, Antimoz Iverieli must be mentioned. He lived in Romania and made a great contribution to this country. Of course, his field of activity was not economics or trade, however, when such grandiose people as Antimoz Iverieli were at the foundation of relations between two countries, this had a significant material dimension even after centuries and had a positive impact on all spheres of relations. Grateful Romanians do not forget the deeds of Antimoz Iverieli and in

1992 he was canonized by the Romanian Orthodox Church.

Antimoz Iverieli made a significant contribution to the development of the Romanian literary language. He made Romanian the liturgical language². He organized the printing of books. He fought for the independence of Romania, for which he ultimately sacrificed himself. It is also worth noting that it stands at the origins of the first Georgian printed book. When the King of Kartli, Vakhtang VI, intended to establish a printing house and addressed this request to the Patriarch of Jerusalem, the latter forwarded his request to Antimoz Iverieli. After which Antimoz sent his disciple, the Romanian Mihai Istvanovich, to Georgia and thus the foundation of the first Georgian printing house was laid³.

When the relations between the two countries have such a brilliant foundation as is the case with Georgia and Romania, it would be unreasonable not to use this fact for the further rapprochement of the Georgian and Romanian nations. The contributions of Antimoz Iverieli and Mihai Istvanovich are so great that they can be considered a strategic basis for relations.

General comparison of the economic potential of Georgia and Romania

Economic relations between Romania and Georgia span several decades and can be divided into two periods. At the first stage, relations

were conducted within the context of the socialist bloc and were not voluntary in nature and therefore could not create a picture of natural development. Georgia was not an independent country at all and its foreign trade was completely controlled by the union structures. Although Romania had formal independence, it was also strictly subject to the rules that operated in the socialist camp. The beginning of the second stage is obviously connected with the liquidation of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the socialist camp. After the change of government in Romania in 1989, this country took the path to-

wards integration into European structures. The same processes began in Georgia from the end of 1991, when the dissolution of the Soviet Union was formalized. A very important event in the history of Romania occurred on January 1, 2007, when this country, together with Bulgaria, became a member of the European Union. From that moment on, relations between Georgia and Romania took on a new political and economic significance, which was further strengthened in December 2023, when Georgia became a candidate for EU membership.

Table 1. Comparison of the economic potential of Romania and Georgia

	Romania			Georgia		
	2015	2020	2024	2015	2020	2024
Area (thousand km ²)	238.4	238.4	238.4	69.7	69.7	69.7
Population (million)	19.82	19.27	19.07	3.72	3.72	3.69
GDP (billion USD)	177.9	210.3	238.2	15.2	17.3	25.1
2015 USD						
GDP (million USD)	578.2	683.6	774.4	55.6	63.4	91.8
2021 international dollars						
GDP per capita	8.98	10.91	12.49	4.01	4.65	6.80
Thousand USD at 2015 exchange rate						
GDP per capita, thousand USD in 2021 international dollars	29.17	35.47	40.61	14.95	17.0	24.88
GDP growth rate %	3.15	-3.67	0.81	3.35	-6.29	9.43

The table was compiled using information from sources^{4 5 6},

Table 1 compares the economic potential of Romania and Georgia in the context of general indicators. Romania is approximately 3.5 times larger than Georgia in terms of territory and 5 times larger in terms of population, according to recent data. Therefore, Romania's basic strategic potential significantly exceeds Georgia's, which is also reflected in economic indicators. In particular, according to 2024, Romania's GDP at the official exchange rate in 2015 US dollars would amount to 238.2 billion, while Georgia's would amount to 25.1 billion, which is almost 10 times less than Romania's. If we compare GDP indicators in terms of purchasing power parity, the difference is slightly smaller and Romania's advantage is 8.4 times greater.

Romania's GDP growth rate in the period 2015-2024 was 33.9%, while Georgia's was 65.1%. Georgia's significant GDP growth, compared to Romania's, was due, among other factors, to a low base effect during the period. From the above, the 2020 figure indicates a significant recession rate for both countries, which was caused by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic during this period. Georgia experienced a notably big economic decline, which exceeded Romania's similar figure by almost two times. On the other hand, Romania's economic development stagnated in 2024, with GDP growth of less than 1%, while Georgia's similar figure exceeded 9% this year.

In 2024, the average GDP per capita in the European Union in purchasing power parity terms was 62.4 thousand international dollars. If we adjust this figure for the inflation rate, we will find that in 2021 dollars it would be approximately 54 thousand international dollars. If we compare it with the corresponding data in Table 1, we will find that in 2024, the GDP per capita in Romania would be 75% of the overall EU average, while Georgia would be 46%. It should also be noted that among the EU countries, Bulgaria has the lowest figure in this regard, at approximately 34 thousand international dollars and Luxembourg has the highest, at 128 thousand international dollars.

Comparative characteristics of transport communications between Georgia and Romania

The first regular container route between Georgia and Romania was launched on September 20, 2019, connecting the ports of Batumi and Poti with the port of Constanta. The working group estimates that this new route will significantly reduce cargo handling times and tariffs. They expect the Batumi/Poti-Constanta route to take 5 days one-way⁷.

A further regular route between Poti and Constanta is operational from June 27, 2023. The route takes approximately 42-48 hours and operates once a week in one direction⁸. The route is served by a 150-metre ferry, which operates in both directi-

ons. The vessel is mainly staffed by Georgian nationals and sails under the Georgian flag. The service is used by truckers; oversized cargo and motorcycles are also transported. Containers and closed railway wagons can also be transported through it. The cost of cargo transportation varies from 300 to 2,600 euros, depending on the type of cargo. Passenger transportation is also planned from 2025, which was already being carried out between Batumi and the Bulgarian port of Burgas by 2023⁹.

In addition to Romania, Georgia is also connected by ferry-cargo crossings with Bulgaria. For example, the direct distance between Batumi and the Bulgarian port of Varna is about 1,100 kilometers and between Batumi and Burgas, which is also a Bulgarian port city, the distance is about 1,000 kilometers. There is also a ferry service between Poti and Burgas, the distance is 950 kilometers. The same indicator between Poti and the Romanian port city of Constanta is 1100 kilometers and between Batumi and Constanta is 1150 kilometers.

Despite the fact that the distance between the ports of Georgia and Bulgaria is relatively shorter than between the Romanian port city of Constanta and the ports of Georgia, in our opinion, sea freight transportation with Romania has greater prospects and this is determined by several reasons. First of all, we should consider the geographical location of these countries. Bulgaria is located south of Romania and borders such countries as Turkey, Greece, Serbia,

Macedonia and Romania. Georgia can establish sea or land connections with Turkey, Greece and Romania. Accordingly, the use of Bulgaria as a transit country is promising only in the case of Serbia and Macedonia. Romania, which is closer to the center of Europe, borders Ukraine, Moldova, Hungary, Serbia and Bulgaria. In addition, transit cargo transportation from this country, due to distance and location, is more appropriate to be carried out in Hungary, Slovenia, the Czech Republic, Austria, Germany and while the war is ongoing in Ukraine, in Poland, Northern Europe and the Baltic countries.

In addition to the above, in terms of the development of economic ties, Romania is a more promising country than Bulgaria because it is larger in terms of territory and population and is significantly better developed in economic terms. An essential factor in this regard is oil reserves and its refining capacities, which make Romania the most important trade and economic partner for Georgia.

Other routes to Europe are less attractive not only compared to Romania but also to Bulgaria. For example, transit times on the Istanbul and Piraeus routes are 12-24 days, while on the new Poti-Constanta route this time is reduced to 2 days¹⁰. The land route via Turkey cannot compete. From Poti to Constanta, its length is more than 2000 km, while the sea distance between the same cities, as already mentioned, is about 1100 km.

Strategic directions for the development of trade between Georgia and Romania

Trade between Georgia and Romania began in the years after Georgia gained independence, although at first it was mainly limited to imports from Romania and export figures to this country were quite insignificant. Among imported products, oil products prevailed.

Trade between Georgia and Romania has two strategic directions. The first is trade in nationally produced goods between these countries for local consumption. However, in our opinion, in the future, the movement of transit cargo between Georgia and Romania will have a greater economic impact, which is consistent with the concept of the Middle Corridor. Regardless of the implementation of the Zangezur Corridor, in our opinion, for the reasons discussed above in this article, Georgia will not lose its importance as a transit point for Romania.

Table 2 presents such indicators of Georgia's trade as domestic exports, total exports and imports with important trading partners. First of

all, it is worth noting the fact that the domestic and total export indicators of Georgia with Romania practically coincide. This indicates that almost no re-export of goods supplied from Georgia is carried out from the territory of Romania. This, in our opinion, is unacceptable, since Romania has great potential as a transit country.

The value of goods imported from Romania to Georgia during the period under review significantly exceeds the export indicators and sometimes this excess is even tenfold. This does not indicate the fact that the territory of Georgia is used for the re-export of Romanian goods. Although the table does not show what part of the goods imported from Romania are re-exported from Georgia, these figures should not be impressive, since the lion's share of the nomenclature imported from Romania falls on petroleum products, which are consumed locally. If we analyze the dynamics of trade indicators between Georgia and Romania, it is easy to notice certain fluctuations in all three directions during the period under review, although no significant trend of growth or decline is evident.

Table 2. Georgia's trade figures with important partners

		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Domestic export (\$ m)	Romania	27	37	75	58	178	20	32	18	22	20
	Bulgaria	178	157	186	258	297	311	252	420	247	122
	Germany	70	76	39	44	42	59	65	62	49	50
	Italy	73	73	60	42	40	34	58	60	36	53
	EU	534	492	558	612	735	642	659	762	609	477
	Azerbaijan	90	48	86	116	88	80	110	152	146	141
	Russia	155	192	357	383	439	409	563	538	559	652
	Armenia	87	62	71	76	87	85	133	177	166	196
	Ukraine	55	61	75	114	132	126	184	90	74	85
	CIS	468	423	656	772	864	808	1,136	1,104	1,095	1,242
	USA	103	67	120	159	129	78	190	262	93	133
	Turkey	78	168	207	232	188	174	307	393	343	403
	China	88	171	190	184	187	460	582	696	270	273
	World total	1,602	1,619	2,006	2,221	2,353	2,437	3,167	3,729	2,862	2,993
Total export (\$ m)	Romania	27	37	75	58	178	20	34	23	25	28
	Bulgaria	214	161	187	259	300	313	254	424	250	124
	Germany	75	85	46	51	54	62	68	68	57	53
	Italy	75	73	69	43	40	35	58	61	37	54
	EU	623	550	642	713	805	697	717	863	704	574
	Azerbaijan	241	153	274	508	509	438	532	673	862	725
	Russia	163	207	398	438	497	441	610	642	657	680
	Armenia	180	153	214	286	433	187	256	584	787	618
	Ukraine	60	74	127	180	251	217	307	233	101	103
	CIS	841	741	1,194	1,689	2,043	1,506	2,021	2,686	4,016	4,525

		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
	USA	104	68	122	160	132	80	195	265	97	141
	Turkey	187	173	217	241	202	191	323	435	409	459
	China	126	174	202	199	208	477	616	737	311	303
	World total	2,204	2,117	2,745	3,379	3,797	3,340	4,242	5,582	6,086	6,558
Total import (\$ m)	Romania	207	190	191	209	213	120	178	292	219	219
	Bulgaria	168	150	156	182	125	110	179	203	217	304
	Germany	432	432	455	467	501	404	481	664	974	1,293
	Italy	198	263	218	232	229	183	248	288	374	416
	EU	1,991	2,084	2,126	2,453	2,303	1,846	2,308	3,060	3,829	4,576
	Azerbaijan	539	493	567	593	559	513	598	640	655	584
	Russia	625	681	790	935	977	888	1,023	1,835	1,744	1,849
	Armenia	175	217	281	335	268	422	418	614	337	237
	Ukraine	456	418	447	515	416	390	452	286	260	251
	CIS	1,968	1,986	2,322	2,695	2,441	2,414	2,815	3,723	3,297	3,303
	USA	254	231	332	501	679	556	648	1,014	2,056	2,049
	Turkey	1,327	1,354	1,374	1,474	1,617	1,408	1,829	2,374	2,575	2,775
	China	587	546	733	834	859	709	865	1,127	1,330	1,612
	World total	7,304	7,342	8,057	9,361	9,518	8,049	10,099	13,540	15,611	16,889

The table was compiled using the figures provided in the source¹¹.

According to the table, Georgia has much more intensive trade relations with another Black Sea state, Bulgaria. The data on domestic and total exports are several times higher than the corresponding indicators for Romania. If we analyze Bulgaria's economic potential, it is clear that we are dealing with a high share of re-exports, although such a conclusion cannot be drawn unequivocally from the table, since these two indicators almost coincide over the years. For example, in 2022, domestic exports from Georgia to Bulgaria amounted to 420 million US dollars, while the total export figure amounted to 424 million US dollars. Based on these data alone, we can conclude that re-exports amounted to 4 million US dollars. But it is not excluded that we are dealing with hidden re-exports. It is also inconceivable that Bulgaria consumed goods worth 420 million US dollars sent from Georgia. There is no doubt that products manufactured in Georgia were re-exported from this country. Import rates from Bulgaria are high and it is highly likely that some of these goods are re-exported from Georgia.

Conclusions and recommendations

Romania and Georgia have complete convergence of political interests and orientations, both of these states are located on the Black Sea coast and are actually the gateways to Europe and the Caucasus. All this creates a solid foundation for deepening economic cooperation.

When there is ideological compatibility between countries, this greatly simplifies cooperation in all directions. Often, when such a thing does not exist, huge resources and funds are spent artificially to create such a base. Georgia and Romania do not need this. Both countries are carriers of Orthodox culture and relations between them have been going on for centuries, as evidenced by the contributions of such personalities as Antimoz Iverieli and Mihai Istvanovich.

Romania's economic and resource potential significantly exceeds that of Georgia, therefore, it is much more important for our country to deepen economic relations with this country.

For Georgia and the entire Transcaucasus, the most optimal routes for trade with most EU countries pass through Romania, which is confirmed by actual data. Their development has already begun, but the pace is clearly insufficient. Coordination at the government level is necessary to accelerate cooperation.

The trade indicators between Georgia and Romania are low and do not correspond to the potential that the two countries have in this regard. The failure to use the re-export potential looks especially disappointing, which deprives both countries of great opportunities. To correct the situation, it is necessary to deepen intergovernmental relations, synchronize legislation and actions and involve other bordering and interested countries in this process, which is so necessary for the development of transit cargo transportation.

Notes

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The Strategies on Cultural Heritage: Challenges and Discourses in Urban Environment (The Case of Georgia)

Ketevan KHUTSISHVILI

Abstract: *The paper discusses the development of the attitudes towards the cultural heritage in Georgia and the challenges in contemporary urban areas. The problem of cultural heritage is a particularly sensitive issue for the comparatively small ethno-cultural groups like Georgia, which has an ancient culture and for a long period was under the domination of the Russian Empire and later, after a short period of independency in 1918-1921, became a part of the Soviet Union. During that time the maintenance of the national identity was highly oriented on the past, ethnographic elements and cultural heritage. The urban environment and contemporary economic developments put different tasks into the agenda of protecting the monuments of cultural heritage. The term itself goes under the process of reconsideration. The cases of Tbilisi and Batumi are used for displaying the contemporary problems. In modern Georgia, the issue of cultural heritage protection is one of the most important issues. The Ministry of Culture of Georgia, the National Agency for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Georgia, various governmental and non-governmental structures, civil society groups, and educational institutions work in this field. The Georgian Law on Cultural Heritage regulates cultural heritage protection issues. Despite the fact that many activities directed to protect the cultural heritage were/are carried out in Georgia, the activities still need further elaboration. Culture is in a state of constant development, and constant changes along the way require new approaches.*

Keywords: *Cultural Heritage, Urban Studies, Ethnology, Georgia.*

The issue of cultural heritage is a particularly sensitive issue for the comparatively small ethno-cultural groups like Georgia, which has an ancient culture and for a long period was under the domination of Russian Empire and later, after a short period of independency in 1918-1921, became a part of the Soviet Union. During that time the maintenance of the

national identity was highly oriented on the past, ethnographic elements and cultural heritage.

The protection of the cultural monuments is rooted in the 19th century, when particular individual scholars were collecting, researching and protecting the artifacts considered to be monuments of cultural heritage. This interest was supported

by the development of ethnographic curiosity.

From the middle of the nineteenth century, interest in ethnographic research grew in Georgia, as it did elsewhere in Europe and Russia. In 1850 the Caucasian Department of the Russian Geographic Society was opened in Tbilisi¹. Based on it, in 1852 the Caucasian Museum was founded².

The Museum became a center of activities related to the tangible cultural heritage. The Georgian statesman and members of the national movement tried to use museum activities for the embodiment of their ideas regarding the fixation and popularization of ethnic culture. The special input in the development of the preservation of the artifacts is appointed to the Georgian statesman and put Rafiel Eristavi, who created the catalogue of the museum and carried out the catalogization of the artifacts. Thus, since 1855 the museum had an elaborate catalogue³. The museum was closed in 1856 due to several objectives (among them the incorrect attitude of the leadership to the aim and function of the museum)⁴. In 1865, a new museum called "Museum of the Caucasus" opened its doors under the leadership of Gustav Rade⁵. The director of the museum, Gustav Rade, has collected a wide range of artifacts from the whole Caucasus. Consequently, the activities were focused on gathering ethnographic collections and organizing exhibitions. These actions were meant to contribute to the popularization of ethnography.

Together with the museum activities, the process of gathering the ethnographic narratives was going on. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the leader of the Georgian national movement, Ilia Chavchavadze, founded a working group, which collected ethnographic data throughout Georgia and published articles in Georgian periodical issues⁶. They realized the threats facing Georgians and, under the leadership of Ilia Chavchavadze, set themselves the goal of consolidating the nation⁷. Along this path, their efforts were naturally directed towards instilling and strengthening a sense of shared history and culture among Georgians in order to strengthen a unified ethnocultural identity. Antiquities, folklore, art, historical sources and ethnographic life – this is a general list of the characteristics that needed to be described, studied and popularized. During this period the ethnographic idea was bound up with the national movement, which raised such questions as the autonomy and unity of Georgian people, and their cultural features and origins. A vivid interest in folklore also developed at this time, as did the studies on mountaineers, social organization, marriage forms and family relations. The ethnographic data were collected and analyzed by Vazha-Pshavela, A. Kazbegi, T. Sakhokia, N. Khizanashvili, B. Nijaradze, I. Margiani, I. Gvaramadze, D. Janashvili, M. Janashvili, N. Janashia and others – many of them well-known writers and/or statesmen. Their articles, published in Georgian

and Russian periodicals, not only consisted of ethnographic descriptions but also analysis and interpretation. In their literary works, some authors used ethnography as a source for novels and poetry. These works now provide important documents for historical anthropologists⁸. They made an invaluable contribution to the fixation of ethnographic material. Their conclusions and generalizations are also very interesting, some of which still sound quite modern today.

In 1907, at the initiative of Ekvtime Takaishvili, a new stage in the development of ethnology began with the establishment of the Georgian Historical and Ethnographic Society⁹. This was the first precedent when the term 'ethnography' was recorded in the name of an institutional association. The society had "historical, archaeological, ethnographic, anthropological, linguistic and numismatic" departments. The members of the society collected material and introduced it to the general public through letters published in periodicals, organized exhibitions and public lectures. In this way, they were engaged in the popularization of ethnology along with historical disciplines. The members of the Historical and Ethnographic Society were those public figures who collected historical and ethnographic material in different parts of Georgia. Today, this is invaluable material for the scientific circles.

The collection of artifacts, folklore and ethnographic data provoked the idea of protecting the elements of culture. In the 19th century, the goal

of interested persons was to collect, preserve, research and protect the surviving antiquities. In 1921, the Section for the Protection of Museum Antiquities and Art Monuments was created at the People's Commissariat¹⁰. Since that time, the cultural monuments of Georgia have been protected by the state. In 1934, by a decree of the Government of Georgia, the Committee for the Protection of Culture and Monuments was established¹¹. In 1948, by a decree of the Government of Georgia, scientific-restoration workshops were created for the first time in the Soviet Union. In 1959, a voluntary organization was established for the first time in the Soviet Union - the Society for the Protection of Cultural Monuments of Georgia. Its goal was to identify, protect, restore, strengthen and study cultural heritage monuments existing in Georgia and outside the country. In 1977, Georgia adopted the Law "On the Protection and Use of Historical and Cultural Monuments", and by the resolution of 1978, the previously existing monument protection body was abolished and the Main Scientific-Production Department for the Protection and Use of Historical, Cultural and Natural Monuments (abbreviated as the Monument Protection Department) was created. In 2004, after the liquidation of the Monument Protection Department, the Cultural Heritage Department was created within the structure of the Ministry of Culture, Monument Protection and Sports of Georgia, with departments

of various directions, which combined the functions of a customer and a controller. From this period, a new stage began in the field of cultural heritage management.

In order to implement state policy and promote the development of the field, a “Cultural Heritage Protection Program” was created with a clearly expressed tendency of increasing state funding of the field and a structure adapted to the European model of cultural heritage management. In November 2008, by the decree of the President of Georgia, a monument protection organization was established – LEPL National Agency for Cultural Heritage Protection of Georgia - with various and highly specific directions of cultural heritage protection – tangible and intangible cultural heritage, museums, museum-reserves and archaeological sites, information systems, research and popularization of cultural heritage, monitoring and documentation of monuments, educational and international projects. The National Agency for Cultural Heritage Protection was created on the basis of the country's complex monuments of national and world importance, and represents their unity and legal successor¹². The tasks of the agency include preservation, protection and promotion of museums, reserves, moveable and immoveable monuments and sites of the Georgian cultural heritage throughout Georgia and beyond the country. The main attention was paid to the historical – architectural monuments, but since the adoption the

law on cultural heritage in 2017 the definition of tangible and intangible cultural heritage has been directing the strategies.

The definition of the term ‘cultural heritage’ is presented in the law. It includes material and intangible areas. Under the tangible cultural heritage are considered “any kind of artistic, aesthetic, historical, architectural, artistic, urban-planning, agricultural, archaeological, anthropological, ethnographic, monumental, immovable or movable objects related to the development of technology, documentary materials, created by humans or as a result of the influence of humans on nature, gardens, parks, objects of landscape architecture, historical settlements, historically formed environments related to the country’s history, development, folklore, beliefs and traditions”¹³. Intangible monuments are “oral traditions and forms of expression, including language as a carrier of intangible cultural heritage, performing arts, customs, traditions, knowledge and skills related to traditional arts, as well as related tools, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces that are recognized by communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals as part of their cultural heritage”¹⁴. To protect the heritage, a set of legal, scientific-research, rehabilitation, informational and educational measures is developed, the purpose of which is to preserve the cultural heritage in full diversity and ensure its sustainable development.

The heritage regimes consist of state policies that are using history as

a cultural, political and economic resource for the present. These attitudes are set by the state and are not always overlapped by the perceptions from below. The cultural heritage is used as a political tool; heritage policy is a top-down project. The people on the ground have to develop coping strategies to encounter the process of “heritagization” in their daily life. Especially in such multi-ethnic areas as the urban areas in Georgia, it is interesting to analyze the local perspectives on cultural heritage.

The topic of cultural heritage in the post-socialist space is discussed from many disciplinary backgrounds. An anthropological view of the situation means to follow a bottom-up perspective on micro processes, to focus on the actor’s perspective on the ground and contribute to the general discussion of cultural heritage in urban environment.

The theoretical framework is based on legitimacy¹⁵ and urban theories¹⁶ as well as attitudes of memory studies¹⁷. As a case, I will discuss the problem of tangible cultural monuments in Tbilisi and Batumi.

Tbilisi is the capital of Georgia with a population of over 1.5 million¹⁸. It is the most multicultural urban area with the long list of cultural monuments. Tbilisi as a settlement has a long history, but it was announced as a capital in the 5th century. “Although little explored in urban studies, the city epitomizes a fascinating assemblage of processes that can illuminate the interplay of geopolitics, political choices, globaliza-

tion discourses, histories, and urban contestations in shaping urban transformations. Tbilisi’s strategic location in the South Caucasus, at the juncture of major historical empires and religions in Eurasia, has ensured its turbulent history and polyphony of cultural influences. Following Georgia’s independence in 1991, Tbilisi found itself as the pivot of Georgian nation-building. Transition to a market economy also exposed the city to economic hardship, ethnic homogenization, and the informalization of the urban environment. The economic recovery since the early 2000s has activated urban regeneration. Georgia’s government has recently promoted flagship urban development projects in pursuit of making Tbilisi a modern, globalizing metropolis. This has brought contradictions, such as undermining the city’s heritage, contributing to socio-spatial polarization, and deteriorating the city’s public spaces. The elitist processes of decision-making and a lack of consistent urban policy and planning regimes are argued to be among major impediments for a more sustainable development of this city”¹⁹. As a capital, it has always had a diverse composition of various ethno-cultural, lingual or religious groups. The religion was present in the urban space. The cultic buildings of different religious communities were neighboring. At the same time, Tbilisi was the residential city of the Patriarchate of the Georgian Orthodox Church. The list of the buildings that are under protection in Tbilisi is a kind of guarantee that

they will not be touched. But the post-Soviet processes impacted the attitudes and a big amount of monuments lost their status in accordance to gaining economic value.

The city of Batumi is situated in Ajara (Adjara). The region of Ajara is especially interesting because of its religious diversity. This southwest Georgian region was highly influenced by the Turkish political-economic and cultural impact since the XVI century, when it came under Turkish rule. From 1878 the region was returned to Georgia by the active presence of the Russian Empire in the region. In 1922, after the Sovietization of Georgia, it was declared as the Soviet Socialist Autonomous Republic of Ajara, within Georgian SSR. After the announcement of the independency following a constitutional amendment passed by the Georgian parliament in April 2000, Ajara was officially designated an Autonomous Republic. Batumi is the central city of the region, and the capital of the Autonomous Republic of Ajara. The claims on autonomy were initially connected and reasoned by the fact that due to Turkish influence, the majority of Ajarians were converted to Islam. The history of spreading Islam in the region is quite complicated and violent. Ajarians are the only Georgian sub-ethnic group who are Muslims. For centuries their religiosity was rather domestic-practical than normative-theological. About 13% of the Georgian population is Muslim²⁰. The population of Batumi is 152 839²¹.

In the I-II centuries, Batumi was settled and used as a port. Later there were the times of its decline. In the XV century, it was conquered by Ottoman Turks and re-annexed by the Russian empire in the XIX century. It was a Black Sea port and the development of the city was bound up with the political and economic developments. According to the 1878 Berlin Congress, the port was declared as Porto-Franco (a port with the right of free economic zone); this promoted the city's growth. The expansion of Batumi began in 1883 and this was connected to the construction of the Batumi-Tiflis-Baku railway, which was completed in 1900. Later the important event was the construction of the Baku-Batumi pipeline. That fact made Batumi one of the main ports in the Black Sea.

Porto Franco's status and regime have increased the construction of the residential buildings, hotels and warehouses. That regime also increased the population of Batumi²². Batumi became an important port for the Black Sea Coast. The Caspian Sea oil products were exported to other countries from Batumi port. Batumi became an industrial city. Rothschild, Nobel, Mantashev, Nurkertt oil companies dominated there. In 1881 the idea of cultivation of Batumi Boulevard appeared. In 1882 in Batumi there were two Orthodox churches, one Catholic church, three mosques, three tobacco products, 8 hotels, 240 shopping establishments, etc. In 1885 the Church of Alexander Nevsky was built,

which was a symbol of the victory of the Russian Empire.

The city started to grow as an industrial one. This caused the formation of the multiethnic community. In 1918, according to the Brest-Litovsk Treaty, Batumi was given to the Ottoman Empire²³. Turkey ceded the area to the Soviet Union on the condition that it would be granted autonomy for the sake of the Muslims among Batumi's mixed population. Batumi today is one of the main port cities of Georgia. President Saakashvili, who once described Batumi as his "daughter"²⁴, turned this Black Sea resort into a part of his campaign aimed at turning Georgia into a tourist zone. Since 2004 Batumi has known an unprecedented development process, which is widely referred to as the "Batumi Miracle"²⁵.

The constructions and reconstructions changed the image of the city a lot. Nowadays Batumi is an architecturally eclectic, growing city with a multiethnic, multicultural and multi-religious composition. Various religious denominations are functioning and having their sacred sites. In 2011, the Georgian Parliament passed a law, that made it possible for religious organizations to register as legal entities under public law, which also entails funding from the state.

The discourses regarding the heritage mainly were connected to the threat of globalization and to the change of the memories. Both are related to the identity construction. The population was suspicious re-

garding the impact of globalization and modernization on cultural heritage.

Globalization, regardless of the organization of the world according to the state-territorial principle and the existence of national borders, implies the gradual transformation of the geopolitical space into a single zone, where capital, goods, services and people will move freely and ideas will spread freely. The basis of globalization is the process of internationalization of the economy, which in turn is related to the emergence of transnational corporations and international banks, the qualitative progress of communication and transport links. International political and economic organizations are created; norms of international law are developed and control over their implementation is carried out. Integration processes are actively underway. In these conditions, communicative aspects of culture gain great importance. There is an exchange of material and spiritual values between national cultures, mutual contacts are expanding, there is an active exchange of cultural information. Interrelationship and mutual influence of national cultures is a regular process and is a necessary condition for the development of humanity. The more intensive the cultural exchanges between nations, the richer and more diverse the general human culture becomes. But the process of globalization, along with the positive (increased foreign trade, high speed of information movement, free move-

ment of new ideas, technologies, devices and “know-how”, the possibility of integration with the world economy and politics), also has negatives. In particular, homogenization, leveling of national culture, spread of counterculture, instability, expected economic shocks, and confusion of values. The roughly ongoing process of globalization in some cases erases cultural differences and unique cultural phenomena disappear (of which there are many examples in the modern world). The relationship between elite and folk culture, value systems are changing, there are problems of cultural differences, subcultures, countercultures, multiculturalism, ethnocentrism, global culture. It is related to the rather contradictory process of the replacement of the industrial age by the information age. The “information revolution” has changed the world.

As a result of the ongoing process of economic and political integration, the importance of ethnic identity has increased due to the awareness of the danger of cultural standardization²⁶. Along with the legitimized, resistant and projective identities emerged. The question of ethnocultural identity is especially problematic in polyethnic societies, where cultural differentiation is great, and in transitional societies, where previously established identities are being questioned. The localization is closely related to ethnic identity, with its different manifestations, which appeared as a defense reaction to globalization (the global context of social existence),

which was considered as a symbol of deterritorialization, integration and universalization.

Ethno-culture as a marker of ethnicity was in the focus. It is a unified structure of behavioral, communicative, value, socio-political and cultural models typical for the ethnic group (conditionally), a set of cultural achievements of the local groups²⁷. Ethno-culture maintains the stability of the ethnic group and determines the behavior of different parts of it in times of crisis. At the same time, ethnic culture means only the set of cultural elements and structures, according to which the “us-them” opposition is realized and the identity is defined. Under the influence of ethnic culture, the primary socialization of the majority of people takes place. It contains spiritual, socio-political and material components. Ethnocultural belonging is a daily practice and a historical process that is both collective and individual. Moreover, the ethnocultural identity is immanent, although not necessarily variable, but the disruption of the natural line of its reproduction leads the group to such negative phenomena as psychological disorientation, the spread of deviant forms of behavior, social marginalization, etc. The cultural specificity of the nation can be seen not only in the traditional uniqueness of the material and spiritual culture formed in the past, but also in the overall cultural contribution of the nation to the foundation of modern world culture. Ethnic culture undergoes innovations over time and becomes multi-

component. In addition, it has become a problem in the post-Soviet space that in the industrial-technical society, the coded, standardized culture transmitted through education to some extent opposes the localized, folk culture transmitted through life practice, which causes a conflict between the new and the old.

Globalization disrupts the autonomy of institutions, organizations and communication systems that people are accustomed to. The world is becoming too big to control, and social actors aim to bring it within its old boundaries. Networking and flexibility break down the boundaries of belonging, the relations of production become individualized, and space and time become structurally unstable²⁸. These processes are particularly painful for traditional or semi-traditional societies. Modernization and the formation of a mass society with an extensive nature of social differences and drastic social changes have made it difficult for people to define their identity. The small, homogenous, and less prone to change societies of the past offered a solid basis for identity to their members. Socio-cultural regulation in them is based on strict reproduction of historically formed traditions. In the modernist society, the socio-cultural regulation is based on the values and norms confirming individual freedom and civil responsibility.

Globalization-modernization processes, on the one hand, are aimed at the homogenization of culture, but on the other hand, as a reaction, they

cause the actualization of ethnic identity and to some extent contribute to the development of ethnic culture. As an example of such a reaction and an example of the development of the adaptive mechanism of culture, we can consider the promotion of ethno-cultural characteristics and the attempt to present them to the world community and establish them. In this process the monuments of cultural heritage are playing the role of mediums.

Tbilisi, as a city with its specific image, organization of the landscape, architectural style, etc. Especially its historical downtown was considered by the locals as a monument of cultural heritage, which needs to be protected and which is under the threat of deconstruction because of a new view on modernization. The state project – Tbilisi the city of the lights – was a new plan for reconstruction. The locals accepted the project with dual feelings.

The modernization in the post-Soviet space, including Georgia, was followed by the reconsideration of the past and attempts to escape from the Soviet legacy. This way, after the long discussions in 2011, the “Charity of Liberty”²⁹ was launched and approved by the Georgian Parliament. Its aim was the elimination of the Soviet symbolic, cultic buildings and ideology. This caused a tension, as some buildings had the status of cultural monuments. Such an example is the building of Parliament itself, on Rustaveli Avenue in Tbilisi. It was built in 1938 (architects V.

Kokorin and G. Lejava), it was hosting the local government. Later it was reconstructed in 1956-1953 and was under the protection as an architectural monument of the Soviet Empire style, which consisted of some Georgian details³⁰. Some Soviet symbols on the façade and the Soviet sculptures at the entrance were removed in 2011.

The discourses and challenges related to the cultural heritage are contradicting each other. These approaches are formed within the framework of specific contexts and are compatible with them. Here the question arises about the material manifestations of memory - places of memory, monuments of the cultural heritage. If the place of memory legitimizes the "old reality", the question of its replacement or destruction will naturally arise. Those monuments related to the close past (Soviet past) are not even accepted as elements of heritage. On the one hand, one of the connecting elements of the "we group" is the shared past, on the other hand, social unity requires a more or less shared perception of this past. However, the constant reconstruction of the past requires representation, for which various means are used, including the materialization of this past, the use of artifacts, symbols. Material culture can be considered as a means of encoding memory for society. Through this remembrance, the current context of identity is legitimized.

Cultural heritage is a broad concept and includes material objects

and spiritual values created by specific groups of people in the context of social interaction formed in relation to them in the process of cultural development. For every ethno-cultural unity, its cultural heritage is the basis of identity. Thus, protection of cultural heritage implies care for the preservation of ethno-cultural identity. The issue of cultural heritage has become increasingly relevant and problematic in the modern world. On the one hand, the reaction to globalization processes locally increased the interest in local (material and intangible) cultural monuments; On the other hand, the same processes also led to an increase in interest in foreign cultures. The high degree of mobility, the significant development of both global and local tourism pose new challenges to the local authorities. It is problematic to define what cultural heritage is. Its recognition, protection and promotion require specific approaches and strategies, and there are differences between international (e.g., UNESCO, etc.) and local legal approaches. There are also differences in local perceptions and attitudes. The complexity of the issue is determined by the political and economic difficulties faced by humanity and its constituent societies. Rapid changes in technological and social systems with their accompanying effects impact the value systems of individuals and groups of people; the process of constant understanding and reevaluation of one's own identity and culture is underway. People are looking for the pillars of

their ethno-cultural identity, and of course the elements of cultural heritage are revealed to be important in this way. That is why it is a sensitive topic: what is perceived as cultural heritage and what is the attitude towards it in everyday life and what is the state policy.

Protection of cultural heritage, as part of a complex issue, is related to politics; therefore, it can become a problem-solving or inspiring factor. Therefore, it is particularly important to analyze the current attitudes towards cultural heritage. Cultural heritage is the realm of mere ethno-cultural or national interest. It is related both to state and transnational issues. The management of cultural heritage is related to the cultural, economic and political processes of a particular society and at the same time to the common processes taking place in the world. The general approaches are created, which are reflected in conventions, and the development of such general or local documents is an altering process in accordance with the changes in the interpretation of values. Cultural heritage is perceived as a set of important objects; as a part of the environment (landscape) and as a socio-cultural construction. All aspects together form an ethnocultural identity, which is especially important for small nations with an ancient history and rich cultural heritage. Georgia, a country with one of the oldest cultures in the world, belongs to such a group. Along with other markers, the identity of Georgians is structured by the historical cultural heritage³¹.

One of the interesting aspects of urban development is the correlation of urban and religious spaces. The post-Soviet society in the mass order has addressed religious roots. Owing to reassessment of the Soviet priorities, personal and public predilections have changed considerably and religiosity has become the determining factor of public life. In the post-Soviet societies of a transitive type, the interest in religion has sharply increased, and the factor of the influence of religion has accordingly increased. Quite often religion replaces ethnicity and carries out an appropriate political role. It is natural that the religion, as a major element of ethnic self-consciousness, determines the character of the processes of inner-ethnic consolidation and, at the same time, differentiation between the ethnoses. The religious creed, as an internal orientation for self-identification of the individuals and ethnic groups, and also a constructor of cultural values, has got huge importance. The residents of the urban areas started to give new meanings to the religious spaces in their neighborhoods; in some cases the attempts of establishment of new religious places were quite active. This refers to the Batumi case.

In 2011, the Administration of Georgian Muslims (AGM) was founded, which improved organizational capacities of Muslim communities. One of the major challenges for the Muslim population appeared to be the construction of new mosques. The Muslim community in

Batumi was fighting for building a second mosque for over years. The oldest mosque in Batumi, Orta Jame, does not offer enough space for all the ones who wanted to attend Friday prayers. The Muslim community possesses land but was not given a construction permit for building a new mosque. However, when the city's administration offered a construction permit in spring 2018, the Muslim community rejected the offer out of fear of too much influence by the government through the Administration of Georgian Muslims (AGM). The dispute remains complicated. Another aspect of the problems the Muslim community in Ajara faces is the funding issue. Many communities in Ajara receive funding from Turkey or are educated in Turkey. This has regularly provoked criticism due to possible influence from abroad. The activity of traditional Islam does not strain a religious situation. They have a customary century-long traditions of cooperation and peaceful coexistence with other religions, especially with Orthodox Christianity and their religious representations do not contradict these traditions. Islam in Georgia could not avoid the fundamental tendencies, which carry in themselves a charge of an opposition both with traditional Islam and in relation to other religions. On crossing these tendencies, significant zones of religious enmity are forming.

The post-Soviet society, after 70 years of living in conditions of fighting atheism in the mass order

has addressed its religious roots. Owing to the reassessment of the Soviet priorities, personal and public predilections have considerably changed and religiosity has become the defining factor of public life. In the post-Soviet societies of a transitive type, the interest in religion has sharply increased, and the factor of influence of religion has accordingly increased. The religious creed, as internal orienteering for self-identification of the individuals and ethnic groups, and also a constructor of cultural values, has got huge importance. However, as inner-ethnic integrating property, the religion, at the same time, is the factor of differentiation between the groups. Concerning the post-Soviet space, the difficulties of the transitive period have created beneficial ground for the wide spreading of the religious traditional or non-conventional ideas. There have arisen the problems of identity, distinction between cultures, minority-majority, globalization-localizations, multi-culture etc. The community has faced a problem of mutual relation between its groups and the search of the correct directions of national integration and national policy³². The long-term mutual relations between such traditional religious communities as the Georgian Orthodox Church and the Moslem community have been developed over the centuries. In conditions of positive or negative stereotypes, the mutual adaptation basically proceeded in a peaceful way.

The majority of the Georgians are historically Orthodox Christians;

Georgians are also Catholics, Moslems and representatives of the other religious groups. All religious organizations acting in Batumi have different positions and possibilities. They have the property in the city and the development of their communities is highly dependent on the level of urbanization.

The Georgian Urbanization Review finds that the country continues to face challenges arising from its dual transition from a planned to a market economy and from a rural to an urban economy. The transition from a planned to a market economy was accompanied by an economic decline and increasing regional disparities. This was exacerbated by the 2008 financial crisis. As the economy transitioned from a planned to a market economy, Georgia's economy also became more urbanized and there are strong indications that building on the urban economy can assist Georgia out of its current economic malaise. However, growing regional disparities emerge as a challenge of this transition from a rural to an urban economy.

The urban transformations and religious transformations are influencing each other. The three types of actors involved in the transformation of the urban space have been identified: state-sponsored mainstream religious institutions, religious "purists" and religious minorities. The forms of religiosity practiced during the Soviet period became limited in post-Soviet era and the processes of reshaping them were set off sponta-

neously. The two vectors of development have been emerged: "from below" and "from above". In Batumi there are the worshiping places that are already historical; some of them have the status of monuments of cultural heritage. There are also new buildings or constructions, formal and informal sites, which have the meanings for the believers. The Orthodox churches (Cathedral St. Mary; St. Nikoloz (Nicolas) and St. Barbare (Barbara) Churches), Moslem sites (Orta Jame, New Mosque), Jewish site (Synagogue), Armenian Apostolic Church and Catholic Church are situated in residential areas of the city. Except of New Mosque, all others are situated in the touristic, central part of Batumi. These sites have specific groups of visitors and an impact on the social, cultural, public life of the city. Batumi appears to be a multicultural, multi-religious city; the citizens have various (everyday life and religious) practices. The urban-rural division in perceptions regarding each other comes into play.

A program of diagnostics of urban development called the 'Urbanization Review' (UR) is based on three main pillars of urban development, which have emerged as key areas of policy engagement for successful cities. These are: a) planning, charting a course for cities by setting the terms of urbanization, especially policies for using urban land and expanding basic infrastructure and public services; b) connecting, physically linking people to jobs, and businesses to markets; and c) financing, raising and

leveraging up-front capital to meet the increasing demand for infrastructure and services. In moving forward, the review recommends that Georgia focus on: a) developing a national urban strategy that recognizes the contribution of each city to the overall economy, i.e. a 'system of cities' approach that can assist in reducing regional disparities; b) assisting cities to develop urban plans, including local economic development plans, c) reforming building and planning codes; and d) assisting cities in improving their local governance and finances.

The aims of the municipal policy of Batumi include making the city more attractive for its inhabitants, businesses and tourism, as well as strengthening the political and economic significance of the city beyond its borders. Characteristics and deficits of the urban fabric were identified in a review and analysis of the situation and used to develop a framework concept. Special features taken into consideration included the Mediterranean climate, the seaside location of the city with a harbor and promenade offering leisure facilities. A structural connection between the inner heart of the city and the sea as well as a clearly defined urban periphery were found to be lacking and oversized urban spaces created by traffic were identified. As the specialists state an appropriate improvement of the spatial urban situation was incorporated in the concept of the master plan³³. There is mentioned: "Three key planning aspects and

concepts were worked out and proposed:

1. Delimitation of the urban structure with continuation of the typical orthogonality up to a structurally clearly perceivable periphery towards the sea and new appropriately sized spaces and centers in the city.
2. Simultaneous opening up of the city by continuation of the streets to the sea and a pier-like structural development into the sea as an urban focus. Also integrating a harbor for sailing boats and the end point of the seaside promenade.
3. The new development sites are to be used for new specific purposes: Creation of a central urban space alongside the opera with new cultural facilities, mixed use including residential spaces near the harbor, commercial and leisure use on the pier, a hotel and congress center on the hill by the sea, continuation of the ministry buildings at the periphery of the city and new sports and leisure facilities along the promenade up to the pier³⁴.

Some scholars are pointing out that Batumi «is not coherent in its approach to change. But it also underlines the ever-expanding tendency of other parts of the world to uncritically adopt methods that were initially developed for Western settings, where the specific historic and socio-economic conditions and local traditions and heritage affected the decisions made. Such a realization calls

for further research and careful, individual approaches to all cities that undergo similar transformations throughout the world, and in particular in the turbulent and fast-evolving area that is the Black Sea basin today»³⁵.

The above-mentioned aspects display the challenges, which are evident in the way of protection of the cultural heritage. In modern Georgia, the issue of cultural heritage protection is one of the most important issues. The Ministry of Culture of Georgia, the National Agency for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of

Georgia, various governmental and non-governmental structures, civil society groups, and educational institutions work in this field. The Georgian Law on Cultural Heritage regulates cultural heritage protection issues. Despite the fact that many activities directed to protect the cultural heritage were/ are carried out in Georgia, the activities should still be a permanent process. Culture is in a state of constant development, and constant changes along the way require new approaches.

Notes

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Religious Challenges in the Georgian Socio-Political Environment

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Abstract: *This study aims to determine which factors drive religious conflict between Georgian Muslims and Orthodox Christians: dogmatic and value differences between the religions or the fear of the dominant religious group that the public performance of religious rituals by the minority will lead to the loss of their dominant position and privileges? The study also aims to analyze the effectiveness of the state's response in the conflict resolution process. The study is based on a qualitative method, namely 'case study'. The work purposefully selects and studies the high-profile religious conflicts in modern Georgia in 2010-2013, in particular those that occurred in the village of Nigvziani, the city of Kobuleti, and the village of Chela between the local Georgian Muslim and Orthodox populations. The study showed that state policy is less focused on resolving religious conflicts at the root and is primarily focused on appeasement rather than in-depth resolution. As a result, the study revealed that state institutions are less able to serve as a neutral "arbitrator" in the regulation of religious conflicts. Despite the adoption of numerous laws, decisions, and regulations by the state at the legislative, formalized level, unresolved or difficult-to-resolve issues persist in practice, hindering mutual acceptance and the perception among ethnically Georgian people of different faiths of themselves as one society. Finally, the research process confirms that the concept of the modern Georgian nation was to some extent based on Orthodox identity, leaving people of other faiths outside the Georgian national identity, and, most of all, the ethnically Georgian but religiously Muslim population.*

Keywords: *Orthodox Georgians, Muslim Georgians, Ethnicity, Challenges, State Role.*

Introduction

In the modern world, one of the most fundamental human rights is freedom of religion – a right without which it is inconceivable for a democratic state to exist. Georgia is a di-

verse country in terms of ethnicity, culture, and religion. Here, people of different faiths have lived and coexisted peacefully side by side for centuries. In modern Georgia, secularism and complete freedom of belief and religion are legally established by the

Georgian Constitution. In particular, “it is inadmissible to persecute a person because of his or her faith, religion or conscience, as well as to force him or her to express his or her views on them”¹. Also, under the Association Agreement with the European Union, as well as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights, the Georgian state has undertaken the responsibility to take adequate measures to ensure religious freedom, including through effective investigation of cases of restrictions on religious freedom and punishment of perpetrators. Despite this, there are still challenges regarding religious tolerance and acceptance of diversity. That is why it is important to determine to what extent the state fulfills its obligations. In this paper, we examine religiously motivated conflicts in several regions of Georgia: namely, the village of Nigvziani, the city of Kobuleti, and the village of Chela. The selection of these cases was based on the fact that, in all three cases, religious confrontation occurred between followers of different confessions within the same ethnic group, Georgians. It is noteworthy that, despite Georgia being an ethnically quite diverse country, which in itself determines religious diversity, religious-based disagreements mainly occur between one dominant ethnic group - Georgians. Our goal in this study is, on the one hand, to investigate the specific factors driving religious conflicts between Muslim and

Orthodox Georgians and, on the other hand, to examine the extent to which the state can resolve these conflicts.

Theoretical aspects and research methodology

Georgia, as we have already mentioned, is a multi-ethnic country from an ethno-confessional perspective. One of its tasks is to create a public space where people of different religions and ethnic backgrounds will feel loyalty to the state². This loyalty largely depends on the existence of intergroup loyalty. Suppose such loyalty and mutual acceptance are not created between the dominant Orthodox Georgians and representatives of other faiths and/or ethnic groups. In that case, it will also be challenging to establish a loyal attitude towards the state. In conditions of reduced loyalty in intergroup relations, state institutions should be strong and, even more, there must be a political will on the part of the state to act as a neutral arbiter and not be seen as a vehicle for the interests of the dominant group. In the current reality, implementing this practice is not very common. There are numerous studies in Western scientific literature on the formation of intergroup relations in multi-member societies, the process of nation-building, and the role of religion and ethnicity in this process. Anthony Smith³, one of the prominent representatives of ethnosymbolism, considers religion an important factor in the “myth-symbol” complex

of the historical past, a determinant of nations' modern identity. According to Anthony Smith's definition of ethnicity, "*The sacred territory, holy cities, and ancestral religion are often embedded in the ethnic conception and preserved in the national one*"⁴. Arnold Toynbee also emphasizes the role of religion as a constructive factor in identity. According to his theory of civilizations, religion is one of the main markers of cultural unity and local civilization, identity⁵. Toynbee when speaking of religion as one of the constructive factors, does not mean religion in a dogmatic sense, but rather a system that constructs a nation from a socio-cultural perspective. John Armstrong also emphasizes the stability and importance of religious symbols and believes that this remarkable stability is reflected in their role in maintaining ethnic continuity⁶. Ernest Gellner's views⁷ On nationalism and the origin of nations differ, as he develops a modernist theory of the nation. According to this theory, nationalism arises from the demands of modernization, in which the state seeks to standardize culture. However, even in this case, if we consider Christianity as one of the most important aspects of culture, we can easily see that, in the political discourse on building the modern Georgian state, the standardization of this culture was primarily based on Christian symbolism⁸. Unlike Gellner, Barth⁹ does not attach importance to cultural commonality for ethnic unity. According to his theory, the main

thing is not a common culture, but the boundary by which "us" and "them" are separated from each other. National identity often takes on religious identity structures¹⁰, or, at the very least, national identity itself may be of religious origin¹¹, and it can also become a powerful form of social organization¹². Alternatively, in extreme cases, it may take the form of religious nationalism and serve as the basis for national unity¹³.

Research Methodology

This study is a case study and uses a qualitative research method. At the first stage, both foreign and Georgian-language scientific literature was studied about the relationship between religion and politics, religious diversity, and Georgia's current and past experience in this regard. In the next stage of the research, we analyzed the country's existing legislative-level normative acts on religious tolerance: the Constitution of Georgia, Georgian legislation, and government decrees. In the third stage, we conducted a content analysis of news articles from various news agencies and interviews. Specifically, 35 articles, 13 interviews, and 32 information blogs were analyzed about the cases under study. The studied materials were published in the most popular Georgian online publications and agencies, such as Radio Liberty, Netgazeti, Publica, Tabula, and GHN. We conducted the research from the perspective of studying spe-

cific cases, which means analyzing specific events - religious conflicts – and examining the interdependence among the groups involved. In addition, to answer the research questions, we use another qualitative research technique – an expert survey. As part of the research, eight in-depth interviews were conducted with experts on the relationship between religion and politics, representatives of the Agency for Religious Affairs, a conflictologist, and lawyers from the Institute for Tolerance and Diversity. For the expert survey, we used purposive, nonprobability sampling, selecting respondents based on their qualifications and experience. The selected political scientists and conflict analysts have experience studying these religious conflicts. At the same time, representatives of the State Agency for Religious Affairs and lawyers from the Institute for Tolerance and Diversity were involved in regulating and resolving them. The interviews were conducted during the period 2021 September–2022 February.

The study has certain limitations. In particular, it covers only those high-profile religious conflicts that have occurred in modern Georgia, about which court rulings and public defender's reports already exist, which allowed us to study the role of the state in the conflict management process; therefore, the study does not cover ongoing or unreported religious conflicts. Also, the study does not include ethnically motivated conflicts, which may have had a reli-

gious character, but the main reason for the conflict was ethnic, not religious affiliation. As a limitation, we note that the study includes only conflicts among ethnic Georgians on religious grounds.

The Question of Georgian Muslims: A Brief Historical Retrospective

As mentioned earlier, the coexistence of representatives of different religions side by side has never been foreign to Georgian history. It was also the case in the nineteenth century, when Georgia ceased to exist as an independent political entity and was annexed by the Tsarist Russian Empire. Although the official policy of Tsarist Russia prioritized Orthodoxy, in practice, this priority applied only to Russian Orthodoxy. Nevertheless, based on centuries-old traditions of ethnic and religious tolerance and coexistence, it remained commonplace in Georgian society. Especially in Tbilisi, the country's capital, and other large urban areas, Orthodox Georgians, Armenians, Jews, Greeks, and Muslims participated together in public and economic life, engaged in trade and cultural exchange, and lived side by side in the same public spaces. A clear example of all this is the presence of cult buildings of various denominations – Orthodox churches, a synagogue, a mosque, and a Georgian cathedral – operating side by side on one of Tbilisi's main streets, Kote Abkhazi Street. However, the same cannot be

said about relations with ethnically Georgian, but religiously Muslim Georgians. According to the 2014 census, the Muslim population in Georgia is 398,677, of whom 132,852 – mostly ethnic Georgian Muslims – live in the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara, along the Black Sea coast in southwestern Georgia¹⁴. The Islamization of the Adjara population dates back to the 16th century, when the territory became part of the Ottoman Empire following its conquest. Over time, the Christian Adjarians (Georgians) under the Ottoman Empire were forced to renounce Orthodoxy and convert to Islam under pressure. The reunification of Adjara with Georgia occurred only in the 19th century, following Russia's victory in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878, the Treaty of San Stefano, and the Congress of Berlin. However, taking drastic steps to integrate the Adjara population with the Georgian population was not in the interests of Tsarist Russia - Adjara became part of the Russian Empire, not Georgia (since the latter was already part of the Russian Empire). Such was the idea of the Tsarist imperial policy. Part of this policy was that the Russian government considered the Adjarian Georgians not Georgians, but 'Tatars', which means Muslims¹⁵. Moreover, they were considered politically unreliable because they lived in Ottoman border regions and might be carriers of Ottoman influence.

Throughout Georgia's centuries-old history, Orthodoxy has been the

most important marker that defined being Georgian. One of the main goals of all historical conquerors was to fight against Orthodoxy. During various wars of conquest and invasions, the destruction and burning of churches, the killing of clergy, and the forcing of conquered and defeated populations to reject Orthodoxy and convert to Islam were important steps towards this goal. Accordingly, it is logical that Orthodoxy has become the most important determining factor of Georgian identity. Given these historical experiences, it is probably not difficult to understand why Georgian society found it difficult to accept and perceive as "one of its own" the ethnically Georgian, Georgian-speaking (Georgian remained the language of communication throughout the reunified territory of Adjara) but religiously non-Orthodox Muslims.

On the other hand, the "Muslim" Georgians were also less accepting of Christian Georgians, the 'Gurjs'. In this regard, the Ottoman Empire did not lack any attempts over the centuries. This problem was well understood by Georgian thinkers of the second half of the nineteenth century; they did not lack efforts in this direction and did everything within their power to promote the integration of Georgian Muslims. On the one hand, they should raise awareness in this direction among the Georgian population. On the other hand, they aimed to spread Georgian literacy among the predominantly Muslim population.

The defining postulate of being Georgian, precisely considering the history of Georgia, was formulated by the famous Georgian writer and public figure, recognized as the father of the nation, Ilia Chavchavadze back in 1863 in the following way: "Whoever seeks the good of the nation must love its language, its homeland, and its faith, for in the unity of these three lies its soul and life."¹⁶ Although the reunion with Adjara caused great excitement in Georgian society, the establishment of the perception of Muslim Georgians as ethnic Georgians and not as "Turks" remained a significant problem¹⁷. This reality led to a gradual change in the three hypostases proposed by Chavchavadze: in the letters published since 1977, "faith" is replaced by the 'spirit of unity. Moreover, in 1895, he directly emphasizes that the main condition for the nation's survival is unity: "Language and homeland are dead without unity, but unity is the soul and life of the nation"¹⁸. What could have been the reason for such a transformation? It is clear that the replacement of faith within the triad—homeland, language, and religion—began precisely when the territory of Adjara was returned to Georgia and, accordingly, the integration of Muslim Georgians into Georgian society became necessary to recognize them as "ours".

"Well, Georgians, you know how to show yourself to your newly joined brothers! Now you know how to prove to the country the will of your fathers: "A brother is for a brother,

for a black day." Now it will become clear whether this will be an empty word or a full deed for you"¹⁹.

Georgian public figures made significant efforts towards this "full deed" in the 19th century. Georgian enlighteners actively sought to lay the groundwork for unity between Georgian Orthodox Christians and Adjarian Muslims. Georgian newspapers of that period often published the history of the Georgians of Adjara, emphasizing this region as a historical part of Georgia. Freedom of religion is a natural human right, and forced conversion from one religion to another restricts this right. In addition to the distrust among Orthodox Georgians, as mentioned above, the matter was further complicated by the fact that, although Muslim Georgians spoke Georgian and preserved Georgian traditions, folklore, and the institution of the family, they also had little trust in Christian Georgians. The spread of education and cultural integration was considered the only and most important way to restore national unity by 19th-century Georgian educators. In this regard, the contribution of Zakaria Chichinadze is particularly noteworthy, as he was among the first to promote the dissemination of Georgian books and literature among Georgians. The teaching of the history of Georgia (as a homeland) and the Georgian language was considered by Z. Chichinadze to be the most important work aimed at "awakening the dormant national feelings" among Georgian

Muslims²⁰. To achieve this goal, Z. Chichinadze traveled to Adjara for about 10 years, distributing Georgian-language books with his own funds. Many Muslim Georgians learned to read and write Georgian thanks to him. However, the overall background of relations between Muslim and Christian Georgians remained unfavorable. It is confirmed by the fact that in the 20th century, during the period of Georgia's independence (1918-1921), in 1920, a member of the Social Democratic Party, Petre Geleishvili, was sent to Atjara specifically to study the situation of the "Makhmadian Georgians" (the same as "Muslim Georgians") and to formulate recommendations. The fact that the Constituent Assembly of Georgia sent a special representative on a similar mission during the drafting of the Constitution is a strong indication of the issue's relevance. "They hate us... Unfortunately, we have not done anything that would, if not eradicate this feeling of hatred from the hearts of the people, at least change the attitude of such people towards us²¹" wrote P. Geleishvili to the government of independent Georgia. At a formal level, the 1921 Georgian Constitution relegated ethno-cultural and religious differences among the population to the background (Adjara was also granted autonomous status). Religious rights were also enshrined, but this was not implemented in practice. The independent Republic of Georgia lasted only three years and ended on February 1921, due to Bolshevik an-

nexation²². As a result of Sovietization, a new stage in Georgia's nation-building emerged. Soviet nationalism, which was based on a primordialist understanding of the nation, created the practice of titular nations and, accordingly, the extreme polarization of ethnicity. It is also interesting that the Soviet Union was officially based on an atheistic ideology. In reality, this was the state's control of spiritual independence. In the early stages of the Soviet period, the result of this policy was the massive demolition of churches, their destruction, a change of function, and the persecution of clergy with particular cruelty. The goal of the Soviet project was one: the formation of Homo Sovieticus, and religion was not a field of interest in this process. Accordingly, the Soviet repressive policy, which, among other things, massively persecuted religious institutions (especially in the first stage of the Soviet era), paid no attention to the rapprochement of religious differences between the Muslims and Christians. It was not its goal. As Richard Sakva notes, the Soviet man was to be formed as a member of a supranational unity, and in this unity, there was no place for ethnic or even religious ties²³. Accordingly, the result of such 70-year politics was that during the Soviet period, there was practically no religious conflict between Orthodox Georgians and Muslim Georgians (as well as between representatives of other religions). However, this did not mean at all that the concept of religious difference, "ours and oth-

ers”, had disappeared somewhere. It soon became apparent after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Religious denominations and formalized institutional relations since 1990th

After the collapse of the Soviet Union and Georgia's independence (1991), Georgia, like other post-Soviet republics, faced many challenges. Chief among these challenges was the long-standing “tradition” of statelessness, which ultimately influenced all subsequent processes. The absence of state institutions, civil war, ethnic and territorial confrontation within the country (with Russian intervention and incitement), and the difficult economic and social background have pushed into the background such important issues as the protection of human rights, civic activism, urban development, and the determination of the political, social, and other rights of members of various religious groups as all the population of the country. Accordingly, the issue of religious tolerance, like many other important topics, was neither on the agenda nor could it be. One of the first and most significant steps in state-building was the adoption of Georgia's 1995 Constitution. Article 9 of the Constitution of Georgia stipulates that “the state proclaims complete freedom of belief and religion and declares the independence of the state and religious associations from each other”²⁴. Thus, in this article, the state clearly

establishes a secular model, implying that it is not affiliated with any particular religion and ensuring the equality of all religious communities. Considering the country's social and cultural realities and historical past, the 2002 Constitutional Agreement (concordat) between Georgia and the Georgian Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church can be considered an important institutional step towards establishing a legal framework. The Concordat was an attempt to formalize the relationship between the state and the Orthodox Church. This treaty recognized the special role of Orthodoxy and the Church in Georgia's history, reflected in the granting of special status to the Orthodox Church. However, at the same time, the document once again confirms the state's tolerant policy towards other religious denominations living in the country: “The state recognizes the special role of the Georgian Orthodox Church in the history of the country, but ensures the freedom and equality of all other religious associations by law”²⁵.

An important step in regulating legal norms in the field of religion was the determination of the legal status of religious associations in 2011. In particular, following legislative amendments to the Civil Code enacted by the Parliament of Georgia, religious associations in Georgia were allowed to register as legal entities under public law (LEPLs). Until 2011, only Orthodox Christians had such a legal status, while other denominations (for example, Muslims,

Jehovah's Witnesses, Catholics, Gregorians, Jews) functioned as private organizations. This change was an important step towards legal guarantees of religious equality and tolerance. This reform was primarily assessed as a progressive step by various international organizations (the OSCE, Council of Europe, and Amnesty International). However, international organizations were also concerned about the law's shortcomings and the dangers it poses. One of the shortcomings is the excessively rapid pace of adoption of the changes. For example, the law in question was adopted in five days following three hearings and 'excludes the possibility of participating in the religious communities, and especially the involvement of religious minorities in this process'²⁶. The fact that the Orthodox Church continues to enjoy a privileged legal and factual position under the amendments, for example, priority in the matter of property restitution, has been considered contrary to the principle of equality in terms of religious tolerance in general²⁷. Although implementing these changes creates a legal framework, it cannot eliminate the institutional inequalities between different confessions²⁸.

One of the shortcomings of Georgia's steps towards religious tolerance is that the state has never calculated the amount of damage caused to the Orthodox Church during the Soviet period, even though this topic has been repeatedly discussed on the agenda of both the government and

opposition parties. As a result, the church's funding practice is not based on compensation for damages, but on a direct subsidy model. This funding rule also applies to Muslim and Jewish communities, the Armenian Apostolic Church, and the Catholic Church. The practice of determining the amount of damage caused during the Soviet period is also not taken into account in this case. Among the problems noted is that, unlike the Orthodox Church, the state fully controls the purpose and spending of funding for four religious organizations, which poses a risk of interference with their autonomy²⁹.

The creation of the State Agency for Religious Affairs in 2014, whose goal is to promote dialogue between the state and religious communities and prevent conflicts, was also met with conflicting assessments. On the one hand, the stated goals of returning property lost as a result of repression of religious groups, developing state strategies on education and tolerance, and participating in dialogues between representatives of different religions in regions characterized by religious conflict can be considered positive; on the other hand, there are also concerns about several aspects of the newly created agency's mandate. In particular, the establishment of this institution was not preceded by consultations with the Council of Religions under the Public Defender and non-governmental organizations working on issues of religious freedom. The creation of a non-representative body on religious is-

sues, subordinate to the Prime Minister, also carries risks. This practice of creating a centralized state institution carries the risk of arbitrary state interference in the autonomy of religious communities³⁰.

An important step was taken to further strengthen the institutional framework for religious equality in 2021, when, at the initiative of the State Agency for Religious Issues of Georgia and with the support of international organizations OSCE/ODIHR, UNDP Georgia, and the Council of Europe's Tolerance and Diversity Program, an interfaith working group was established within the State Agency for Religious Issues. Moreover, since 2021, an interreligious working group has been operating with the agency, with a format more akin to a consultative platform between the state and religious communities.

In conclusion, since 1995, the Georgian state has established a legislative and institutional framework to ensure religious freedom and the principle of tolerance. Despite shortcomings in the legislation, the steps taken to establish a legal framework for religious equality can be assessed as a positive development. At the legal level, the rights of all religious groups are recognized and protected.

Case study: Overview of challenges

Nigvziani village incident. The village of Nigvziani is located in the Guria region. 35% of the population

consists of eco-migrants who settled from Atjara in the 1970s and again in the late 1980s, many of whom identify as “Georgian Muslims”³¹. During the Soviet period, religious differences did not become (at least openly) a cause of religious conflict (as we have already mentioned above, this was facilitated, on the one hand, by the mass repressions of the Soviet government at the initial stage, including the suppression of religious services, and on the other hand, by the established policy of atheism). After gaining independence, the peaceful coexistence of the Christian and Muslim populations continued for more than two decades. However, in 2010, a conflict between them on religious grounds took place for the first time. According to the Public Defender of Georgia, the conflict was sparked by the Muslims' desire to open a chapel. According to the local mufti, the district municipality again opposed the plan. It offered to organize transportation for Muslims to Kobuleti (a nearby city) instead of the mosque so that they could pray there. However, instead of a mosque, Muslims opened a public chapel in a private house where Georgian Muslims prayed every Friday. This controversy was not widely covered and, accordingly, did not cause a nationwide response. However, the conflict soon continued, and in 2012, on the holiday of Bayram, after the end of Friday prayers, 150 Christians blocked the road for Muslims and demanded the closure of the chapel³². Finally, as a result of meetings held

at the village council involving various institutions, the parties agreed that no new religious buildings would be built without permission, but that Muslims would be allowed to use their place of worship. As a result, the conflict was stabilized to some extent, and the Muslim population of Nigvziani was granted the right to pray.

The Kobuleti Incident. Another high-profile incident of conflict between Georgian Muslims and Christians occurred in Kobuleti. Kobuleti is the second largest city in the Adjara region, where the majority of the population (unlike the mountainous villages of Adjara) is Christian. In 2014, ethnic Georgian Orthodox Christians, the dominant religious group, protested the construction of a Muslim school in Kobuleti and hung a severed pig's head on the building's door. The aforementioned action elicited a strong response from Muslims living in Georgia and representatives of civil society. A case was opened under Article 151 of the Criminal Code, i.e., threats³³.

Regarding this incident, the Georgian Patriarchate issued a statement, according to which the incident in Kobuleti is a gross insult to the religious feelings of Muslim believers and such an act is unacceptable for both Christianity and any traditional religion. However, the Patriarchate representative also stated that the construction of an Islamic boarding school, whose religious purpose is beyond doubt, was carried out against the will of the absolute major-

ity of the population, which could not be morally justified. On the other hand, in the same statement, the Patriarchate assessed the action in question - hanging a pork roast on the door of a Muslim - as a provocation³⁴. At this stage, the mosque in Kobuleti is still not officially functioning.

The case of the Village of Chela.

Finally, the study included a conflict that occurred in the village of Chela, Chechla community, Adigeni municipality, Samtskhe-Javakheti region. The village of Chela is also mixed in terms of religion, with both the local Orthodox population and ecomigrants from Adjara living there. The confrontation between Orthodox and Muslim Georgians began in July 2013, when local Muslims installed a minaret next to a mosque. The local Muslim community believes that a minaret is a necessary attribute of a mosque. Followers of Islam believe that the construction of a minaret will not restrict the rights of Christian neighbors, because from this place neither the mullah will call the faithful to prayer, nor will anyone be disturbed by loudspeakers³⁵. However, the construction of this mosque was mainly carried out in violation of legal norms. "They had no intention of erecting the minaret and explained this by saying that they could not obtain such a permit, since there is no law that defines the rules for the construction of a mosque," says a representative of the Tolerance Center in an interview³⁶. In addition, as it turns out, the minaret was imported from

Turkey to Georgia. The Muslim residents of Chela explain this by saying that it would not have been possible to manufacture it in Georgia (they even collected 9,000 dollars for the minaret), so they placed the order in Turkey³⁷.

The Adigeni City Council ruled that the construction of the minarets was illegal without the local authorities' permission, and fined the landowner 200 GEL and ordered the structure dismantled. When the government began dismantling the minaret amid clashes with local Muslims, it was assumed that government officials were implementing the city council's decision. However, the Ministry of Finance's Revenue Service was formally behind the dismantling, stating that it acted for an examination to determine whether the weight and commodity code of the minaret structure corresponded to the data declared at customs during its import to Georgia from Turkey in July³⁸.

Religious Conflict: Causes and Mediation

The results of research revealed that in the cases studied, representatives of the dominant religious group, Georgian Orthodox Christians, had no problem with Islam as a religion. For example, the Orthodox population of the village of Nigvziani said in interviews with various local media outlets that they lived peacefully with their Muslim neighbors and did not want a mosque in their village.

They urged Muslims to pray not in public, but in their own homes. If there were a functioning Christian chapel in the village, where Orthodox Christians could pray publicly, the question arises: why couldn't Muslims do the same in a mosque? However, the only argument justifying this attitude was that the Orthodox represented the majority of the rural population³⁹. Also in the village, Chela, there had never been religious conflict between Muslim and Orthodox Georgians before the incident discussed in the study. As the investigation revealed, despite their religious differences, good-neighborly relations always existed between them. Moreover, as one of the Muslim Georgians noted, they even helped their Orthodox villagers build the church. An Orthodox resident of Chela also confirms this. "Yes, that is true. They brought stone and other materials in their own vehicles. We were like brothers. There was no conflict between us in life; we had a perfect relationship"⁴⁰. Moreover, as is clear from the statement issued by the Council of National Minorities under the Public Defender of Georgia regarding the aforementioned confrontation, no Georgian Orthodox signed the request from one of the initiative groups to demolish the mosque. Moreover, the entire village, including the Christian Chela residents, followed the people beaten and arrested as a result of the conflict during the demolition of the minarets in Akhaltsikhe (the central city in the region)⁴¹.

The study also revealed fascinating facts about the government's involvement in the conflicts under study. On the one hand, in all three cases considered, the government is quite passive in resolving the conflict; on the other hand, representatives of local government are, to some extent, considered instigators of the conflict. As the Muslim population of the village of Nigvzinai states, for example, in their case, the negative involvement of a local government representative, the village governor, was an obvious fact:

“They tell us that since we settled in Guria, we have to convert to Christianity. Two years ago, when the disagreement first arose, the district governor, Gia Goguadze, also intervened. Goguadze also cared about our Christianization. We are working because we have to convert you to Christianity. During my term as governor, there was no mosque, and there will never be one”⁴².

We can also speak about the discriminatory treatment of Muslim Georgians by the authorities in the pre-conflict period in the case of Kobuleti. City Hall restricted the water supply to a religious school in Kobuleti. However, in the same Kobuleti case, another state structure, the court, partially satisfied the claim of the chairman of the “Georgian Muslim Relations”. Individuals were ordered to eliminate ongoing discriminatory practices in order to ensure the unrestricted use of property in Kobuleti, including the opening

and operation of a boarding house for Muslim students in the building. It meant the termination of the plaintiffs' and persons associated with the boarding house's enjoyment of property rights, their freedom of entry into the boarding house, and their freedom of movement in the surrounding area of the building⁴³. Georgian Muslims consider the local government and its initiative to be one of the actively involved parties in the confrontation that took place in the village of Chela. The Adigeni City Council decided to demolish the minarets after a part of the local Orthodox community collected signatures. However, even in the face of the demolition of the minaret and the resulting conflict, part of the same Georgian Orthodox population states that they had no problem with the existence of the minaret, and when collecting signatures, the issue was not the dismantling of the minaret, but rather the fact that prayers were not loud and did not disturb the rest of the population. As one representative of the Orthodox community stated, “If it does not bother anyone, why shouldn't it be there? It should be there. The minaret was standing there, and nothing bothered me. I do not even know what a minaret represents”⁴⁴. The respondents interviewed during the research process also point to this type of involvement by the government and the dangers of a one-sided approach, believing that in regions such as Adigeni and the village of Chela in particular, where there is a threat of inciting conflict on reli-

religious grounds, it is entirely unacceptable for the government to commit such actions and, accordingly, to some extent, provoke conflict⁴⁵.

Another interesting fact emerged during the research process: in the case of the village of Chela, one argument for dismantling the minaret was that it had been imported from Turkey. It is also interesting that the local government used this argument. As one of the respondents noted, the state's dismantling of the minaret was clearly linked to its construction by a foreign country⁴⁶. The state's passivity is clearly evident in its approach to conflict resolution. On the one hand, for example, in the village of Nigvziani, the police did not investigate individual violations of the law and failed to ensure effective investigations⁴⁷. On the other hand, it indirectly entrusts the solution of the problem to the clergy, thus failing to demonstrate the state's function as the exclusive guarantor of human rights. "The state often fails to be impartial and enforce the law, which then allows some groups to place themselves above the law, along with frequent political provocations and the use of religious immorality to score political points with the religious majority"⁴⁸.

Conclusion

Thus, the analysis of the research results shows that, despite the historical tradition of tolerance, religious conflicts still occur among local communities in modern Georgia. In a

religiously diverse settlement, citizens coexist peacefully until representatives of the religious minority demand the public expression and enforcement of their beliefs, which then provokes protests from the religiously dominant group⁴⁹. During the research process, it was revealed that the conflict takes on an overt character in the construction of cult religious temples. Even though Muslim Georgians in the studied cases do not deny or hide their religion and openly follow their own faith and defend the dogmas defined by it, the dominant religious group confronts the religious minority on religious grounds precisely when they decide to build a cult temple.

In fact, the research process has shown that the incitement of religious conflicts among the local population in Georgia is not caused by the dogmatic and value differences between religions, but by the fear of the dominant religious group that the public performance of religious rituals by the minority will lead to the loss of their dominant position and privileges.

On the other hand, in religiously motivated conflicts, state policy is focused not on resolving them fundamentally, but on temporarily stopping them (pacifying them). Moreover, often the harsh steps taken by the state itself lead to the intensification of conflicts between Orthodox and Muslim citizens. State institutions fail to fulfill their role as a neutral "arbitrator" in the regulation of

religious conflicts. It is noteworthy that the judicial branch of government, when making decisions, takes into account the fundamental human rights recognized by the Constitution of Georgia and international law. However, the main problem is the implementation of court decisions. Local authorities, as a rule, create procedural obstacles for religious minorities and demonstrate bias towards the dominant religious group.

The research process confirms that the concept of the modern Georgian nation was, to some extent, based on Orthodox identity, which excluded people of other faiths from Georgian national identity, and, most of all, the ethnically Georgian but religiously Muslim population. The study clearly showed that the last

component of the triad of homeland, language, and unity – what Ilia Chavchavadze and 19th-century Georgian educators considered one of the most important aspects of the nation-building process – has not been fully achieved, even in modern Georgia. The study showed that the leading cause of conflicts between Muslim and Christian Georgians is the cultural-symbolic narrative based on Christianity, which often portrays Muslim Georgians as an outgroup. In conclusion, despite the legal establishment of the ideas of religious equality and civic nationalism, there is still a religious division: “us” and “them” in modern Georgia’s socio-political life, which causes some challenges to the ideas of tolerance and equality in practice.

Notes

* The grammar check of the article was conducted using Grammarly.

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⁸ It is beyond the scope of this study to discuss in detail the role of Christianity in Georgia’s historical past and/or in the process of building a modern state. However, one argument in support of this view is that, as early as the 9th century, the Georgian writer Giorgi Merchule defined ‘Kartli’ (which means Georgia) as the territory where liturgies are performed in Georgian.

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The Issue of National and Religious Minorities in the Democratic Republic of Georgia

Otar JANELIDZE

Abstract: *The Democratic Republic of Georgia became the first precedent in human history where a government was led by a social democratic party. This state existed for only three years, but left us with a remarkable experience and legacy of democratic development, including in its treatment of minorities. The government and representatives of the opposition approached the issue of national and religious minorities based on the principle of protecting their rights and not violating the interests of the state.*

In the Democratic Republic of Georgia, minorities had the full right and opportunity to participate in the political, economic, and cultural life of the state. Their rights were guaranteed by legislation, including the Law on the State Language, the Regulation on Citizenship/Subjecthood, and the Constitution. In areas densely populated by national minorities, where they constituted a majority, the use of the minority language in court alongside the state language was permitted.

The religious policy of the leadership of the Democratic Republic of Georgia was also characterized by tolerance. Despite the ongoing policy of secularization and the separation of church and state, and school and church, numerous synagogues, mosques, madrassas, and Orthodox churches operated throughout the country. Religious rites were performed there unhindered.

Despite the targeted policies of the authorities of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, the civic integration of national minorities was delayed. The process of political consolidation of the "fragmented nations" within the Georgian state was complex and could not be fully realized between 1918 and 1921.

In this article, various on a variety of primary sources, archival materials, periodicals, memoirs, and scholarly literature, we seek to analyze the issue of national and religious minorities in the Democratic Republic of Georgia, highlighting the positive results of measures taken in this field and the contradictions that accompanied the coexistence of Georgians and national minorities during the period under review.

Keywords: *Georgia, national minorities, religious policy, cultural autonomy.*

Introduction

The historical development of Georgia, situated on the crossroads of Europe and Asia, occurred in such a

way that alongside Georgians, the representatives of various other ethnic groups also found a home within its territory. On the eve of the restoration of state independence, the ethnic

and confessional composition of Georgia resembled a mosaic. Alongside Georgians lived representatives of many different nationalities.

In the Democratic Republic of Georgia, whose population amounted to 2 466 630 people, approximately twenty percent consisted of national minorities¹. These included Armenians, Turkic-speaking Muslims (then referred to as “Tatars”, later known as Azerbaijanis), Russians, Abkhazians, Greeks, Ossetians, Jews, Germans, Kurds, Ukrainians, and others. The approximate figures for the non-Georgian population were as follows: Armenians – slightly more than 200 000; Tatars – 85 000; Abkhazians – 60 000; Ossetians – 45 000; Russians – 45 000; Georgian Jews – up to 40 000; Jews – about 7 000; Greeks – 25 000; Germans – 8 000².

Thus emerged the demographic picture that Georgia, taken to the path of freedom, inherited as a puzzle legacy from the Russian Empire upon the restoration of its independence. Although Georgia’s ethnic diversity had been largely shaped artificially in the nineteenth century as a result of Russia’s colonial policy, the leaders of the Democratic Republic took into account the existing reality and provided national minorities with full opportunities for civic integration.

Much has been written on this topic in both Georgian and foreign historiography. Different authors have examined the issue from various perspectives, and their assessments often diverge.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the issue of national and reli-

gious minorities in the Democratic Republic of Georgia, to demonstrate the positive outcomes of the measures implemented in this regard, and to highlight the challenges that accompanied the coexistence of Georgians and national minorities during the period under consideration.

Methods

This article is based on a wide range of primary sources, archival materials, periodical press data, memoirs, and scholarly literature. In the course of the research, the methods of historicism, historical-comparative analysis, and document analysis were employed.

Minorities and Georgian Political Parties

In the Democratic Republic of Georgia, four main political groups were active: the ruling Social-Democratic (Labour) Party (led by Noe Jordania) and three opposition parties – the Socialist-Federalist Party of Georgia (Samson Pirtskhalava), the National-Democratic Party of Georgia (Spiridon Kedia), and the Socialist-Revolutionary Party of Georgia (Leo Shengelaya). So. Democratic Republic of Georgia was led by the Social-Democratic Government. It was a phenomenon that had no precedent before in the history of mankind. This Georgian state, which emerged in May 1918, was initially led by a coalition government, but in February 1919, after a great success in the elections to the Constituent

Assembly, the executive power was completely filled by the victorious party - the Social Democratic Party.

Upon assuming governance, the Georgian Social Democrats adopted a tolerant course toward national minorities. In the words of Noe Jordania, in Georgia “there was neither Greek nor barbarian; we were all Greeks”³. The Social Democrats opposed the oppression or discrimination of one nation by another. They pledged to the population that within the borders of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, all nations would be equal and each would be granted full opportunity to satisfy its national needs⁴.

The Socialist-Federalist Party held that Georgian citizens of non-Georgian nationality should be granted the right to form their own national-cultural associations and the special administrative organs necessary to govern them. In its pre-election platform for the Constituent Assembly, the Federalists declared: “To those non-Georgian peoples who are dispersed among us, ...we shall grant autonomy in the management of their cultural affairs. A portion of state revenues will pass into their hands, and their language will be introduced into local institutions”⁵. A similar attitude toward the non-Georgian population of Georgia was expressed by the Socialist-Revolutionary Party.

As for the National-Democratic Party of Georgia, it proclaimed that “every non-Georgian should see in Georgia a mother, not a stepmother”. The party’s program declared: “The

cultural and national rights of all non-Georgian tribes are protected by law,” and “freedom of religion is guaranteed”⁶.

As early as November 1917, the National Congress of Georgia adopted a resolution emphasizing that “the national minorities residing within Georgia shall receive full legal guarantees for their cultural development”⁷. The Act of Independence adopted by the National Council of Georgia on 26 May 1918 proclaimed that “Georgia equally guarantees to all citizens of the Republic their civil and political rights and provides free conditions of development for all nations inhabiting its territory”⁸.

The establishment of the rights of national minorities – then referred to as “small nations” or “fragmented nations” – was a constant concern of the Georgian state. Every possible option was considered to ensure the protection of minority rights without infringing upon the interests of the state.

After prolonged debates, the government of the Republic and the opposition political spectrum reached a consensus to grant the non-Georgian population national-cultural autonomy. This entailed the establishment of self-governing communities in compactly settled minority areas under the leadership of national administrations, as well as the creation of national courts, national schools, and other similar institutions⁹.

Legislation on National Minorities

It is well known that until the end of the First World War, the rights of national minorities were not given due attention even in developed states. This issue had not yet become a serious concern of international law or international politics. Against this background, in the Democratic Republic of Georgia, minorities enjoyed full rights and opportunities to participate in the political, economic, and cultural life of the state. All of this was guaranteed by legal acts, including the Law on the State Language, the Statute on Citizenship (Subjecthood), and the Constitution.

In the Democratic Republic of Georgia, ethnic identity was not an obstacle for anyone to obtain citizenship or, among other rights, political participation. Many individuals of Russian, Armenian, Azerbaijani, Ossetian, and other non-Georgian nationalities were employed in the central state administration as well as in local self-government bodies. Numerous representatives of national minorities held high and responsible positions in both civil and military institutions.

Each national minority in the Democratic Republic of Georgia had its own national council established to manage local affairs, and these councils functioned freely. Religious denominations, as well as cultural and educational institutions, operated without restriction. In Georgia, there were 80 Armenian, 60 Russian, and

31 Tatar schools, where education was conducted in native languages. Alongside Georgian – periodicals, newspapers and magazines were also published in Russian, Armenian, English, German, and French – among them *Грузия*, *Закавказское слово*, *Uzuly*, *The Georgian Messenger*, *The Georgian Mail*, *Kaukasische Post*, *La Géorgie indépendante*, *La République Géorgienne*, and others.

The law “On the Representation of National Minorities in the National Council of Georgia”, adopted on 13 September 1918, allowed the “fragmented nations” to elect 26 representatives to Georgia’s supreme legislative body. These included: Armenians – 10, Tatars – 4, Abkhazians – 3, Russians – 2, Ossetians – 2, Georgian Israelites – 2, Jews – 1, Greeks – 1, and Germans – 1.

Later, during the elections for the Constituent Assembly, participation was not restricted for political organizations formed on an ethnic basis. There were several such organizations: the National Council of Muslims of Georgia (N 6), the Muslim Union of Borchalo District (N 12), the Hellenic Democratic Union of Georgia (N 15), the Armenian Dashnaksutyun (N 4), and the Russian Social-Democratic Labour Party (N 13).

It is noteworthy that the Georgian Social-Democratic Party included 20 representatives of national minorities on its list of 130 candidates. Other political parties had smaller numbers (Socialist-Revolutionaries – 4, Federalists – 1, National-Democrats – 2)¹⁰.

As a result of the elections, deputies of nearly all nationalities residing in Georgia were represented in the Constituent Assembly, including 8 Armenians, 3 Abkhazians, 4 Russians, 2 Ossetians, 2 Germans, 2 Jews, 1 Greek, 1 Azerbaijani, and 1 Russian Molokan. Among the representatives of national minorities was also a female deputy, Eleonora Ter-Parsegova (Makhviladze).

The issue of Georgian Jews and their legal status in the Democratic Republic of Georgia deserves particular attention. The coexistence of Georgians and Georgian Jews had withstood the trials of history, and the latter had never felt like foreigners in the country. After Georgia restored its independence, Georgian Jews, like other national minorities, were nevertheless classified as an ethnic group whose political rights required additional guarantees, and parliamentary seats were allocated to them under a national quota.

One of the prominent representatives of Georgian Jews, the publicist Mikhako Khakhanashvili, regarded such an approach as mistaken, declaring that Georgian Israelites did not require special protection. "We have always participated in elections together with the Georgians and not separately... Therefore, today, the deputies sitting in our National Council, elected by us together, are our deputies as well"¹¹.

The National Council of the Democratic Republic of Georgia had already adopted, on 16 July 1918, the Law on Citizenship (Subjecthood),

which granted citizenship to all residents of the Republic, including members of national minorities. (A resident was defined as any person registered in any administrative unit of Georgia prior to 19 July 1914)¹².

The Law on Citizenship of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, approved by the Constituent Assembly on 27 May 1919, further simplified the process of obtaining citizenship. Representatives of national minorities were actively involved in drafting the Basic Law – the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Georgia – a process led by the Constitutional Commission of the Constituent Assembly¹³.

The Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, adopted on 21 February 1921, devoted an entire chapter (Chapter XIV) to national minorities, consisting of nine articles. These provisions codified the rights that national minorities had in practice enjoyed during the years 1918–1921.

The Constitution fully reflected and legalized the policy and attitude that the Georgian government and opposition political forces had maintained toward national minorities from the moment of the restoration of statehood until the end of the Democratic Republic¹⁴.

During the period under discussion, national minorities felt more secure and comfortable in the Democratic Republic of Georgia than in any other political entities of the Caucasus, because in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the Mountain Republic, ethnic tensions were much more severe.

Religious Policy

Due to its geopolitical location, Georgia has for centuries been a place not only for dialogue between various cultures and civilizations, but also for the interaction of Eastern and Western religions. It is largely because of these special circumstances that Georgians have become a tolerant people. In Tbilisi, you can still find a mosque and synagogue next to an Orthodox cathedral. A little further away is a Catholic church, and before the establishment of Soviet rule, a Lutheran church also stood here.

It is well known that the Democratic Republic of Georgia pursued a policy of secularism: the Church was separated from the state, and the school was separated from the Church. Nevertheless, the Georgian Orthodox Church welcomed the country's liberation and the renewal of its sovereign life. On 2 June 1918, Catholicos-Patriarch Kirion II offered a thanksgiving prayer to mark the restoration of Georgia's state independence. The clergy, in the presence of a large congregation, celebrated a service of thanksgiving at the Sioni Cathedral on 12 March 1919, the day of the opening of the Constituent Assembly of Georgia.

Georgian Catholics also convened a gathering in Tbilisi, at the Church of Saints Peter and Paul, where they unanimously adopted an address congratulating all of Georgia on its independence and wishing success to the young Republic.

From the perspective of the Georgian Orthodox clergy, the state was expected to support the autocephalous Church of Georgia, which was in a difficult financial condition and struggled for survival. Church leaders likewise believed that, in an independent country, the traditional relationship between Church and state should continue, yet this did not occur.

As a result of the Democratic Republic's confessional policy, the rights and competence of the Church were significantly restricted. All types of theological schools were declared state property and placed under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education¹⁵. The Church was entirely excluded from the process of education and upbringing; the teaching of the Law of God in schools was prohibited by a special law¹⁶. The Church was deprived of property of historical significance – ecclesiastical lands, mills, forests, and other holdings.

By the law of 17 June 1919, several church holidays were abolished: Candlemas, Good Friday, the third day of Easter, Pentecost, the Transfiguration, the Dormition, the Nativity of the Virgin, the Elevation of the Cross, and the Presentation of the Virgin¹⁷.

The Church retained only the functions of maintaining and protecting churches, and of registering births, marriages, and deaths. For this reason, throughout the entire existence of the Republic, the Church

continued to receive financial support from the state budget.

It should be noted that the state was relatively more accommodating toward other confessions. For example, the prohibition of the Law of God instruction in schools applied in practice only to Georgian schools. As for non-Georgian schools, this law was not enforced upon them; in the schools of national minorities, religion could be freely taught. Moreover, in Muslim schools, the salaries of teachers of Sharia were paid by the State¹⁸.

Another noteworthy example is that the Ministry of Labor of the Democratic Republic of Georgia sent official letters to the national councils of Armenians, Muslims, and Jews, asking them to specify which days were considered religious holidays within their communities. The government intended to exempt workers and employees of those nationalities from work on those days¹⁸.

Between 1918 and 1921, Georgian Jews enjoyed a form of religious autonomy. The government took their interests into account and approved the "Statute on the Religious and Cultural-Educational Rights of Georgian Jews", which confirmed their full freedom in spiritual and cultural-educational activities such as establishing Torah synagogues, prayer houses, scientific, educational, and charitable institutions, and others²⁰.

The authorities of the Democratic Republic of Georgia also ensured, through legislative acts, the freedom of the Islamic faith. At that time, nu-

merous mosques and madrasas operated throughout the country, where religious rituals were performed without interference²¹. Religious communities of the Roman Catholic and Armenian-Gregorian Apostolic confessions likewise enjoyed full protection.

In the Democratic Republic of Georgia, no one ever questioned that citizens of other faiths were as legitimate and complete members of the Georgian state as Orthodox Christians. As the newspaper *Sakartvelos Respublika* ("The Georgian Republic") observed: "For the Georgian nation, the question has never been confined to religious boundaries. For it, every believer of any faith is equally Georgian – whether Orthodox, Catholic, Israelite, Muslim, or otherwise. All of them are children of one family – Georgia"²².

The 1921 Constitution enshrined these principles, declaring: "No religion shall have any preeminence... Every citizen enjoys complete freedom of conscience. No one may be persecuted or have their political or civil rights restricted because of religion or belief. Everyone is free to profess any faith they choose, to change their faith, or to belong to no religious denomination at all".

Language Policy

On 1 October 1918, the National Council of Georgia enacted a law declaring the Georgian language as the state language. The same law stipulated that "a representative of a

national minority who does not know the state language may deliver a speech in his or her mother tongue”²³. A subsequent law, the Regulation on the Use of Language, further clarified this provision, stating: “A representative of a national minority who does not know the Georgian language may speak, besides his or her native tongue, in any minority language that is understood by at least one member of the presidium”.

Legislation also regulated the use of languages in local self-government bodies. It was specified that “if more than half of the citizens residing within a local self-governing unit speak a non-Georgian language, the self-governing body may, by its own decision, allow the use of this majority language alongside the state language”²⁴.

National minorities were entitled to receive education in their native languages; however, the law also required that they study the state language. In the regions compactly populated by minorities, where they formed a majority, judicial proceedings could be conducted in minority languages in parallel with the state language²⁵. The Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Georgia further guaranteed national minorities access to education and the right to cultural self-determination, ensuring the principle of non-interference by the state²⁶.

A segment of the Armenian population demanded that, alongside Georgian, the Armenian and Russian languages be granted the status of

official administrative languages. The Russian National Council in Georgia and other Russian nationalist groups supported maintaining the dominant position of the Russian language, seeking to preserve their “political and social privileges through linguistic supremacy”²⁷. The Georgian government, however, remained firm in its position and did not satisfy these demands. As a result, the Armenian press accused the Georgian authorities of national discrimination and violations of human rights.

The Armenian National Council in Tbilisi advocated for self-government among the Armenian population, criticized the government’s policy of nationalization, and requested that the Armenian language be equalized with Georgian in local administrations and courts²⁸.

Certain minority groups expressed dissatisfaction with the policy of “Georgianization” in schools, which introduced the compulsory teaching of the Georgian language, Georgian history, and Georgian geography in all educational institutions. The government did not revise this state-oriented decision but agreed to a partial compromise: for those who did not know Georgian, the above subjects could be taught in Russian. To assist citizens unfamiliar with the state language, special Georgian language courses were established, and civil servants were granted a six-month period to learn Georgian.

Overall, the language policy of the Democratic Republic of Georgia did not contradict democratic princi-

ples. The state did not oppress any national group; rather, it showed benevolence even toward foreign nationals who had fled the civil war in their own countries. In this regard, the Republic became a safe haven for many Russian intellectuals, including almost the entire troupe of the Moscow Art Theatre, who continued their artistic work in Tbilisi under favorable conditions. Among those who found refuge in Georgia in 1920 was the distinguished poet Osip Mandelstam, along with other prominent Russian cultural figures.

Civil Integration Challenges

A significant portion of Georgia's national minorities identified themselves with the Georgian state and shared the values promoted by the newly established sovereign republic. However, a smaller segment became alienated from the independent Georgian state. Their unfriendly attitude toward Georgia's independence complicated the timely and successful resolution of the national question. For instance, while the majority of Armenians residing in Georgia remained loyal to the Democratic Republic, the population of Armenian villages compactly settled in Borchalo District sided with the Armenian army during the Georgian-Armenian military conflict in December 1918. Moreover, a large cache of weapons was discovered in the office of the Armenian National Council in Tbilisi, intended by the leaders of the Dashnaktsutyun party

for distribution among the city's Armenian population. As a result, the Ministry of Internal Affairs conducted searches in the Armenian-populated districts of the capital and arrested several individuals with anti-Georgian sentiments. By government decision, around two thousand Armenians were temporarily resettled from Tbilisi to western Georgia. The absolute majority of Armenians who maintained loyalty to the Georgian Republic were not subjected to any repressive measures.

At the same time, the Georgian government extended assistance to Armenian refugees who had fled to Georgia, allocating 40 million maneti (the Georgian currency) for their relief in 1918, whereas only 3 million maneti could be raised for Georgian refugees in need²⁹.

During the period under consideration, national minorities felt more comfortable in the Democratic Republic of Georgia than in other political entities of the Caucasus region, where ethnic conflicts in Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the Mountain Republic were far more acute.

Despite this reality, some representatives of non-Georgian ethnic groups residing in Georgia refused to recognize the jurisdiction of the Georgian state and attempted to distance themselves from it. In Abkhazia and in Ossetian-inhabited villages of Inner Kartli, separatist movements emerged under slogans of secession from Georgia and unification with Soviet Russia. These movements were led by local (including Georgian)

Bolsheviks, who enjoyed significant support from the Kremlin.

The Ossetians demanded the creation of a “South Ossetian Autonomous Region,” with Tskhinvali as its administrative center, while the government’s proposal envisaged only a district (mazra) with Java as its center³⁰. Ossetian communities rose against the Democratic Republic of Georgia several times, alternately demanding autonomy, independence, or incorporation into Russia. Bolshevik uprisings aimed at establishing Soviet power also took place in Abkhazia³¹.

The Democratic Republic of Georgia successfully prevented separatism and safeguarded the country’s territorial integrity. The Abkhazians, who had no other homeland, were constitutionally granted political autonomy within Georgia, whereas the Ossetians – whose principal homeland lay in the North Caucasus – were not entitled to and did not receive such status.

The government of the Democratic Republic of Georgia was obliged to protect the sovereignty of the newly created state, ensure internal peace and stability, and therefore, individuals involved in anti-state activities, regardless of their ethnicity, were sometimes imprisoned or expelled from Georgia. These circumstances, along with migratory processes, somewhat altered the demographic composition of the Georgian capital. By the summer of 1920, for every 100 Georgians in Tbilisi there were:

125 Armenians, 49 Russians, 13 Tatars, and 18 others³².

While recognizing, protecting, and respecting the rights of national minorities, the state also required them to fulfill certain civic obligations. The prevailing approach was as follows: “Everything that can be granted without harm to the state should be granted”, yet “the minority must understand that our republic is their republic, and whatever harms the state harms them as well”³³. For example, representatives of national minorities were subject to the same military conscription – service in the armed forces, whether in the regular army or militia – as Georgian men aged 20 to 40.

It must be noted that the non-Georgian citizens of the Republic who were loyal to the Georgian state performed this duty conscientiously and contributed to strengthening the country’s defense capability.

Foreign authors also drew attention to the difficulties faced by the Democratic Republic of Georgia in its relations with national minorities. Unfortunately, some of them were unfamiliar with Georgian primary sources. For instance, Firuz Kazemzadeh, whose book – based mainly on Russian Bolshevik literature – was published in 1951, even spoke of “Georgian nationalism and imperialism,” writing that as a result of this policy, in Georgia “tens of thousands Russian officials, telegraph and postal employees, and even railway workers, lost their jobs”³⁴.

The complete opposite of nationalist policy is demonstrated by an event that occurred in 1918. At the end of that year, the authorities permitted the settlement of Yazidi Kurds, persecuted by the Ottoman government, and some Muslim Kurds in Georgia³⁵.

The American historian Stephen Jones also identifies certain shortcomings in the Democratic Republic's treatment of national and religious minorities. However, he offers an explanation, noting that "the Democratic Republic of Georgia was a nation-building, nationalizing state. For newborn states that need modernization, unification, and consolidation of legitimacy, this is a normal condition." He further emphasizes that for the Georgian government, the ethnic question was simultaneously "a question of national security"³⁶.

Conclusion

The Democratic Republic of Georgia existed less than three years. Despite this short period and the many external and internal challenges that accompanied the construction

of the Georgian state, the foundations of liberal democracy were set up, with its inherent equality of individuals, civil liberties, separation of powers, multi-party system, universal suffrage, and so on. Among the democratic values affirmed in this state, the rights of national and religious minorities were particularly prominent. Freedom of religion, speech, and expression was protected, and individuals were not subjected to discrimination. The republic's leadership understood well that the country's internal strength and stability largely depended on the correct and reasonable regulation of interethnic relations. This is precisely why, in Georgia from 1918 to 1921, no nation or nationality was subjected to oppression on the basis of nationality.

Despite the Georgian government's consistent policy, the civil integration of national minorities progressed slowly. The process of political consolidation between the "fragmented nations" and the Georgian state unfolded in a contradictory manner and was not fully achieved during the years 1918-1921.

Notes

- ¹ G. Peradze, „The Population of Georgia According to the 1917 Census, Central Statistical Office of the Georgian SSR”, *Statistical Bulletin*, Nr. 1, Tbilisi, 1921, pp. 14-15.
- ² Newspaper *Sakhalkho Sakme* (Public Affair), 10 September 1918.
- ³ N. Jordania, *My Past*, "Sarangi" Publishing House, Tbilisi, 1990, p. 104.

- ⁴ Newspaper *Ertoba* (Unity), 22 January 1919.
- ⁵ Newspaper *Sakhalkho Sakme*, 26 January 1919.
- ⁶ Newspaper *Sakartvelo* (Georgia), 29 January 1921.
- ⁷ *Ibidem*, 21 November 1917.
- ⁸ National Archives of Georgia, Central Historical Archive, Fund 1836, ref. 1, cas. N 99, sheet 1.

- ⁹ *Ibidem*, Fund 1825, ref. 1, cas. N 126, sheet 34.
- ¹⁰ *The First General Democratic Elections in Independent Georgia*, Tbilisi, 2018, pp. 35, 39, 42, 49.
- ¹¹ Newspaper *Sakhalkho Sakme*, 1918, August 3-4.
- ¹² *Collection of Legal Acts of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, 1918-1921*, Tbilisi, 1990, p. 46.
- ¹³ *Collection of Laws and Government Decrees*, Tbilisi, 1919, Nr. 8.
- ¹⁴ O. Janelidze, N. Sadghobelashvili, „The Issue of National Minorities in the Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Georgia”, *e-Journal History, Archaeology, Ethnology*, Vol. XII, 2024, p. 182.
- ¹⁵ National Archives of Georgia, Central Historical Archive, Fund 1836, ref. 1, cas. N 258, sheet 12.
- ¹⁶ *Collection of Legal Acts of the Democratic Republic of Georgia. 1918-1921*, Tbilisi, 1990, p. 110.
- ¹⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 273-274.
- ¹⁸ National Archives of Georgia, Central Historical Archive, Fund 1836, ref. 1, cas. N 261, sheet 3.
- ¹⁹ Newspaper *Sakhalkho Sakme*, 18 September 1920.
- ²⁰ I. Ephremashvili, *The History of the Jews of Georgia*, Vol. 1, Tbilisi, 2023, pp. 337-339.
- ²¹ National Archives of Georgia, Central Historical Archive, Fund 1836, ref. 1, cas. N 258, sheet 12.
- ²² Newspaper *Sakartvelos Respublika* (The Georgian Republic), 9 August 1918.
- ²³ *Collection of Legal Acts of the Democratic Republic of Georgia. 1918-1921*, Tbilisi, 1990, pp. 80-81.
- ²⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 83, 206.
- ²⁵ Newspaper *Ertoba*, 23 September 1919.
- ²⁶ A. Khvedeliani, *Educational Policy and the Formation of National Identity in the Democratic Republic of Georgia (1918-1921)*, PhD Dissertation in Cultural Studies, Tbilisi, 2022, p. 165.
- ²⁷ Newspaper *Sakartvelos Respublika*, 8 August 1918.
- ²⁸ *Memorandum to the Constituent Assembly on the National Self-Government of Armenians in Georgia*, 1919, p. 74.
- ²⁹ E. Kvachantiradze, „The Migration of Armenians to Georgia in 1918”, *Clio*, Nr. 11, 2001, p. 92.
- ³⁰ O. Janelidze, *The Democratic Republic of Georgia 1918-1921*, Georgian National Museum, Tbilisi, 2018, p. 48.
- ³¹ Idem, „The Abkhaz Issue in the Constituent Assembly of Georgia”, *Global Journal of Human-Social Science: F Political Science*, Vol. 21, Issue 4, Version 1.0, 2021, pp. 1-7.
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Quota-Based Approaches to Ethnic Minority Integration in Higher Education: The Case of Georgia*

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Abstract: *This article examines the integration of ethnic minorities in Georgia from the perspective of language education and civic identity formation. Since the restoration of state independence, linguistic diversity, the geographical concentration of minorities, and limited access to Georgian-language education have created significant barriers to full participation in public life. In response, the state has gradually developed several educational initiatives to improve Georgian language proficiency and strengthen civic cohesion. The study focuses on a government initiative implemented in the higher education system, a quota-based preparatory program (known as the 1+4 model), which aims to support the study of the Georgian language and promote the academic and social integration of students from ethnic minorities.*

The research methodology is based on a qualitative analysis that combines a review of policy documents and academic literature with semi-structured interviews with ethnic minority students enrolled in higher education through state quotas. This approach allows us to understand not only institutional structures, but also students' personal experiences during linguistic and cultural transition.

The article argues that language learning for minority students is both an educational process and an identity-formation process. Knowledge of the state language ensures access to higher education, employment, and civic engagement, and also influences students' sense of belonging and national identity.

The study highlights that integration is most effective when language learning is accompanied by inclusive public representation and a positive symbolic message about the place of minorities in the country.

The study concludes that successful integration policies should focus on sustainable language support, culturally appropriate teaching methods, and the promotion of a common civic identity without compromising cultural distinctiveness. Strengthening these elements helps build a more unified and inclusive society in Georgia.

Keywords: *Inclusive education; Affirmative action; Ethnic minorities; 1+4 program; Georgia.*

Introduction

Several years ago, a student enrolled in the quota program at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, where he studied political science and the Georgian language. Several years ago, one of our students enrolled in the quota program at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, where he studied political science and the Georgian language. We remember him particularly because of one meaningful moment during his studies. After viewing a social video produced by the Ministry of Defence of Georgia in honor of Independence Day, he began to integrate with students from ethnic majorities. The video featured soldiers from an ethnic minority speaking Georgian and congratulating the nation on Independence Day, with their surnames displayed as subtitles to highlight their ethnic backgrounds. After watching the video, the student proudly remarked, “Look at how many of our people – ethnic minorities – defend our homeland.” This statement reflected his progress, showing a development from a shy student into a young person who connected his identity to Georgia.

This case can be examined as an example of why integrating ethnic minorities is considered a fundamental principle of modern state policies. Access to quality education is not only essential for individuals to realize their potential but also plays a significant role in promoting social mobility and civic engagement. Con-

sequently, higher education systems are vital in helping ethnic minority groups become fully participating members of the integration process.

Georgia is a multiethnic country where ethnic minorities play a significant role in the overall population. According to the 2014 census, these minority groups make up 13.2% of the population, with Azerbaijanians constituting 6.3% $N=233,000$ and Armenians 4.5% $N=168,100$ ¹. The state-building process in Georgia has not been very collaborative, largely due to historical experiences, particularly those stemming from the Soviet era. The Soviet Union's policies aimed at developing its republics, especially in education, focused on creating “Soviet citizens” rather than fostering national cohesion². Additionally, the practice of indicating nationality on ID cards and the use of Russian as a common language presented challenges to the integration of these minority groups. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Georgia faced significant political, social, and economic obstacles, including the disintegration of its political system, civil war, and financial instability. As a new independent nation, Georgia struggled with the issues of minority integration and separatist movements. The concentrated settlement of these minorities in border areas added further complications to the integration process³.

Over time, Georgia has implemented a number of educational programs aimed at supporting the integration of ethnic minorities, with a major focus

on language learning. Of particular importance were the reforms initiated after 2005, when civic integration became an official state priority. Guided by European norms, Georgia adopted policies that emphasized respect for ethnic identity and ensured equal opportunities. These initiatives led to the development of national strategies and action plans aimed at strengthening social cohesion through education and civic participation.

Historical Context of the Quota Program

The inclusion of ethnic minorities in education has gone through many stages and includes a variety of programs. Language teaching for minorities can be categorized into several types of programs, including school programs, university programs, municipal (local) programs, online programs, and others. Each educational program plays a crucial role in supporting ethnic minorities in Georgia, strengthening intercultural dialogue and social integration through promoting language acquisition⁴. But especially noteworthy are the processes that began in Georgia after the 2005 education reform. However, in parallel with this reform, legislative frameworks were developing that established integration policies as part of the agenda. In 2005, an institutional approach to the civic integration of ethnic minorities was introduced in Georgia. In accordance with the Council of Europe's Frame-

work Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Georgia has developed a policy based on the principle of respect for the ethnic identities of minorities and the idea of creating appropriate conditions for the realization of their rights. In 2009, by decision of the government, a State Concept of Tolerance and Civic Integration was created, and an Action Plan for 2009-2014 was developed, which defined the state's approach to civic integration. In 2015, the ministries approved the State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration and the Action Plan for 2015-2020⁵.

Phinney believes that higher education institutions are, by their nature, assimilative; they are based on interaction, and here, in order to achieve psychological or civic well-being, there is a need to balance the markers of civic and ethnic identities. Here, we also place special emphasis on higher education⁶. The development of the Unified National Examinations model made it possible for students to enter higher education institutions on the basis of meritocratic principles. Until 2005, the university itself administered the relevant exams for higher education institutions, which led to the decentralization of university admission standards and their implementation. There were frequent discussions about the existence of various forms of corruption.

In the entrance exams, passing the Georgian language, a foreign language, and general skills was made mandatory⁷. However, this reform

could not ensure the meritocracy of applicants from ethnic minorities precisely because of the low rates of proficiency in the Georgian language. Moreover, the situation worsened: The first year of the reform had considerable negative effects on ethnic minorities. For example, in 2005, only two of the applicants to Akhalkalaki were admitted, only one was admitted from Ninotsminda, and only 17 were admitted from Marneuli. These statistics were significantly lower than the enrolments before the formal establishment of the United National Entrance Exam System⁸.

Therefore, the Ministry of Education has identified a number of measures to encourage ethnic minority applicants to enter higher education. These measures can be grouped into several areas:

a) Initially, minorities were given the right to take both general skills and elective courses in Russian; language tests were also offered by the Ninotsminda and Akhalkalaki language centers, which were implemented with the assistance of the OSCE High Commissioner for National Minorities.

b) Financial assistance in the form of grants for students was also established. Within the social program's framework, the Government has funded 15 students annually from Kvemo Kartli, 15 from Samtskhe-Javakheti, and 10 from Tbilisi⁹.

Also, non-Georgian language school graduates, including Russian-language school graduates, were given the right to pass Russian as a for-

eign language. The above-mentioned measure led to an increase in the number of ethnic minorities in universities, and in 2006, 25 students were enrolled from Kvemo Kartli and 31 from Samtskhe-Javakheti¹⁰.

c) Later, representatives of ethnic minorities were allowed to take the general skills test in Armenian and Azerbaijani. In parallel, preparatory courses were developed to support competitors; For example, 113 applicants took the general skills test in Armenian, and 46 (40.7%) enrolled successfully. 250 applicants took the test in Azerbaijani, of whom only 29 (11.6%) enrolled successfully. Statistical data indicated that allowing applicants to take the exams in their national language has increased the number of both registered and enrolled national minority students, particularly Armenian applicants¹¹.

Experts believe that the establishment of a college in Akhaltsikhe, which was focused on language teaching and was created on the basis of the Akhaltsikhe Faculty of Tbilisi State University, had a positive impact on this process.

d) In November 2009, an amendment was made to the Law on General Education of Georgia, which determined the establishment of quota programs, which, on the one hand, instructed the National Examination Center to administer general skills exams in the Armenian and Abkhazian languages; on the other hand, higher education institutions were required to allocate quotas for students representing ethnic minori-

ties. Their size was subsequently determined as five percent for Armenian and Azerbaijani students, and one percent for Abkhaz and Ossetian youth.

In addition, this quota program was determined to be a temporary measure that would operate until 2018-2019, and after 2019, it would not be needed. A funding module for minority students was also determined; namely, 100 Azerbaijani and 100 Sokhumi minority students would be funded by the state.

In 2019, this program was re-credited, and twenty state universities were involved in the teaching process; also, since 2020, private higher education institutions have included the quota program in their curricula¹².

Accordingly, the essence of the Quota Program can be defined as follows: This is a one-year, sixty-credit program of Georgian language teaching, the completion of which is mandatory for ethnic minority students involved in this program. It is mandatory for those wishing to enroll in all undergraduate programs, as well as medical and veterinary undergraduate education programs. After successful completion of the course, students of the Quota Program will be awarded a certificate and will be given the opportunity to enroll in any first-level educational program of that university.

When evaluating the results of the program, we can talk about its success, but at the same time, many challenges are identified that affect

both the successful implementation of the program on the one hand and the successful completion of undergraduate programs by students, integration, and future professional realization.

Literature Review

In modern nation-states, education appears not only as a mechanism for transferring knowledge but also as a tool that forms civic identity and common national unity. In his famous work "What is a Nation?" Ernest Renan defines a nation as "a soul, a spiritual principle". And he considers a common past and the desire to live together as fundamental conditions for the formation of a nation¹³. The creation and modernization of an industrial society have given rise to a new need - to ensure cultural unity, a common language, and standardized education in the state, which have become necessary prerequisites for the functioning of the state. Education, therefore, becomes the main channel through which the state develops a common and at the same time standardized narrative of national identity and civic consciousness¹⁴ - that will to live together, which, according to Renan, is a prerequisite for the formation of a nation. Gellner somehow transformed Max Weber's concept of "the state possesses legitimate violence" into the form that the state can achieve a high level of literacy and enlightenment only by monopolizing the education system.

However, as Will Kymlicka¹⁵ and Charles Taylor¹⁶ have noted, formal equality alone is not enough in modern democratic societies. If education does not take into account the specifics of cultural and linguistic diversity, it often leads to the marginalization of minorities. That is why the theory of multiculturalism emphasizes the importance not only of equality, but also of “recognition of difference” – different cultures should have a space where they can maintain and develop their own identities, and in the same institutional environment that promotes common civic engagement.

In this theoretical framework, education becomes an arena for finding a balance: on the one hand, it wants to foster a common civic consciousness, and on the other, it must ensure respect for cultural diversity. It is this contradiction that creates the main challenge of integration policy - how to reconcile the principle of state civic nationalism with the practice of multiculturalism in a way that neither assimilation nor isolation occurs.

When it comes to the integration of ethnic minorities, the theoretical framework of social capital also becomes important. Social capital is a network of connections between people and groups of people and the mutual trust associated with these networks. It facilitates communication and cooperation between people and makes resources available that would otherwise be inaccessible. Accordingly, social capital is important for social and economic develop-

ment¹⁷. There are many definitions of social capital; however, most of them point to the structural and cognitive elements of this phenomenon. Structural social capital refers to networks and connections, while cognitive social capital refers to the feeling of trust associated with these connections¹⁸. If we consider this through the prism of the inclusiveness of the education system, structural capital reflects the process of association with Georgians, while cognitive capital represents trust in the process of implementing state governance, and especially its main component – the education system.

According to Robert Putnam¹⁹ (2000), effective participation in society depends on “social capital” – the trust, relationships, and social networks that shape the internal and external ties of a society. He distinguishes between “bonding” capital (in-group ties) and “bridging” capital (inter-group relations). In terms of the integration of minority students, it is the balance of these two types that determines whether they will be able to develop as members of the university and the wider society while remaining in harmony with their cultural identity.

In the case of Georgia, the 1+4 program represents an attempt by the state to create a model that strikes a balance between civic nationalism and multiculturalism. The program has been in operation since 2010 and aims to include representatives of ethnic minorities in the Georgian higher education system by offering

them an additional one-year preparatory course in the Georgian language. The program aims to strengthen Georgian language skills and promote students' academic and social integration.

However, as existing research shows²⁰, the success of a program is not determined solely by high enrollment rates. Real integration requires not only improved language competence but also the existence of a social and institutional environment that makes minority students feel part of a tolerant and accepted society.

Among the theories in nationalism studies, one part – primordialist approaches – contend that ethnic bonds are ‘natural’, fixed by the basic experiences that human beings undergo within their families and other primary groups²¹. In contrast, so-called inclusive nationalism questions this idea and perceives the nation as a product of modernity, which is more of a political community than an organic body²² (Benedict Anderson 1983²³; and Eric Hobsbawm 1990²⁴). Theoretically, the 1+4 program can be perceived as one form of “inclusive nationalism”²⁵ – an attempt to create a unified political nation in conditions of ethnic diversity. At the same time, the experience of liberal states shows that such a policy clashes with the so-called “liberal paradox” – the state wants to respect cultural diversity, but at the same time must ensure the strengthening of a common national identity²⁶.

Thus, the literature analysis shows that the issue of education and integration of ethnic minorities should be considered within three interconnected dimensions: on the one hand, at the level of national discourse – how the state defines civic identity and what role it assigns to education in this process; on the other hand, at the institutional level – how the university manages to manage and support cultural diversity; and finally, at the individual level – how students perceive their own integration, opportunities and challenges.

Ultimately, both theoretical and empirical sources show that the effectiveness of integration policies is not determined only by the existence of state initiatives, but also by how consistently the principles of civic nationalism, multiculturalism, and social capital are connected with the everyday practice of education.

Research Methodology

Despite the long-term operation of the program and the growing number of participants, the question remains relevant: to what extent does the 1+4 program manage to fulfill its goals, and how does it affect the real integration of students?

In this context, the study aims to analyze to what extent the 1+4 program contributes to the integration of ethnic minority students into the Georgian higher education system and what types of challenges exist in the process of its implementation.

According to the study's assumption, despite the high interest and orientation of students towards the program, due to the limited resources and uneven institutional capabilities of universities, the program does not fully achieve its two main goals – (1) to provide students with an appropriate level of proficiency in the Georgian language and (2) to promote integration in the academic and social space.

The research participants include three primary groups:

1. Current students enrolled in the 1+4 program;
2. Graduates of the program who have completed their higher education;
3. Implementers and administrators responsible for managing or coordinating the 1+4 program within universities or relevant governmental structures.

To ensure the validity and depth of findings, semi-structured in-depth interviews were also conducted with experts and researchers who have studied ethnic minority education and integration issues in Georgia. This triangulation of perspectives – students, institutional actors, and experts – enables a multidimensional understanding of the program's effectiveness, its social outcomes, and the structural barriers that persist.

The methodological framework is based on interpretivist and constructivist paradigms that focus on how individuals construct social meanings and interact with institutional environments. This approach is consistent

with research in the fields of education and political sociology that examines how inclusive policies are implemented in practice and how they are perceived by participants²⁷.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were used as the main data collection tool, covering both predefined topics and spontaneously raised issues. This method made it possible to identify and interpret the experiences and subjective perceptions of the respondents. Each interview lasted an average of 60-90 minutes and was conducted both in person and online, taking into account the availability of the respondent.

Several strategies were used to increase the reliability of the data: namely, triangulation – combining different sources and perspectives (students, alumni, administration, experts); documentary analysis – comparing themes identified through interviews with official reports and policy documents; and a multi-step coding process – iterative analysis and categorization to ensure that interpretations are based on empirical evidence rather than preconceived notions.

The data obtained were analyzed through thematic analysis, following the framework of Braun and Clarke²⁸. The analysis was conducted inductively – that is, the themes emerged directly from the participants' narratives, but were also discussed in parallel within the framework of theoretical frameworks that relate to integration, multiculturalism, and the formation of social capital.

Among the limitations of the study, it is worth mentioning, on the one hand, the fact that the study does not include municipal language teaching and integration programs (e.g., the “State Language Teaching and Integration Program” of the Zurab Zhvania School of Administration), or other state programs and their results, but is deliberately focused on the “1+4” program. In addition, the study analyzes only the representatives of the Armenian and Azerbaijani-speaking ethnic minorities and does not include the topic of the Ossetian and Abkhazian ethnic minorities²⁹. In addition, the study does not aim to achieve statistical generalizations, but is oriented to offer conceptual and theoretical interpretations that describe how integration policy functions in practice. Nevertheless, the results provide important insights into inclusive educa-

tion and ethnic minority integration policies in the post-Soviet context, which may be useful for both academic research and policymakers.

Results achieved by the quota program

Increasing access to higher education

The most important result of the “1+4” program is the expansion of opportunities for ethnic minorities to receive higher education. This is why the program is evaluated as a “very radical program” (*Interview with the head of the 1+4 program at the State University, 23.04.2024*). Before the program was implemented, the mandatory requirement for Georgian-language exams almost automatically excluded a large part of non-Georgian-speaking applicants. The program removed this barrier.

Table 1.

Year	Azerbaijani students registered for the Exam	Azerbaijani students qualified for a one-year Georgian language program	Armenian students registered for the Exam	Armenian students qualified for a one-year Georgian language program
2010	335	178	253	123
011	377	250	277	179
2012	579	386	290	198
2013	1189	704	270	186
2014	834	456	345	217
2015	1181	522	427	219
2016	1610	660	535	300
2017	1703	673	658	373
2018	1866	788	664	422
2019	2081	893	643	436
Total	11755	5510	4362	2653³⁰

As a result, thousands of young people who previously had limited access to higher education were able to become students at a state university for the first time. This process has become an essential aspect for both individuals and ethnic minority groups as a whole, as education is considered one of the main paths to social mobility. Accordingly, the program has not only statistically increased the enrollment rate of minority representatives but also created the prerequisites for improving their economic and social situation.

However, one issue is the increase in accessibility, but another is the number of graduates. Despite the increase in appeal, the number of graduates is not high. The administration of the preparatory program emphasizes personal communication, which the majority win, and their number is approximately 70% (*interview with the head of the 1+4 program at the State University, 23.04.2024*), although the number of graduates of the preparatory program itself is not high. For example, from 2010-2014. The number of enrolled students was 2877, of which 857 students were able to complete the program, which is 29.80%³¹.

Improving Georgian language skills and increasing academic readiness

The one-year language preparation course included in the program structure provides students with basic and academic-level skills in the Georgian language, which are

necessary for successful study in bachelor's programs. The central role of the language component is related to the fact that the daily use of the Georgian language in minority communities is limited, which is why applicants are either unable to or have difficulty mastering Georgian terminology and discourse. A noteworthy fact in the Georgian context is the fact that ethnic minorities live in monoethnic settlements in some municipalities. For example, in Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda, more than 94% of the population is Armenian, while the majority is Azerbaijani in the municipalities of Marneuli, Dmanisi, and Bolnisi. This determines the current situation of Georgian language proficiency³². However, ethnic minorities are also found in non-compact settlements, and therefore, their level of Georgian language proficiency is much better. This difference creates a difference in the language competencies of students. As a result, we see a situation where students with high language skills do not acquire the knowledge corresponding to their competencies, while for students with low language skills, the duration of study and the knowledge acquired are not enough to achieve the desired level.

Language knowledge is associated with a sense of security for minority representatives. This is confirmed by the respondents we interviewed, for whom mastering the Georgian language meant: "a prerequisite for employment"; "easier

movement and work throughout Georgia”; “a good education” (*interview with a graduate of the quota program, 11.04.2024*).

“If I didn't know Georgian, I would feel hopeless, like the representatives of my community, because I wouldn't be able to talk to different people and receive complete information”³³.

Although the quality of language training programs varies across universities, the general trend indicates that some students are more or less acquiring the necessary linguistic competencies. This allows them to more or less participate in the university process, understand Georgian academic material, work with research texts, and formulate their own academic positions. The language component also lays the foundation for their future professional integration, as proficiency in the Georgian language is, in most cases, a necessary condition for employment in the labor market.

Strengthening intra-group solidarity (bonding capital)

The third important outcome of the program is related to the formation of strong internal ties among ethnic minority students. Due to their common linguistic, cultural, and social background, students tend to unite compactly and form networks of mutual support. These processes create a form of social capital that Robert Putnam calls “bonding social capital” – group solidarity that provides emotional support, infor-

mation sharing, and protection of common interests.

Bonding capital significantly facilitates adaptation to a new educational environment, reduces stress, and increases the sense of belonging. However, at the same time, it poses some challenges: students are less likely to establish connections with representatives of the Georgian ethnic majority and are less likely to be involved in the wider social and academic networks of the university. As a result, “bridging social capital” – the bonds that connect different groups – is poorly developed. This means that despite internal support, the degree of integration into the wider campus environment remains limited, which subsequently affects both academic and professional trajectories.

Identified problems

Lack of integration

The data collected within the framework of the study reveal that the process of student integration within the 1+4 program is generally weak and fragmented. During the preparatory year, the main focus is on the development of Georgian language and subject competencies; however, there is little organization of activities that would promote cultural and social inclusion in the daily life of the university. As a result, program participants often mention a feeling of isolation in both academic and informal environments.

The national and individual plans of the universities involved in the 1+4 program indicate proactive steps taken towards creating an intercultural and tolerant environment. Civic education or integration courses are not to be missed among these plans³⁴. These programmatic approaches are of great importance for creating a “receptive context”³⁵ conducive to integration and developing cross-cultural competence³⁶.

Following the example of TSU, students are grouped by ethnicity in the first semester of the preparatory year, which is partially justified at the beginning of the language learning process, but at the same time makes it difficult for them to use the main language of communication – Georgian – in practice. Representatives of the Armenian minority speak Armenian among themselves, while representatives of the Azerbaijani minority speak Azerbaijani.

Mixing groups from the second semester (when they attend lectures and seminars together) clearly improves language integration - students note that: *“We have no other language in common; they don’t know Armenian, we don’t know Azerbaijani, we don’t know Russian either, and we’re left with only Georgian. It also comes with practice”* (Interview with a quota program student, 10.10.2025). However, on the other hand, such a change can sometimes provoke tension, especially noticeable in the conditions of political tension in their historical homeland.

Daily communication in Georgian significantly contributes to their language development and self-confidence.

Another important challenge in terms of integration is the lack of contact between the participants of the program and the wider student community of the university. As it turns out from the interviews, minority students often communicate only with members of their own ethnic group and rarely participate in common university events and student clubs. The reasons for this are language barriers, cultural differences, and sometimes self-restraint – the fear that they will not be understood or accepted in a Georgian-speaking environment. Added to this is the lack of information about upcoming events or programs, which is also distributed in Georgian, and the lack of language skills also affects this.

It is also noteworthy that the researchers assessed the ability of ethnic minority students to communicate with Georgian students based on data from 2016 and 2020. In both studies, participants emphasized the lack of communication with the ethnic majority and other minorities, and the study also showed that a significant part of teachers did not see any problems in communication between Georgian-speaking and non-Georgian-speaking students³⁷.

As a result, programs that aim to promote integration are often limited in practice to academic integration, while social integration is less complete.

Difficulty of learning material

Program participants enter the education system with significantly different levels of initial preparation and academic experience. In some cases, students graduate from schools in regions where the quality of education and access to learning resources are low. Consequently, it is difficult for them to master both the language and the academic standards of the university immediately.

The implementers of the quota program consider the curriculum and related issues to be one of the challenges. *“During the so-called lockdown of the Covid pandemic, a 300-page textbook was developed, which alleviated the problems with the material, but the learning process is alive, and the textbook constantly requires revision, which unfortunately is not possible” (Interview with the program implementer, 12.04.2024).*

The topic of study materials becomes especially relevant after they join the undergraduate programs in Georgia after the preparatory year. Students note that the study materials are difficult to understand, not only due to the language barrier, but also due to the terminological and content complexity. *“When I started reading the material in my first year, I thought I was reading in a foreign language” (Interview with a Quota Program student, 8.10.2025).*

Many thematic courses use voluminous academic texts and require

students to conduct independent research, which poses an additional challenge for students who still struggle to master professional language. *“When I was in the preparatory program, I knew that I didn't know Georgian very well, but when I started studying for my bachelor's degree, I realized how well I didn't know it” (Interview with a quota program student, 8.10.2025).*

Ethnic minority students also experience stress due to the difficulty of assignments and exams, which often leads to decreased motivation and loss of self-confidence. Many students report being unable to keep up with their peers, which somewhat increases the risk of dropping out of the program.

The complexity of the learning material and language barriers often reinforce each other – even though students study Georgian intensively for a year, its use at the academic level is still a challenge. Accordingly, the effectiveness of the program significantly depends not only on language teaching, but also on the adaptation of the learning environment – it becomes necessary to introduce additional academic support mechanisms (tutoring, additional consultations, Georgian-language academic writing courses, etc.).

In addition to the complexity of the material, it is worth considering the problems that accompany the recruitment of teachers for the program. Just as teaching Georgian as a foreign language, working with ethnic minorities, and in a multicultural

environment in general require high competence and constant retraining from teachers, which is very rarely possible. Neither the Ministry of Education and Science nor educational institutions provides retraining for teachers. However, if some teachers were to retrain within their own resources, we would get a mixed picture. On the one hand, teachers who have completed special training programs are familiar with language teaching and integration techniques and, as a rule, use them both inside and outside the classroom, which makes their lessons interesting and attractive for students, while on the other hand, there are cases of teaching with a standard behavioral approach, which affects the learning process (*Interview with the implementer of the Quota program, 3.10.2025*). It is also worth noting the challenges related to the technical equipment of higher education institutions, which is directly related to the provision of audio-visual support for language teaching. Students and teachers of the program emphasize that the use of various means not only increases quality, but also motivation and interest.

Institutional and administrative barriers

The analysis of the research data shows that the implementation of the 1+4 program is significantly dependent on the administrative and institutional capacities of universi-

ties, which differ significantly from each other. Although the program is a unified state policy, its practical implementation is mainly the individual responsibility of universities, which creates management and coordination difficulties. The research also shows that when the reaccreditation of the program took place in 2019, higher education institutions that implemented the program were represented by different organizations, some had an integration-facilitating course, some did not³⁸.

One of the most obvious problems is related to the lack of resources - both in terms of material and human capital. Some universities do not have specialized Georgian language teaching centers or relevant staff who are knowledgeable in both linguistic and cultural aspects. Often, the same teachers have to teach the language, as well as proofread and consult academic texts, which significantly increases their workload and affects the quality of teaching.

In addition, the implementation of the program requires clear coordination and sharing of experience between universities, which is rarely done in practice. Different higher education institutions independently determine the content of courses, teaching methods, and forms of student assessment. As a result, the overall structure of the program becomes uneven - at one university, the preparatory year focuses more on language development, while at another, on subject competencies.

This inequality is especially reflected in the level of preparation of students when they begin studying for bachelor's programs³⁹.

Another important challenge is the lack of institutional coordination at the state level. The Ministry of Education and Science is responsible for the general policy framework of the program; however, the needs and problems at the university level often do not reach the decision-making structures. In interviews, program administrators emphasize that there is no effective feedback system that would allow universities to regularly provide information on the progress and results of the program (*Interview with the implementer of the Quota program, 3.10.2025*).

Particular difficulties also arise in the direction of social and psychological support for students. There is no unified policy within the program that would include mentoring or counseling mechanisms – for example, the support of a psychologist or academic advisor. Students from ethnic minorities often face culture shock, problems with living conditions, or decreased motivation, which is not accompanied by systematic institutional support.

In addition, the study showed that in some universities there is still limited competence of support administrative staff, which is particularly noticeable in the documentation and communication process. For example, in some cases, the administration fails to provide ade-

quate linguistic or cultural mediation, which makes students feel excluded.

Finally, institutional and administrative barriers create an environment where the program's goals – language development and social integration – are formally fulfilled, but their effectiveness at the real level is limited. The success of the program requires not only a student-centered approach but also systemic support that includes financial, human, and managerial resources, standardized quality control, and regular monitoring.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that the quota-based program (“1+4 Program”) introduced to promote the integration of ethnic minorities in the Georgian higher education system is an important state step that has significantly expanded the opportunities of young people representing minorities since its launch. The program has successfully ensured, on the one hand, increased access to higher education, as well as increased participation rates, and facilitated the introduction of an institutionalized process of learning the Georgian language. Ethnic minority representatives have linked their future to Georgia and have seen the purpose of teaching the Georgian language. In this sense, the quota program can be perceived as a practical expression of inclusive nationalism, the goal of which is to

strengthen civic equality and multi-ethnic social unity.

The analysis of the research data also shows that the “1+4” program largely reflects the dynamic nature of the perception of ethnic belonging described by Roger Brubaker. As for Brubaker, ethnicity is not a fixed category; it is created as a result of social and institutional architecture and is constantly being updated. The results of the program show that students gradually present themselves in new ways - as members of an ethnic group and, at the same time, as citizens of the country. Nevertheless, the practice of program participants often continues to produce the practice of forming “groups”, since students are mostly united along ethnic lines, which limits the natural expansion of the integration process. However, even limited opportunities for communication lay the seeds for the integration process.

The study also shows that minority students have strong “bonding social capital” – intra-group connections – which provide emotional and practical support. At the same time, bridging social capital - connections between different groups is poorly developed; this significantly limits the degree of integration and the expansion of professional or so-

cial trajectories. Accordingly, the program in question, which is declared to be aimed at inclusion in a wider civic space, in practice somewhat reinforces parallel social boundaries⁴⁰.

This allows us to conclude that there is a discrepancy between theoretical goals and practical results in the process of program implementation: formally, the program contributes to the reduction of barriers; however, the actual processes still reflect the logic of Brubaker's categorization - students often remain within the “ethnicized space”. In addition, since the formation of bridging capital is insufficient, it is not possible to combine broader networks based on a solid foundation of common civic identity.

As a result, the study indicates that successful integration requires a configuration of the institutional environment that deliberately promotes horizontal, multiethnic relations, which in turn is encouraged by language teaching as well as by language teaching itself. Without this model, the group perception critically discussed by Brubaker is still reproduced, and Putnam's “bridge-building” component – the main integration mechanism – remains weak.

Notes

* **Acknowledgement:** We would like to acknowledge the use of the Grammarly AI tool for refining grammar and language in this article. The tool enhanced clarity and accuracy while maintaining the original meaning and content.

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¹³ E. Renan, „What is a nation? (Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?, 1882)”, In M. Giglioli (Ed.), *What Is a Nation? and Other Political Writings*, New York Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 2018, pp. 247-263, <https://doi.org/10.7312/rena17430-0-13>.

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- ³⁰ The table is prepared based on the data of Sh.Tabatadze, N. Gorgadze N. Gabunia, *op.cit.*
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- ³² Office of the State Minister of Georgia for Reconciliation and Civil Equality <https://smr.gov.ge/ge/page/33/demogرافي-statistika>.
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Two Important Episodes from the History of Relations Between the Georgian and Romanian Orthodox Churches

Mikheil KARTVELISHVILI
Eter BOKELAVADZE

Abstract: *Georgian-Romanian political and ecclesiastical relations have a history spanning many centuries. The distinguished public and ecclesiastical figure, Anthimos the Iberian, stands at the origins of these relations, representing a personality of multifaceted interest and significance for both Georgia and Romania. The particular importance of this individual is confirmed by the fact that the Romanian Orthodox Church canonized him as a saint in 1992. The goal of our article is to study the lesser-known episodes of Romanian-Georgian relations, which have not yet been the subject of dedicated scientific research; consequently, the views presented in it represent a scholarly novelty. The subject of our research is the visit of the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Justinian, to Georgia in 1948, and the resulting relations, as well as the visit of the delegation of the Georgian Orthodox Church to Romania in 1986. It should also be noted that representatives of these two churches jointly participated in a number of peace conferences, which further strengthened the benevolent relationship between them. These events are studied and analyzed based on a review of the broad political-historical context. The paper is based on primary sources concerning the issue (archival documents, press materials, memoirs) and relevant scientific literature.*

Keywords: *Romania, Georgia, Patriarchates, Orthodox churches, Soviet regime, Church Diplomacy*

Introduction

Throughout its existence, the Georgian Orthodox Church has never been isolated from public life. It has historically had close ecclesiastical, diplomatic and cultural relations with Christian churches, as well as with other confessions, their leaders and individual representatives.

From a historical perspective, the 20th century is not an exception;

although this period is truly unique and interesting with its complexity and multifacetedness, the Georgian - Orthodox Church and its leaders have never chosen isolation, but rather, within their capabilities, have always tried to convey their message to other churches and establish the closest possible ties with them.

This is also confirmed by the fact that in 1917, after the restoration of autocephaly, the newly – elected Pa-

triarch Kyrion II, in order to establish close church diplomatic relations, sent letters as Patriarch of Constantinople. Germanus V, Pope of Rome¹. It is clear that the desire of the Georgian Patriarch was to achieve real autocephaly of the Georgian Church and to escape from the centuries-old isolation in which - our Church was under Russian occupation. Unfortunately, his desire and goal remained unfulfilled at that stage. The patriarchs who followed him found themselves in an even more difficult situation, as they were forced to work first under the strictly secular policy of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, and then during the atheistic period of the Soviet Union. In this regard, the improvement of the situation is actually related to the relatively loyal church policy of the Soviet government, which was a direct result, on the one hand, of the restoration of the Patriarchal Throne in the Russian Church, and, on the other hand, of the recognition of the autocephaly of the Georgian Church by the latter.

Romanian-Georgian political and church relations have a centuries-old history. At the origins of these relations stands the prominent public and church figure Anthimoz Iveri, who is an interesting and important person in many ways, both for Georgia and Romania. The special significance of this person is confirmed by the fact that in 1992 the Romanian Orthodox Church canonized Anthimoz Iveri as a saint.

The aim of our paper is to study two little-known episodes of Romanian-Georgian relations, which, as far as we know, have not been the subject of special scientific research to date. The present paper aims to raise the issue, we do not exclude that a more detailed study of the scientific problem will reveal new historical sources that will make the mentioned relations even more interesting, which is why we have decided to study this problem in more detail.

Relations between the Georgian and Romanian Orthodox Churches in the late 1940s

It is a generally accepted fact that in the middle of World War II, Joseph Stalin changed his policy towards the Orthodox Church. In particular, if before the Soviet government had aggressively fought against any manifestation of religiosity, considering it a "bourgeois remnant" that should have been completely destroyed over the years, now the communist state has somewhat renewed its attitudes, which had many manifestations: for example, representatives of the Russian Church were allowed to elect a patriarch, the Orthodox Church was granted the right to legal existence, and previously closed churches and monasteries began to be opened.

It is quite obvious that the Soviet government did not intend to grant the church any kind of autonomy with these steps, but rather decided to turn one of the most powerful reli-

gious institutions into its ally. This process took on a more intense character, since among religious institutions, the Martyrdom Church became a state institution, and if before it was perceived as a force opposed to the government in the eyes of the local and international community, this – time it appeared as a state policy implementer.

In the reality that in the Soviet Union there was almost no normal approach to cooperation between the state and the church, it was necessary to find a form that would ensure its regulation in such a way that both sides would be more or less satisfied with the cooperation. That is why in 1943 the central government created a new body in order to better exercise control over the church – the Council for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church under the Council of People's Commissars of the USSR. G. Karpov was appointed chairman of the council².

In parallel with this, religious life began to revive in Georgia. The Russian Orthodox Church officially recognized the autocephaly of the Georgian Church, and representatives of the Georgian Church renewed church diplomatic relations, which were almost impossible under the conditions of Soviet isolation. The scientific literature expresses the opinion that “His Holiness Callistrates established friendly relations with the Romanian Patriarch Justinian”³.

A particularly important event in the history of the Georgian Church in the late 1940s was the visit of repre-

sentatives of Orthodox churches to Georgia in 1948.

The point is that in 1948, representatives of the Orthodox Churches were in Moscow, where the 500th anniversary of the adoption of autocephaly by the Russian Church was celebrated on a large scale. This fact should be considered a truly significant event for that period. Moreover, the idea of unifying the Orthodox world of Eastern Europe was expressed by the Soviet government and the Russian Orthodox Church, which was directly subordinate to it, which naturally considered itself the leader of this religious unity. All this was a process initiated in opposition to the ecumenical movement, which ultimately ended with the adoption of a joint resolution in 1948, where the heads of the churches subordinate to the Soviet system refused to have relations with the ecumenical movement. The signatories of this resolution include the patriarchs of both the Georgian and Romanian Orthodox churches.

In this article, we are interested in the feasibility of rapprochement between the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Georgian Churches. Several important factors should be taken into account here. In particular, before his arrival in Georgia in 1948, the Romanian Patriarch Justinian had just been enthroned and, accordingly, he needed to look for allies. Given the current political situation, when the socialist system in Romania was newly formed, it is natural that it is unlikely that he would have found an

ally in the West. It is also worth considering the fact that under communist rule he would have had fewer freedoms, which meant significant pressure and restrictions from his government. On the other hand, the Georgian Orthodox Church was isolated as a result of the abolition of autocephaly by Russia (1811) and then the Soviet occupation. It had only fragmentary relations with other churches. During World War II, Stalin's change in church policy brought about, among other things, the recognition of the autocephaly of our Church by the Russian Church, which practically ended its isolation. Although in the Soviet totalitarian system, where absolutely everything was controlled by the central government, there was no need for any kind of full freedom, the fact that the Georgian Church was able to present itself to a greater or lesser extent already meant a lot. It is a noteworthy fact that the reports of representatives of the Georgian Church at various peace conferences always began with an introduction to the centuries-old history of the Georgian Church. It was precisely these interests that led to the close contact between these two ancient Churches.

The fund of the Office of the Trustee for Religious Affairs of the Archives of Recent History of the National Archives of Georgia, along with many other interesting documents, preserves the report of Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia Kalistrate Tsintsadze for 1948 entitled "Report to the Orthodox Church

of the Catholicosate in 1948", which was submitted to the Trustee of the Council of Ministers of the Georgian SSR for the Affairs of the Georgian Orthodox Church, V. Bujiashvili. The mentioned document describes in detail the domestic situation of the Georgian Orthodox Church. In addition, the document reads:

"This year, a remarkable event took place in the life of the Georgian Church. In July of this year, the Russian Orthodox Church celebrated the 500th anniversary of its autocephaly. All Orthodox (including Georgian) Church leaders were invited to this celebration. After the celebration in Moscow, some delegations wished to visit the capital of Georgia. Their wish was gladly granted by the Catholicos-Patriarch, and on July 27, **Patriarch Justinian of Romania, accompanied by six delegates** (emphasis ours); Metropolitan Stephen, Exarch of Bulgaria, accompanied by five delegates, 4 Czech delegates (unfortunately, their leader, Metropolitan Elefther, was left behind on the way), and the head of the Albanian delegation, Bishop Pais of Korça, 5 accompanied by a delegate and the head of the Polish delegation, Archbishop Timothy of Białystok, accompanied by 4 delegates.

The foreign delegates from the Moscow Patriarchate were accompanied by Archbishop Pitirim of Minsk, Bishop Nicholas of Orlov, and Archpriests Solertovsky and Kolesnikov.

The guests were accompanied by Sergei Konstantinovich Belyshev, Assistant to the Plenipotentiary of the

Council of Ministers of the USSR for Church Affairs. The guests were accompanied from Moscow by the cinematographer E. P. Yatsuni, a total of 34 people.

The centuries-old Church of Georgia is often visited (individually) by the Eastern Patriarchs and their representatives, but they have come to us for material assistance, not as guests and friends. This year's selfless visit with such a large contingent is all the more remarkable.

The guests, as far as their time allowed (they stayed only 4 days), got acquainted with the picturesque nature of our country, the faith of its people, worship, readings and chants, morality, historical monuments (Svetitskhoveli, Samtavro, Sioni, Kvasveti), operating churches, the hometown of the proud son of Georgia, I. B. Stalin and the former residence of the leader, objects reflecting modern cultural and scientific achievements, and more.

According to the letters that the Catholicos-Patriarch received, the guests were very satisfied with their stay in Tbilisi⁴.

Unfortunately, in the personal archive of Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia Kalistrate Tsintsadze, which is kept at the Korneli Kekelidze National Center of Georgian Manuscripts, no information can be found about the aforementioned visit or any letters from the patriarchs.

The Soviet press responded to the visit. In particular, the official publication of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Georgia, the

newspaper "Communist", dedicated a special article to the visit. Although it was only informative, it is quite obvious that the fact attracted attention and even the pages of the communist publication were devoted to it⁵. Unfortunately, the information we have about the visit is very scarce.

The visit of Orthodox churches to Georgia was also covered in the Moscow Patriarchate magazine, where a very interesting and informative article, "Visit of Delegations of Autocephalous Orthodox Churches to Tbilisi," was published by Archpriest Giorgi Novak. It describes in detail the rich impressions that the clergy who arrived in Georgia received, with particular emphasis on the Georgian church architecture, which impressed foreign clergy⁶.

We make a cautious assumption that the relations between the Georgian and Romanian churches would have continued. The basis for this is the letter sent by the Patriarch of Romania, Justinian, to the Catholicos-Patriarch of Georgia, Kalistrates Tsintsadze, dated April 1951, which is an Easter greeting. It clearly shows the mutual goodwill and special respect between these two clerics⁷. Unfortunately, the information at our disposal does not allow us to make any further judgments. We do not rule out the possibility that after some time, new materials will emerge that will make the history of these relations even more interesting.

Relations between the Georgian and Romanian Orthodox Churches in the 1980s

An equally interesting period in the history of the Orthodox Churches of Georgia and Romania is the 1980s. This is mainly a period of great “transformation” in the communist world, which had its impact on the state of the churches of the Soviet Union and the socialist camp.

Mikhail Gorbachev's “religious perestroika” initially affected only the Russian Orthodox Church. If before that, religion and religious organizations were considered one of the main opponents of the atheist government, from now on he decided to formally recognize the positive historical role of the church in the unity of society and the state and make the main church of the USSR his ally in neutralizing the compromising materials of Western states and balancing relations with them. The release of those imprisoned for their faith began. The Russian Church returned the confiscated churches and monasteries; in 1988, the Soviet Union celebrated the 1000th anniversary of the Christianization of Russia on a large scale.

It should be said that the “religious transformation” had a segregative character, since at the first stage it affected non-Russian and non-Orthodox churches to a lesser extent. The churches of Georgia, Ukraine, Latvia, and Lithuania could not enjoy the opportunities and rights

that the Russian Patriarchate had. Naturally, this had its reasons. We have in mind the particularly negative attitude of the Soviet government towards Catholic and Protestant organizations, which it unequivocally perceived as “satellites” of the Western world. In addition, they were in a long-standing conflict with the Russian Orthodox Church over theological and jurisdictional issues. As for the Georgian Apostolic Church, although it did not have a theological or legal-jurisdictional dispute with the Russian Church during this period, it did have nationalist positions, which made it an undesirable institution for the government, and naturally, it was not in the latter's interests to strengthen it.

Until the end of the 80s, the Georgian Patriarchate did not have a residence (after the Sovietization, the Georgian Church was deprived of its residence, which was purchased during the Exarchate with funds collected by the Georgian clergy); a Theological Academy; a theater, a concert hall, a workshop, a bathhouse, a bakery and other institutions were located in the Georgian church-monastery part (obviously, without the permission of the Georgian Patriarchate). However, in parallel with this pressure, the government allowed the Georgian Church to open a department for external relations back in 1978, obviously for its own interests, however, the Georgian clerical hierarchy used this opportunity well to reintegrate the Georgian Church and the Georgian peo-

ple, who had been in long-term isolation, with the outside world. And in this process, one of the most important places was occupied by relations with the Orthodox Churches. The Georgian Church was able to restore relations with the ancient patriarchates (of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem) and other Orthodox churches. It also established contacts with Catholic and Protestant religious organizations, which, in turn, was facilitated by its participation in the activities of the World Council of Churches and the work of Patriarch Ilia II of Georgia as one of the presidents of the Council.

The double standard of the communist government's religious policy also extended to the Romanian Orthodox Church. Although the church was not officially separated from the state and the clergy received their salaries from the state budget, this did not alleviate the situation of the church. It remained under strict government control. There were demolitions of churches and monasteries, arrests of clergy for anti-communist positions, etc.⁸. The church could not resist the communist dictatorship.

As we can see, the situation of the Orthodox churches of the socialist camp did not change dramatically under the conditions of the "transformation" that began in the Soviet Union in the 1980s. Along with the facade of cooperation with religious institutions, the communist government still maintained control over them and, in the face of a potential threat to the regime, did not

shy away from repression. The strengthening of non-Russian churches whose worldview was connected with national ideology was fundamentally unacceptable for the Soviet government, since any manifestation of national identity was considered "ugly" and "harmful nationalism," which hindered the development of Soviet society. Local governments of the USSR and the countries of the socialist camp were also obliged to follow the directives of the center. Although individual rulers achieved a certain degree of freedom, a single standard operated throughout the entire Union system.

Given the current situation, it was of particular importance for the non-Russian churches of the socialist camp to draw closer together and maintain close ties, as well as to gain the support of the West and the entire Christian world, since this could create a kind of immunity against the totalitarian regime.

In November 1986, His Holiness Patriarch Theoctist (1986-2007) was enthroned on the patriarchal throne of the Romanian Orthodox Church. It is his name that is associated with the renewal of contacts between the Romanian and Georgian churches in the 1980s.

In the National Archives of Georgia, a document dated November 3, 1986, which is a letter from the representative of the Council for Religious Affairs under the Council of Ministers of the USSR, A.N. Tsiklauri, addressed to the Council, has been preserved. The representa-

tive informs the Council that the Patriarch of Georgia, Ilia II, received an invitation from Romania to send representatives of the Georgian Orthodox Church to attend the enthronement of the new Patriarch of Romania on November 16 of the current year. The Patriarch recommended Bishop of Tsilkani and Urbnisi Zosime (Shioshvili) and Dean Elguja Losaberidze to attend the ceremony⁹. The document does not contain any other additional information, however, a second source preserved in the same archive provides us with relatively extensive information about the visit of the Georgian delegation to Romania. Namely, a letter/report from Bishop Zosime (Shioshvili) himself entitled "Celebration in the Romanian Church". The Patriarch writes: "On November 15... in the afternoon, the new head of the Romanian Church, His Beatitude Patriarch Theoctist, received a delegation of the Georgian Church at the Patriarchal Residence. The meeting was attended by the Chairman of the Foreign Department of the Romanian Patriarchate – Archbishop Niphon and other officials. The head of the Georgian Church delegation, Bishop Zosime, conveyed to the Romanian Patriarch on his enthronement the congratulations and good wishes of the Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia, Ilia II. He also noted that fraternal relations have existed between the Georgian and Romanian Churches since ancient times, a clear expression of which is Bishop-Martyr Anthimose of Iveria,

who, with his sublime activity, left an indelible mark in the history of the Romanian and Georgian peoples"¹⁰. From the document we learn that Patriarch Theoctist expressed great satisfaction with the participation of representatives of the ancient Georgian Church in the celebration of the Romanian Church. On the same day, the Georgian delegation visited the higher and secondary theological schools of Bucharest, the temple founded by Saint Anthimos of Iveria, where Georgian clergy were specially introduced to the gathered parishioners. Bishop Zosime describes how the Romanians expressed respect and love for the Georgians. The guests visited the ancient printing house next to the temple, where Saint Anthimos printed church books in the Romanian language¹¹.

The enthronement of Patriarch Theoctist took place on November 16 in the main cathedral of Bucharest, dedicated to the Holy Apostles Constantine and Helen. In addition to representatives of the Georgian Church, it was also attended by Patriarch Dorotheos of Jerusalem, Patriarch Maxim of Bulgaria, as well as delegations of other churches around the world and representatives of the Romanian government.

The enthronement of the Romanian Patriarch is reflected in the official journal of the Georgian Patriarchate, "Cross of the Vine", whose second issue of 1986 devotes a special place to the chronicle of the enthronement of the new Patriarch of the Romanian Church and the visit of

the Georgian Church delegation to Bucharest, although the information in the chronicle mainly repeats the information in the archival document of Bishop Zosima¹². Archbishop Zosima himself tells us much more about the visit in his memoir collection "I Praise the Lord with My Life," published in 2008, where he describes in detail the visit to Bucharest and his impressions. The memories are extremely positive, which was largely due to the warm hospitality of the Romanian Church and the Romanian people and the visits to the sights associated with the name of the great Georgian saint (Anthimos the Iverian). Regarding the pilgrimage to the Church of St. Anthimos, the Archbishop writes: "When the parishioners were specially told that I was from the land of the great Anthimos – from Iveria, and I saw with what respect and modesty the people treated me, I was very moved... As happens when meeting someone very dear and close... Here, where I did not have a single acquaintance, they met me as if I were a relative and one of their own"¹³. At the end of the memoirs, the archpriest writes: "A few years later, we learned that the Romanian Orthodox Church had canonized Anthimos of Iveria, which was very joyful for us. He will truly be a great intercessor before God for the Georgian and Romanian peoples"¹⁴.

The October-November issue of Romanian Orthodox Church News, the official publication for external relations of the Patriarchate of Romania, was dedicated to the en-

thronement of the Romanian¹⁵ Patriarch, stating that the historic event was attended by many clergy, including Bishop Zosime of Tsilkene, a representative of the Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia, and Archpriest Elguja Losaberidze.

The presented sources show that the church diplomatic relations between the Georgian and Romanian Orthodox Churches, which began in the late 1940s, were followed by a suitable continuation in the second half of the 1980s, which represented an attempt to renew historical contacts and create future prospects, which could play an extremely positive role in the life of both churches. As we mentioned above, both churches needed an ally, first of all, in the struggle to preserve their existence under the conditions of a totalitarian atheistic regime and, at best, to escape from the communist yoke, and at the same time, for the unity of the Orthodox Churches in world ecumenical processes, which in turn faced many challenges. In addition, the name of Saint Anthimos of Iveria was of particular importance for the Georgian and Romanian churches, which not only in the 17th-18th centuries and the 20th century, but also at the modern stage closely connects the theological, scientific and cultural circles of the two countries. The efforts of the churches have yielded the desired results. Renewed contacts under the totalitarian regime continue intensively in the post-Soviet period and play an important role in the relations between the two states and societies.

Notes

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- ² Daniel H. Shubin, *A History of Russian Christianity*, Vol IV, *Tsar Nicholas II to Gorbachev's Edict on the Freedom of Conscience*, Algora Publishing, New York, 2006, pp. 152-153; Merab Vachnadze, Vakhtang Guruli, *History of the Russian Church* (lecture course), Part Three (1900-2001), Section One (1901-1945), “Artanuji”, Tbilisi, 2008, p. 83. А. Б. Онищенко, „О роли и значении Совета по делам Русской Православной Церкви в 1943-1953 годах”, *Церковь и время*, №2 (55), 2011, pp. 133-158. Sergo Vardosanidze, *The Georgian Church in the 50s-70s of the XX Century . – History Without Beautification*, Ed. Roin Metreveli, Sergo Vardosanidze, Tbilisi, 2014, pp. 43-44.
- ³ Sergo Vardosanidz, *Patriarchs. Book II. Patriarch Callistrates, Patriarch Melchizedek III*, Tbilisi, 2013, p. 77.
- ⁴ National Archives of Georgia, Archive of Contemporary History, *Note for orthodox church of Georgia in 1948*, Fund 1879, Record N1, Case 14, pp. 1-2.
- ⁵ „Delegations of autocephalous Orthodox churches arrived in

Tbilisi”, Newspaper *Communist*, 30. 07. 1948, #150 (8194), p. 4.

- ⁶ Протоиерей Новак, „Поездка церковных делегаций в Тбилиси”, *Журнал Московской Патриархии*, №9 Сентябрь, 1948, pp. 33-35.
- ⁷ Korneli Kekelidze National Center for Manuscripts, *Kalistrate Tsintsadze Foundation*, Case No. 155.
- ⁸ L. Stan, L. Turcescu, „The Romanian Orthodox Church and Post-Communist Democratisation”, *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 52, No. 8 (Dec., 2000), p. 1469; Published by: Taylor & Francis, Ltd.. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/155705>.
- ⁹ Central Archive of Recent History, *Letter from A.N. Tsiklauri*, Commissioner of the Council for Religious Affairs under the Council of Ministers of the USSR, to the Council, Fund 1880, Record No. 1, File 549, Sheet 78.
- ¹⁰ Idem, Bishop Zosime, *Celebration in the Romanian Church*, Fund 1880, Record N1, Case 546, p. 80.
- ¹¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 80-81.
- ¹² Journal “Cross of the Vine”, 1986, No. 2, p. 22.
- ¹³ Archbishop Zosime, *I Praise the Lord with My Life*, Tbilisi, 2008, pp. 170-171
- ¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 172
- ¹⁵ The new patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church: his beatitude Teoctist Arapasu. Romanian Orthodox Church News October-December, No. 4, 1986, p. 16, 45.

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Religious Practice in West Georgian Highlands: Correlation of Traditional and Modern on the Case of Lagurka Monastery

Rozeta GUJEJANI

Abstract: *The paper discusses the correlation of the traditional mode of life and religious beliefs and analyses the social interactions in connection to the sacred sites and holy objects. The case of “Lagurka” displays the evidence of the importance of traditional value systems. “Lagurka” is the name of Kala St Kvirike Monastery, in Svaneti, Georgia. This sacred site is considered to have a power, which is admired till nowadays. This power is constructed through the narratives spread among the local population. The historical and ethnographic sources and data are displaying interesting facts and legends bound together and legitimizing the perceptions regarding “Shaliani”.*

Keywords: *Georgia, Svaneti, Religion, Traditions, sacred objects.*

Kala St. Kvirike Monastery is one of the most important religious centers of the mountainous region of Georgia – Svaneti. In the article there is a discussion of the traditional social aspects of this religious center and the festival of Kvirikoba. The theoretical frames of the historical ethnological research are used for analyses of the data of historical sources and the field ethnographic data.

The St. Kvirike Monastery (Lagurka/Lagvirka) in the Kala community, in upper Bali Svaneti (Mestia municipality), on the left riverbank of Enguri, is located high in the mountains. Traditionally, this mountain is also believed to be sacred and is well preserved since it is the property of

the church. The mountain is covered with thick coniferous forest followed by one road – a path to the monastery. The wood also belongs to the monastery and it is also taken care of.

“Lagurka” is a church of the Middle Ages, of a monumental type. It was built in the X-XI centuries. The exact date of the monastery fresco painting is known from the inscription of the painter of King Tevdore in 1111, by the order of the Kala feudals¹. There is a bell tower towards the West of the cathedral, which was built by the locals in the 60s of the XX century on the base of the old and ruined tower². There is a so-called Ladbash – an auxiliary building near to the bell tower, with three places for rituals. Here stand

copper pots of special size in which Zvaraki (sacrificed animals) are cooked³. A fence surrounds the monastery. The fence has been restored. The old Senaki (living room of a clergyman) and canteen are preserved.

Kala's Lagurka was a well-known religious center; it is considered that it was a nunnery until the end of the XVII century. Not only local religious figures were involved in the worship ceremonies at the monastery but also those from other regions of Georgia and even the representatives of the royal dynasty. For example, Tekla, the daughter of King Bagrat of Imereti previously called Tinatin, became a nun in 1704⁴.

The monastery owned the property: the lands not only in the Kala community but also in Kvemo Svaneti, in Choluri. The wood around the monastery was also in ownership of the monastery. Many treasures are still kept at the monastery; among them is the crucifixion relic icon Shaliani, which is believed to have a special sacral power. This is a Byzantine icon, which is mentioned in various legends and stories and it possesses important social as well as religious meaning.

Historically, the time of cessation of monastery life is believed to be the end of the eighteenth century. There is a tragic story preserved regarding the invasion by Tatars, who devastated the monastery and killed the nuns. After the end of the monastery life, the local population started to look after Lagurka. The first written

source mentioning the monastery is the records of the Russian statesman and numismatist I. Bartolomei. I. Bartolomei traveled to Svaneti in 1854. According to his data, the locals preserved the church very well, the area was guarded by armed guards day and night and the church service was carried out by the deacons⁵. The word Deacon is not spread in Svaneti and seems to be borrowed by Bartolomei from the language of the eastern Georgian mountainous region and mechanically assigned to the ritual practice of Svaneti.

In 1860 Dimitri Bakradze visited the Kala community⁶, in 1875 the French traveler Bernovil visited Kala⁷. Stoianov could not manage to travel to see the monastery although he had a great wish to do so. However, he still left some information⁸. The researchers Ivaniukov and Kovalevski were not allowed to enter the monastery by the population of Kala, since, according to the observations of the locals, if a foreigner cast his eye on Shaliani, it could bring quite a lot of bad luck for the village⁹. The deacon Besarion Nizharadze also took great care of the monastery. In 1903 the priest Polievktos Karbelashvili visited the monastery and he published quite notable material in Iveria¹⁰. The countess Praskovia Uvarova recorded a part of the collection of the books of the monastery and its epigraphical material as a result of the expedition in 1895¹¹. In 1910 Ekvtime Takaishvili described the treasures of the monas-

tery and its epigraphical material¹². The results of these expeditions are important for the research of the Georgian culture in Svaneti till today. Later on, Pavle Ingorokva, Svimon Kaukhchishvili and Giorgi Chubinashvili carried out substantial researches¹³. In 1972 a complex scientific expedition of the State Museum of Georgia recorded about 120 icons and crosses, 196 inscriptions and 56 various types of utensils¹⁴.

After the fall of the monastery life, its parish, the Kala community decided to take care of the monastery. The monastery was well guarded by the Kala community who made it difficult for strangers to enter the church, which can be confirmed by all the researchers and travellers. However, there took place several attempts to rob the monastery as well as one act of robbery. It necessitated guarding the monastery well.

The church disposed of the immobile property of the monastery to village. It was used to repair the monastery, distribute the church lands among the members of the community, assign the monastery guards (Mokil), control the monastery wood, etc. According to the ethnographic material, the population of Kala cultivated the church lands and they were carrying out the celebration on 28 July¹⁵.

As for the church wood, its dense nature and preservation amazed all the scientists and travelers who visited Kala. The Kala population explained to Bartolomei that the wood belongs to the church and if they cut

trees in the wood, it would be followed by the rage of the God¹⁶. It was possible to use the woods just for the monastery needs, for example, during the holidays when the wood was needed or for repairing the church. According to the priest Polievktos Karbelashvili, "the forest is guarded, no one can touch it, it is even not allowed to take dry wood home: Although trees may fall by the impact of wind and snow and they are rotting, but the Svans still take care of them. As they say, the trees belong to the church"¹⁷ The Kala population is still preserving this tradition and even nowadays the mountain slope of Lagurka is still covered by coniferous forest.

It seems that the social function of the St. Kvirike Monastery grew with the weakening of the Seti St. George monastery. It is known from the documents preserved in Svaneti that the social and religious center of Svaneti was Sveti Mtavarmotsame, with his help and mediation, the important "Writings", "Decrees" and "Deeds" were created. The name of Seti bishop and the social role of Setieli are closely connected to the monastery and after their weakening, probably at the end of the Middle Ages, the main religious and social center of the Svaneti region moved to St. Kvirike monastery¹⁸. It is a fact that by the end of the nineteenth century the St. Kvirike Monastery had great influence on the whole of Svaneti, including the Svaneti regions below Bali. The pages of the newspaper Iveria contain interesting infor-

mation: in 1901 the inspector of the revival of the Christian community Mamineishvili, whose energetic activity resulted in opening seven schools in Svaneti, called a general meeting at the house of the noble Tatarkan Dadeshkeliani. This meeting took the following decision: they established a brotherhood on behalf of St. Kvirike and Ivli in Svaneti, which aimed to assist poor school pupils and materially support the schools that require help¹⁹. It is clear that connecting this great deity to educational institutions would lead to the increase of the number of pupils as well as the number of persons who want to do charitable deeds. Of course, the reasons for the increase of the social status of Kala St. Kvirike monastery require additional research.

According to the ethnographic material, one of the deities kept at St. Kvirike monastery in Kala is Shaliani, an icon which brought to the monastery special importance. Shaliani ensured the first place for Lagurka monastery among other Svaneti churches. It turned Kala monastery into the religious and social center of Svaneti. As Ekvtime Takaishvili correctly observed, "Kala church has the same importance for Svaneti as the Delphos temple for Greece. It unites Svaneti divided into communities the way Delphos used to unite different Greek republics"²⁰. Vera Bardavelidze also believes that, as distinct from the worshipping places of local importance, Kala's "Shaliani", the flag "Lemi" and St

George icon were deities that united Svaneti²¹.

As it was mentioned above, Shaliani is a Byzantine creation, a relict icon. It was used for keeping Dzeli Cheshmariti – the part of the cross on which Christ was crucified²². The priest Polievktos Karbelashvili is mentioning: "the two guards of the monastery took Dzeli Cheshmariti from the chest, the icon was wrapped well in the old silk cloth and it was placed on the spread. "We are the guards of this" Svans told us politely. I do not doubt that Dzeli Cheshmariti used to be in the middle of the cross while the relicts were kept in the corners in small boxes"²³.

According to Praskovia Uvarova, the icon dates back to the IX-XI centuries and is a piece of Byzantine art²⁴. R. Kenia and N. Aladashvili consider "Shaliani" as the best piece among the pieces of foreign art preserved in Svaneti, they especially mention the ornaments of the icon, its embossing and precious stones²⁵.

Interesting legends and stories exist regarding the building of Kala St. Kvirike monastery and the Shaliani icon located in it, among them scientific and popular literature includes the version of the deacon Besarion Nizharadze. Ekvtime Takaishvili and Egnate Gabliani depict a similar legend with slightly different content. It should be noted that Aleksei Stoianov has mentioned the legend with different content. Let us follow it step by step.

According to the deacon Besarion

Nizharadze, Shaliani used to be an inhabitant of the Ifari community, village Zegani. Once the son of Shaliani found a stone in the field and threw it at the cow he was grazing. The stone pierced the cow like a bullet. Shaliani found this stone and made the blacksmith forge a scythe, using this stone instead of metal. "By that time there were Kings in Imereti. Svaneti was obliged to mow the Geguti field each year, near to Kutaisi (Imereti). Shaliani went there too and took the scythe with him. In Kutaisi Shaliani appeared before the King saying: "Your grace, if I can mow alone the whole fields of Geguti which has to be mown by Svans - will you give me anything I wish for a present?" "All right!" – said the King. Shaliani tied the scythe to the tail of his horse, mowed the Geguti field, the scythe was mowing on its own and by the evening the whole job was done... Shaliani asked the King to give him this crucifixion icon and brought it to Svaneti... The Kala society got to know that he was bringing the icon. Here one woman, encouraged by her husband, attracted Shaliani and made love to him; When her husband and community got to know this, they made Shaliani leave the icon there... and they placed the icon where it is now. The privilege given to Shaliani was that his successors who reside in Mulakhi nowadays, and are considered Sharvashidzes, get one cow, which is to be brought to them by any Svan who wants to pray to St Kvirike²⁶.

According to this version of the

legend, St Kvirike Monastery had already been built by the time the Shaliani icon arrived, while according to Ekvtime Takaishvili's data, the arrival of the icon was followed by the building the St. Kvirike church: according to Svans, Shaliani was a Svan, once the king of Imereti called a hundred Svans and ordered them to mow the Geguti field... Shaliani completed mowing before the time schedule. He asked for a Kala icon as payment. The king kept his promise... Shaliani went to Svaneti. The resident of Kala community killed Shaliani and got the icon but the community did not know where to take it so they harnessed two bulls; attached a pillar to the yoke, attached the icon to the pillar and let it go on its own... the bulls crossed Enguri, went up the hill and stopped at the top of the mountain where now St. Kvirike church is located. Svans built a monastery here and since then this is the place where Shaliani icon is kept²⁷.

According to Egnate Gabliani, the real name of Shaliani was "Sharshkhlani" and he was the ancestor of Shervashidzes. The resident of Kala who made Sharshkhlani leave the icon – was Ioseliani. Then Dadeshkelianis took the icon from Ioseliani but it was soon stolen from them... Goshteliani and Beriani returned it to Ioseliani and then it was placed in Kala St. Kvirike Monastery and they put armed guards there. When Svans are praying before this icon, they have to pay, but Shervashidzes do not pay. Neither do

Ioselianis because they obtained this icon and took it back from Dadeshkelianis²⁸.

Such legends are spread in the Svaneti region which is higher than Bali. They include the following interesting facts: a) They underline that the icon comes from the old royal town – Kutaisi. b) The name of the person who brought the icon to Svaneti is Shaliani and it is connected to Shervashidze kin; c) The offence committed by the residents of Kala obtaining the icon by force is justified by the following – the biggest deity, the relic icon remains in Kala community; d) a notable mythological passage – the place is found by the bulls that were let to go on their own; e) At some moment the “Shaliani” icon is kept in the region lower Bali by the Dadeshkelianis.

The residents of Svaneti region lower Bali (Becho, Tskhumari, Etseri, Chubekhevi, Lakhamula communities) believe that “Shaliani” icon used to be theirs and the residents of Kala stole it from there. The first author confirming this is Alexei Stoianov. He used to travel to Svaneti in the beginning of the 70s of the XIX century. He stayed for two months in Etseri, the residency of Tengiz Dadeshkeliani, from where he made trips to other villages of Svaneti, used to write down the folk narratives. According to A. Stoianov, the residents of Sabatono Svaneti (Principality of Svaneti) are sure that this precious icon used to be theirs and was kept in Pkhutrer. According to the legend, each spring a doe

would come to the church of Pkhutreti and leave her buck. Then this icon was stolen by the residents of Kala and was put in a chest and they wrapped it in chains. At first the icon used to stay by some resident of Kala then it was carried to the church. Three guards are guarding it there. Otherwise, the icon will return back to Pkhutrer. Stoianov also has another interpretation of the issue when describing the crosses and icons of Pkhutreti: “I got interested with the icon in a leather bag which has respect among people, it is called “Motchkvili”, it is an equal brother of the well-known “Sharlani” icon, which used to be stolen from Pkhotreri to Lagvirka”²⁹.

“Motchkvili” icon (Motchkvili means glazed, glassy) is mentioned by Countess Praskovia Uvarova too (P. Uvarova believes that this is a XI century icon) and by Ekvtime Takaishvili as well (He believes the icon belongs to the XI-XII centuries)³⁰.

According to Kiti Machabeli, several fragments of the icon have been preserved: “The sizes of the icon are 32X26. The surface of the icon was covered with marble plates among which were inscripted miniatures in the boxes covered with glass plates”³¹.

“Motchkvili” icon used to be the main relic of the lower Bali Svaneti region. It is well known that the Svanetian traditional life preserves the icons, which have to be mentioned, even during the shortest prayers, the Motchkvili icon is

among them. Motchkvili was a relic icon and to some extent resembles Shaliani³².

On the basis of the diverse comparative analysis, Kiti Matchabeli believes that “Motchkvili” belongs to the monumental art of North Italy and Germany that includes decorative ornamental miniatures. The researcher also thinks that Ianashi cross and the cross standing on the Ushguli Murkmeri St. Barbare church are the unique monuments³³. It should also be mentioned that according to the legend, the Murkmeri cross was also taken from the Svaneti lower Bali region, in particular, from the Doli St. Barbare church³⁴, which leads us to the thought that all of these crosses and icons have one and the same origin, they should belong to some famous Byzantian or Italian school.

Another long legend also tells us the story about the “Shaliani”, named “Kashletiani” Svaneti’s army – “Svimra” visited Kashletiani who was living in Etseri, Tasleri. He hosted the guests for two nights, but became absolutely impoverished by the third night. Kashletiani, who became poor, got angry and decided to take revenge on Etseri. By that time Etseri was enjoying the grace of God. The deer used to come to Pkhotreti church each spring on Tuesdays of the Easter Week. Kashletiani waited for the deer in an ambush and killed them. He poured their blood on the sacred Sabiashi place. Then he covered the main water source (Sgim) of Etseri residents with a waterwheel and stopped its flow. Then late at

night he stole the precious icon from the Pkhotreti church. Of course, Kashletiani could no longer stay in Etseri and he went to the upper valley. He stayed by one family there in Kala. The residents of Kala took the icon from Kashletiani and donated it to their church. Since the Etserians would inevitably try to take the icon back, they placed guards at the church. N. Pakeliani, who is 102 years old says that this was the “Shaliani” icon³⁵.

The archival material by Ali Davitiani is nearly of the same content. It is important to note that the scholars wrote that they apply an epithet to Shaliani icon – “Khosha tskhovet Khat”, which means “the Great Holy Icon”³⁶.

The lower Svan legend also tells us a story of the “Shaliani”. Lagurka’s church near Makashi represents one of the strongest sacred centers. According to the legend, Kala’s Lagurka icon was stolen from this church and it was tied with chains³⁷. As we can see, legends regarding the “Shaliani” exist in all parts of Svaneti.

Vakhushti Batonishvili is also mentioning that in Etseri, which is in the South of Lechkhumi, there is one church called Sueti. There are kept not just Sueti’s holy treasures and jewelry, brought by the King Vakhtang Gorgasali from India, made of red rubies, but also icons and crosses made of gold and silver and embellished with stones. They are precious, big and small, they are much respected, and a better icon is tied with a golden chain, and Svans

believe that if they untie the chains, it will destroy all the icons and crosses here... If anyone with the sins goes in, the icons will pardon him and set him free³⁸. Can we really connect Vakhushti Batonishvili's note to any of Etseri churches? In this respect, Egnate Gabliani mentions that there is geographic inaccuracy in Vakhushti Batonishvili's description since Etseri is mentioned to the south of Lechkhumi instead of the north-east³⁹. Besides, Seti church was located in Seti (part of Mestia), Setis Mtavarmotsame was Svaneti religious center and it also possessed some civil authority as well. Since Etseri is mentioned in the historical sources, including Kartlis Tskhovreba and it is referred to as one of the most important places, it is natural that Vakhushti Batonishvili also had information regarding Etseri. He tells us one fact: action is taking place exactly in Etseri. It is natural that Vakhushti Batonishvili also had information regarding Etseri. The historical sources and legends confirm that Etseri represented the residence of Vardanidzes, and later on the residence of Gelovanis. There were also residing the "varg"-s of lower Bali Svaneti (varg is a noble in Svaneti)⁴⁰ Ruchegianis and Dadeshkelianis. It is possible that one of the nobles took Svaneti's most sacred icon "Shaliani", and kept it near to his residence in Pkhutreti church, from where, as the legend tells, the icon was stolen by Kashletiani⁴¹.

Several mythological passages in connection with Shaliani should also

be mentioned, for example, it is described that before Shaiani was placed in Pkhutreti church, the place and the total village were enjoying Gods grace, which was evident since in spring deer would come to the church on the Easter Tuesday and they would leave their buck there. The topic of searching the place for keeping Shaliani should also be noted: the bulls find the sacred [place on their own]. I. Surguladze who studied the scarification in Georgian mythology and rituals, concluded: "the beliefs regarding animals intended for sacrifice, who go to the place on their own, are spread around the whole Caucasus. The stories regarding the choice of the place to build cathedrals tell us that the bull or a calf walking on their own will lead to the place, after which the equivalent – the animal is driven to the holy place by God's will. The animals are sacrificed there and in such a way a ritual is formed that repeats every time⁴². When the information in the written sources is lacking, the ethnographic data play a decisive role in restoring the real picture of a historical fact.

There is an opinion in Georgian historiography that Shaliani icon is connected with Abkhaz kings Shavlianis. The Georgian scientists share the idea that there are parallels between Shaiani and the kings of Abkhazia, Shavlianis. Geronti Gasviani, Teimuraz Mibchuani and others agree with this idea. Geronti Gasviani believes that in the second half of the IX century, the kings of

Abkhazia were the representatives of Svans, Shavliani⁴³. Teimuraz Mibchuani also connects the surname of Shavliani with the initiator of the upheaval that took place in the 60s of the IX century in the kingdom – Ioane Shavliani, who is considered to be the representative of the already existing Abkhazian dynasty. After Ioane Shavliani his son, Adarnase came to the throne. Shavliani were Svans by origin. These Svans used to live in the village Iviri in Upper Svaneti. According to the legend, the icon under the name of Shavliani (Shaliani) was brought by some Shavliani from Kutaisi, the royal city. The Svan Sharvashidzes had privileged rights to use Shaliani icon, which shows us their genetic relation to the latter Shavliani⁴⁴.

The icon is carefully kept, and it still has the biggest religious and social function till nowadays. Shaliani can be touched only two times a year: on Easter Saturday and on the 28th (15th) of July on Kvirikoba (ligurke) festival. Only the distinguished persons, so-called Mokiles can touch the icon. Mokiles are chosen by the whole Kala community and they take care of the monastery until the next Easter.

As we have mentioned, Lagurka had great influence on the social life of Svaneti. All the researchers, stories and narrators are stating that no important political decision could be made without making an oath on Shaliani icon. And as we know, the important decision was preceded by convening a meeting uniting the

whole Svaneti (Lukhori)⁴⁵.

The decisions made at the meetings were approved by the oath made at St. Kvirike monastery. One of the famous meetings took place in 1875, before the uprising in upper Svaneti. Lagurka and Shaliani icon played an important role in the customary law. The most important cases were decided at Lagurka. An oath was made at the monastery in a special occasion to “Shaliani” icon.

The folk holiday Kvirikoba – Ligurke, which stems from the church tradition, is still celebrated on a large scale in the Kala community, near the Church of St. Kvirike (former monastery). The holiday has many components and some innovations are also observed. The holiday has been firmly preserved in the folk religious calendar of Svaneti and still retains its significance, and this confirms a noteworthy fact – the number of those wishing to attend the holiday is increasing every year, as is the geographical map of worshipers. In recent decades, a canonical service is also been held here, after which a folk holiday is carried out.

The festival of Kvirikoba (“Ligurke”) plays an important role in the traditional life of Svaneti. They prepare for the whole year for this day. The festival is held according to the Christian calendar and according to the old-style calendar, it is held on the 15th (28th) of July. The festival is held to remember the martyrs – mother Ivli and her son Kvirike. Together with the believers the tourists also attend the festival. Those

who pray at St. Kvirike monastery are hoping to have a peaceful and happy year. It is believed in Svaneti that each believer should visit the monastery at least thrice.

It should be noted that after the creation of the eparchy of Mestia and upper Svaneti and after conferring orders to father Ilarion (Kitiashvili) canonical prayers are carried out during Kvirikoba.

The main hosts in charge of Kvirikoba are still women. Early in the morning, several respectful men chosen from Kala community bring out the "Shaliani" icon from the monastery, they dip it in the water, then the same men go around the church with candles lit in their hands and the bowls full of the holy "zedashe". Svan chants are heard, including "kiria" – the Svan folk variation of the ecclesiastic Kirieleison. Bells are heard from the bell tower. The men gathered inside the fence are kneed and without their hats. The women are gathered near "Ladbash". The believers from the other villages stand nearby and wait for the completion of the main "Limzir" (prayer). After walking around the church, "Shaliani" will be brought back to the monastery, where it will be kept untouched and protected until the Saturday of the Easter week of the next year. Before that the older member "Memzir" (believer) will bless the whole of Georgia, Svaneti and the believers gathered at "Lagurka". After this ritual the believers have an opportunity to go near to the church door, bring their

sacrifice and pray. First the Kala community will sacrifice a bull. The older men from Kala will bless each praying person, and the people around shout – "Amen". When the flow of the believers decreases, the men who are praying ("Memzir") will have an opportunity to listen to the people who have certain problems, for whom the festival of Kvirikoba turns into a relief. It is the place where a concerned Svan can go, who has a wish to prove that he is right, it is the place where people who are worried because of the defamation, and in the most serious case, a felon's fate is passed over to the icon.

The water in which Shaliani is dipped is also used for healing. According to the believers, it has miraculous power and can heal any illness. The water is brought to the peoples' homes that have a severe disease, and those who can walk, go to the monastery themselves, where a ritual of blessing will be carried out. The caregiver of the ill person will put the promised heart and liver of the sacrificed animal, the prayer bread ("Lemzir") and a jug with vodka on a small platter (tabla), light a candle and ask the distinguished people - the people who pray, to bless the ill person. The pray ("Limzir") is completed with the shout of Amen by the people around. Several types of blessings are used in practice.

Thus, it is clear that the traditional Svan way of life is based on religious belief. In this case, this belief is symbolically focused on the "Shaliani"

icon and it is the driving force of the social life that manages it, the icon depicting crucification. the so-called “Shaliani” which is intended for keeping a part of the greatest Christian relic “Dzeli Cheshmariti” is the most important part of the traditional life of Svaneti. Along with the religious value, the icon also has a social value. Lagurka, where the Shaliani icon is kept, is the main religious

center of Svaneti. The oath made in front of this icon plays a decisive role in the application of customary law. Today the faith in “Shaliani” is still active. The various rituals connected to it clearly reflect the mode of traditional life of Svaneti and bring us an opportunity to restore the common Georgian traditional religious and social structures.

Notes

- ¹ Shalva Amiranashvili, *History of Georgian monumental painting*, vol. 1, Tbilisi, 1957, (in Russian) p. 134.
- ² Mikheil Chartolani, *The Results of the Georgian State Museum 1972 Svaneti scientific complex expedition*, Georgian State Museum, Moambe, XXXI-Б, Tbilisi, 1975, pp. 165-181 (in Georgian).
- ³ Idem, *From the Material culture of the Georgian people*, Tbilisi, 1961, p. 6 (in Georgian).
- ⁴ Polievktos Karbelashvili, „Two weeks in Svaneti”, *Iveria*, 31 October, (# 232) 1903 (in Georgian).
- ⁵ Ivan Bartolomei, *Trip to free Svaneti*, ЗКОИРГО, vol. III, Tiflis, 1855, pp. 161-162 (in Russian)
- ⁶ Dimitri Bakradze, *Svanetia*, ЗКОИРГО, vol. VI, Tiflis, 1864 (in Russian).
- ⁷ Vakhtang Beridze, *Against the falsification of the history of Georgian art*, Tbilisi, 1949 (in Russian).
- ⁸ Alksei Stoiانov, *Trip to Svaneti*, ЗКОИРГО, vol. X, part. 2, Tiflis, 1876, p. 267 (in Russian).
- ⁹ Ivan Ivaniukov, Maxim Kovalevski, *In Svaneti*, 1866 (in Russian).
- ¹⁰ Polievktos Karbelashvili, *op.cit.*
- ¹¹ Praskovia Uvarova, *Trip to Pshavi, Khevsureti and Svaneti*, MAK, X, Moscow, 1904 (in Russian).
- ¹² Ekvtime Takaishvili, *Archaeological Expedition to Lechkhumi-Svaneri*, vol. II, 1910, Tbilisi, 1991 (in Georgian).
- ¹³ Report on Performance of museums in 1931-1932, Museum Moambe, vol. VII, pp. 344-350 (in Georgian).
- ¹⁴ Mikheil Chartolani, *The Results of the Georgian State Museum 1972 Svaneti scientific complex expedition*, *op.cit.*
- ¹⁵ Giorgi Jalabadze, *Arable Farming in Western Gworgia*, Tbilisi, 1990, p. 12 (in Georgian).
- ¹⁶ Ivan Bartolomei, *op.cit.*, pp.162 (in Russian).
- ¹⁷ Polievktos Karbelashvili, *op.cit.*
- ¹⁸ Pavle Ingorokva, *Svaneti historical Monuments*, vol. 2, Tbilisi, 1941 (in Georgian).
- ¹⁹ Antonidze, „Zemo Svaneti”, *Iveria*, 5 October, #215, 1901 (in Georgian).
- ²⁰ Ekvtime Takaishvili, *op.cit.*, p.179 (in Georgian).
- ²¹ Vera Bardavelidze, *From the History of the Ancient Beliefs in Georgia, Flag Lem, Wolf-Dog, Materials for Georgian Ethnography*, XII-XIII, Tbilisi, 1963, p. 144 (in Georgian).

- ²² Ekvtime Takaishvili, *op.cit.*, p. 186 (in Georgian)
- ²³ Polievtos Karbelashvili, *op.cit.*
- ²⁴ Praskovia Uvarova, *op.cit.*, pp. 94-100 (in Russian).
- ²⁵ Rusudan Kenia, Natela Aladashvili, *Guide of Georgia*, II, Upper Svaneti, Tbilisi, 2000, p. 49 (in Georgian)
- ²⁶ Besarion Nijaradze, „From Svaneti”, *Droeba*, 11 January (1-8), 1880 (in Georgian).
- ²⁷ Ekvtime Takaishvili, *op.cit.*, p.180 (in Georgian).
- ²⁸ Egnate Gabliani, *Old and New Svaneti*, Tiflis, 1925, p. 116 (in Georgian).
- ²⁹ A. Aleksander Stoianov, *Trip to Svaneti*, ЗКОИРГО, vol. X, part. 2, Tiflis, 1876, p. 326 (in Russian).
- ³⁰ Praskovia Uvarova, *op.cit.*, pp.181 (in Russian). Ekvtime Takaishvili, *op.cit.*, p. 416 (in Georgian).
- ³¹ Kiti Machabeli, *From Svaneti Treasures*, Tbilisi, 1982, p.106 (in Georgian).
- ³² see Ali Davitiani, *Cult of Nature in Lakhamura Community* 35, In Archaive of Iv.Javakhishvili Institute of History and Ethnology (in Georgian); Idem, *Svaneti Historical Events*, #94, In Archaive of Iv.Javakhishvili Institute of History and Ethnology (in Georgian).
- ³³ Kiti Machabeli, *op.cit.*, pp. 97-109 (in Georgian).
- ³⁴ Rozeta Gujejiani, „About one Svan Festival”, *Historical-Ethnographic Studies*, V, Tbilisi, 2002, pp. 238-257 (in Georgian).
- ³⁵ Svan Prosaic, *Texts*, vol. I, Tbilisi, 1957 (in Georgian).
- ³⁶ Ali Davitiani, *Cult of Nature in Lakhamura Community* 35, *op.cit.*; Ali Davitiani, *op.cit.*
- ³⁷ Nino Abakelia, Ketevan Alaverdashvili, Nino Gambashidze, *Calendar of Georgian Folk Festivals*, Tbilisi, 1991, p. 121 (in Georgian).
- ³⁸ Vakhushti Batonishvili, *Description of Georgian Kingdom, Life of Georgia*, vol. IV, Tbilisi, 1973, pp. 787-788 (in Georgian).
- ³⁹ Egnate Gabliani, vol. I, *op.cit.*, p. 28 (in Georgian).
- ⁴⁰ Simon Janashia, *From the ancient chronology, according to the language data. Works*, vol. III, Tbilisi, 1959, p.135 (in Georgian)
- ⁴¹ Vakhushti Batonishvili, *op.cit.*, p. 261 (in Georgian)
- ⁴² Irakli Surguladze, *Sacrifices*, X, Tbilisi, 2001, pp. 241-242 (in Georgia)
- ⁴³ Geronti Gasviani, *Extract from the History of the middle ages*, Tbilisi, 1991, pp.89-90 (in Georgian)
- ⁴⁴ Teimuraz Mibchuani, *Shaliani - King of Abkhazia (IX)*, “aia”, vol. I, 1996, p.7 (in Georgian)
- ⁴⁵ Besarion Nijaradze, *Historical and ethnological Letters*, vol. I, Tbilisi, 1962, pp. 85-88 (in Georgian)

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The Beginning of Renewed Life-A Code of Repentance (Saint David the Builder and Saint Anthim the Iberian)

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Abstract: *This study explores two exemplary theological and moral approaches to repentance as reflected in the lives and writings of two great figures of Georgian spirituality: Saint King David IV of Georgia, known as David the Builder, and Saint Anthim the Iberian, the Holy Hierarch of Romania. The reflections of two great saints draw attention to one of the most important concepts of Christian ethics: repentance.*

Although they lived in seemingly different eras, it is evident that both thinkers belong to the same conceptual and intellectual tradition.

Their teachings illuminate both the universal and particular aspects of repentance as a means of ethical and spiritual renewal, emphasizing the role of conscience in shaping the renewed human being. For each of them, one of the essential and decisive factors is the subjective infallibility of one's own conscience.

Repentance, in both saints' thought, represents not only contrition for sin but also the conscious act of spiritual reorientation – a turning back to God. It evokes the biblical image of the Prodigal Son returning to his father's house after long estrangement: repentance as homecoming, renewal, and victory of divine grace within the human soul. A "Code of Repentance" in Christianity is essentially a spiritual roadmap guiding believers from recognition of sin to transformation and renewal. This and its structural elements are revealed in the discourse of Saint David the Builder and Holy Hierarch Anthim the Iberian. With their teaching, they encourage human beings to examine their lives regularly, for self-examination and continually seek God's guidance.

Keywords: *a code of repentance, conscience, Saint David the Builder, Saint Anthim the Iberian.*

Introduction

The moral and theological significance of repentance lies in the recognition of God's existence and His transformative presence within the human soul. Repentance constitutes an essential marker of spiritual ma-

turity, extending beyond the mere acknowledgment of sin and remorse for transgression. It signifies an inner transformation – the spiritual rebirth of the individual.

As expressed in sacred tradition, "Obedience to God is more beneficial than sacrifice, for one who offers

sacrifice gives to God something external, whereas obedience means offering oneself – one’s own will and freedom – to Him”. Obedience and repentance are therefore intrinsically interwoven, reflecting the ethical and spiritual dimensions of human submission to the divine will.

The role of the clergy in facilitating repentance is of paramount importance, yet it is the believer’s genuine disposition toward moral purification that ultimately determines the efficacy of this spiritual act. Every Christian is called to bear witness to the transformative power of the Gospel through a life characterized by peace, humility, and spiritual integrity – ever conscious of God’s infinite love.

However, adherence to Christianity alone does not guarantee forgiveness; authentic faith presupposes active engagement in repentance as a living, dynamic process.

The present study seeks to examine the theological and spiritual pathways toward the renewal of human life through repentance. For this purpose, we have selected two eminent Georgian saints, in whose works the mystery of repentance occupies a central and transformative place. It is particularly fruitful to juxtapose the perspectives of two figures from different epochs and social standings – the supreme secular authority, King David IV of Georgia¹, and the supreme ecclesiastical authority, Saint Anthim the Iberian – in order to discern their shared understanding of

repentance as the foundation of spiritual renewal.

King David IV stands as one of the greatest monarchs in Georgian history. His reign marked a period of national unification, military and administrative reform, and profound Christian revival. He is venerated not only as a ruler but as a saint, reformer, and hymnographer. His reforms — particularly those inspired by the monastic and theological legacy of George the Hagiorite — contributed to the harmonious integration of church and state.

The ecclesiastical counterpart to David’s legacy is Saint Anthim the Iberian², a metropolitan of Wallachia, theologian, and scholar, holy hierarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, maintaining a deep connection to his Georgian spiritual roots. The works of Romanian and Georgian scholars³ – including – have illuminated the depth of Anthim’s theological and pastoral writings, particularly his treatment of repentance as the path toward spiritual regeneration.

For both saints, communion with God must take place through the discerning power of the conscience. Both of them follow the New Testament concept of conscience, on which is based their understanding of regret which is more individual in nature and involves three major truths.

First, conscience is a God-given capacity for human beings to exercise self-evaluation. Paul refers several times to his own conscience being “good” or “clear” (Acts 23:1, 24:16,

1 Corinthians 4:4). Paul examined his own words and deeds and found them to be in accordance with his morals and value system, which were, of course, based on God's standards. His conscience verified the integrity of his heart. Second, the conscience as a witness to something. Paul says the Gentiles have consciences that bear witness to the presence of the law of God written on their hearts, even though they did not have the Mosaic Law (Romans 2:14-15). He also appeals to his own conscience as a witness that he speaks the truth (Romans 9:1) and that he has conducted himself in holiness and sincerity in his dealings with men (2 Corinthians 1:12). He also says that his conscience tells him his actions are apparent to both God and the witness of other men's consciences (2 Corinthians 5:11). Third, the conscience is a servant of the individual's value system. An immature or weak value system produces a weak conscience, while a fully informed value system produces a strong sense of right and wrong. In the Christian life, one's conscience can be driven by an inadequate understanding of scriptural truths and can produce feelings of guilt and shame disproportionate to the issues at hand. Maturing in the faith strengthens the conscience.

There exists the monastery – the sacred space of practice, a means of direct communication with God – yet above all, conscience itself assumes the highest significance, the utmost importance. It is the inner place and

mediator that every human being carries within. In Saints' understanding, the human being is, by nature, sinful. Yet at the same time, man is also a being who is conscious of the guilt inherent in his own nature. Conscience is that through which a person stands in direct relation with God, and it is within this inner sphere of infallibility that forgiveness and reconciliation are manifested – not through external evidence.

The intense feeling evoked by the recognition of sins is accompanied by bright tones, hope for human transformation, and a deep faith in one's perfection. The emergence of a sense of repentance in a person's consciousness already implies a qualitative transformation of the personality. Repentance prepares the ground for the birth of a new self.

Praise of the King to the Mystery of Repentance

Saint David the Builder's *Chants of Repentance* constitute a unique monument of Georgian Christian culture and are recognized as part of the world's spiritual heritage. The text stands out for its profound emotional and theological depth – a moving expression of guilt, humility, and spiritual striving.

Georgian scholars such as Ivane Javakhishvili, Zurab Chavchavadze, Simon Kaukhchishvili, and Laura Grigolashvili have examined *The Chants* from codicological, philological, theological, and literary per-

spectives, situating them both within Georgian culture at large and within the history of Georgian hymnography in particular.

There are several attempts to translate the text into English. Although the English translation by Dodona Kiziria⁴ brought this work to international attention, it is not entirely faithful to the original. The translation by Lali Jokhadze⁵ is closer in spirit and precision to the Georgian text, particularly in rendering the theological nuances of

repentance rather than mere *remorse*⁶.

Saint David's "*The Chants*" take the form of hymns dedicated to the Creator, expressing the paradox of human imperfection before divine perfection. Saint David laments humanity's inability to reflect God's image fully, transforming this sorrow into a pathway toward renewal. His repentance is not despair but hope – the inner recognition of divine love and the possibility of restoration.

As he writes:

"I betrayed my own nature,
moving away from Thy image,
and I gave birth to evil,
turning all my thoughts
to all that is visible and lustful"⁷.

Throughout the *Chants*, David's voice resonates with both awe and intimacy, blending fear of divine majesty with joy at divine mercy. The structure of the hymns recalls the *Confessions* of Augustine and the

Meditations of Marcus Aurelius – introspective dialogues of the soul before God.

The hymn draws upon Scripture, particularly Exodus 15:1–19, and the Epistle to the Philippians (2:10–12):

"At the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."
Saint David the Builder echoes this in Troparion I:
"Thou before whom
every neck is bowed
and bent is every knee
and every tongue confesses
Thou, O, Word,
hearken to me, a penitent"⁸.

Saint David carefully selects words that both glorify God and revere the Word, which is God Himself, encompassing omnipotent

power. The Word created the world, whose energy and omnipresence are infinite. This inspires in the poet both fear and joy: fear that he may not be

able to praise God adequately, and joy that he has been chosen to reveal the hidden meaning of the Word, fulfill human potential, and carry out his divine duty.

We share Lali Jokhadze's opinion that *the Word (Logos)* here refers to the second person of the Holy Trinity – Christ Himself – whose light restores and sanctifies the fallen image of man⁹.

Saint David addresses Almighty God with tears, lamenting his sins. Within the process of repentance, the human being aspires to return to the

divine archetype – the image and likeness of God. Along this transformative journey, the “old self” dies, giving way to the birth of a “new self”. The human being, whose divine image has been obscured by sin, must once again strive to resemble God by renouncing the old nature and embracing renewal. Saint David thus appeals to the human conscience, which must awaken repentance as the essential agent of the soul’s moral and spiritual transformation.

“Thou madest me in thine own image,
a natural entity
of the material and spiritual,
enlightening me with wisdom
as a being like unto Thee;
but ungrateful I proved to be”¹⁰.

It becomes evident in the concluding part of the text that, for Saint David, the only path to salvation lies in recognizing his own guilt, confessing it, and being willing to overcome it. This journey involves hope

in God, love for God, and the triumph over despair. Repentance, therefore, unites faith, hope, and love: one believes in God, hopes for His protection and help, and loves God while feeling His love in return.

“Knowing that according to his promise
He will bring to life and join bone to bone,
and joint to joint,
I believe
that with his dexter hand
God will restore
all my sinful body;
after my repentance!”¹¹

In Saint David’s code of repentance exist all essential structural elements of the code, but there is set forth recognition of his personal sins,

full acknowledgment that he has sinned against God, his people, his country. He calls for reflection, prayer, confession, admission of sins.

Saint David emphasizes genuine sorrow for having offended God. This sincere sorrow is emotional and spiritual. Contrition for saint David is not merely feeling guilty, but truly regretting the sin. Repentance for Saint David, is the victory of divine grace within the soul. It is both confession and creation, the beginning of a renewed life.

His final testament – asking to be buried at the threshold of Gelati Monastery so that all who enter “may tread upon my heart” – embodies ultimate humility and repentance.

The Holy Hierarch’s call to Repentance

Saint Anthim the Iberian has a keen sense of the spirit of the times and the religious and spiritual processes taking place in Europe, which posed a challenge to Christianity, the Church. He was to provide contemporary Orthodox Christians with a new orientation based on the spirit of the times. His task was to find a fundamental foundation for the Christian community and show the way to the truly and sincere believer. He offers Orthodoxy's response to this historical challenge. The Holy Hierarch saw the solution in a sense of repentance and a sense of duty as the path to conversion to Christ and spiritual rebirth. In his view, repentance is and should be the primary step of a Christian towards renewal, and it is precisely this that will return Christians to the true faith.

Why namely Repentance? In Saint Anthim’s teaching Repentance is the last chance for man to survive. It is the path back to God. The words of John the Baptist: Repent, for judgment is near, are the foundation and starting point for Saint Anthim.

He gives us a strict definition in one passage of his “Ecclesiastic Teaching “calls the Mystery of Confession or Repentance”: Repentance is a person's conversion from evil to good and from the devil to God through diligent work, passion, and free will¹². So, it is clearly seen that for Saint Anthim repentance is a free, conscious attempt by a person to repent, which is no less valuable to God. The position of Anthim the Iberian, unlike that of other thinkers of Modernity, is an expression of positive hope. The society of Anthim's day, lost in hope and deprived of love, finds itself in a grave spiritual state. But there is a way out of this situation. The Holy Hierarch sees it in repentance. The path of the human’s return to God and the Church is repentance.

He believes that it is necessary to clarify this path and remind Christians of the importance of repentance. Repentance and baptism are the path to rebirth in Christ and a return to Christ. Repentance is a way to draw closer to God and atone for sins. It also speaks of the duty of the believer, the priest, and the church.

Repentance is one of the basic themes of Saint Anthim’s sermons. Among them we would single out: “On the birth of our Savior Jesus

Christ, December 25”, “On Sunday of forgiveness”, “On Saint Nicholas Day, December 6”, “On the transfiguration of our Lord, August, 6”, “On Pharisee and the Publican Sunday”, “Ecclesiastic Teaching”, etc. Holy Hierarch also devotes a special work to revealing the essence of repentance: “a Brief Teaching on the Mystery of Repentance”.

In these works, the Holy Hierarch proves that Repentance is an intermediate path that requires great patience. God calls people to repentance both directly and indirectly.

For Holy Hierarch repentance *begins* with the awakening of the conscience. He follows Patristic Teaching on Conscience and describes it as “a teacher given to us by God, not from without but from within” [St. John Chrysostom Homily 24 on the Gospel]. Even if a person has never heard Scripture, conscience acts as a lawgiver, making excuses or accusations. Saint Hierarch understands conscience as “the natural law” written in the human heart. “When God formed man, He implanted within him something divine – a certain thought which shows him what is good and what is evil; this is conscience” [Homily on Romans 13].

When the conscience is stirred – by prayer, Scripture, or the Holy Spirit – a person perceives their spiritual condition and feels the need for reconciliation with God. This inner movement leads to confession and transformation. A healthy spiritual life keeps the conscience sensitive

and “alive”, responding quickly to sin through repentance. But if one repeatedly ignores the conscience, the Fathers warn it becomes “seared” [1 Timothy 4:2], losing its ability to discern right from wrong – leading to spiritual blindness.

Thus, Saint Anthim argues that repentance *purifies* the conscience, and the conscience *guides* repentance – a continuous, healing cycle sustained by grace.

At the very beginning of “a Brief Teaching on the Mystery of Repentance” Saint Anthim preached to us: “I will briefly explain what the path to repentance means. I beseech God and I address you, I who am the most sinful person in the whole world, let us all of us, together with me, repent our evil deeds, let us cry with bitter tears, let us groan, and let us address our Lord who loves humans with the publican’s words “God be merciful to me a sinner” [Luke, 18:13] and let us repeat the words of the prodigal son: “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee” [Luke, 15:18] and below he goes on “And our heavenly father when He sees our true repentance and tears will truly forgive us our sins as the merciful and long-suffering God. If repentance is not such as it should be therefore, it will bring no good to man”¹³.

Saint Anthim is confident in the Lord’s mercy and calls on people to repent of their sins with all their hearts. “It is a manifestation of God’s love, patience, and humility, and also an opportunity for the believer to

return to their homeland to strengthen their faith and obedience”¹⁴.

Among those countless graces that the all-wise healer of souls, our Saviour Jesus Christ, our Lord bestowed on us, one is the mystery of repentance. He bestowed it on us so that we might rid ourselves of all the sources of evil, the enemy of man’s soul, the Devil. And, having sinned, to be able to return to innocence, and to free ourselves from perpetual tortures by means of repentance”. The Holy Hierarch seeks reasons for committing sin; for him it is ignorance.: “Because of this shameful ignorance, therefore, we have no fear of God, and are not ashamed before men, and commit evil and mortal sins: we drink hard all day, fight in the inns, fornicate, and perform all kinds of injustice. We hurt people, tell lies, make false oaths, commit perjury, do not refrain from blasphemy, commit murder, defame and envy others, are at enmity with others and persecute them, and commit many other sins. And it makes our wretched souls mortally ill”¹⁵. Below it is vividly described what happens to an ignorant and pitiful person if he dies without repentance and confession: “ his soul will get into the Devil’s hands, i.e., fall into eternal fire and pitch-darkness, where there is a relentless worm, the gnashing of teeth, and where this person will lack the grace of the Lord, the joy of angels, the splendour of Eden, the bliss of the saints and eternal life”¹⁶. Describing the story of Noah, Holy Hierarch emphasizes that people

were given 100 years to repent, and finally it rained for 40 days and nights, showing great patience by giving people time to repent, but in vain¹⁷.

Saint Anthim discusses in detail what repentance is, how repentance is reached, and how it can be carried out. There are two types of repentance: repentance as the basis for a person becoming a Christian, when a person repents of the old period of sinful life and receives the light of Christ, and repentance, which is shown by an already baptized Christian. There is a fundamental difference between them. At this time, the Christian feels like a traitor who has betrayed God and himself. He fights with himself so that the good beginning may triumph in him. Saint Anthim returns to this theme in several of his sermons, notably “*On Pharisee and the Publican Sunday*” and “*On Modesty at Palm Sunday*”¹⁸.

He proves that true repentance is achieved through three steps. The first is contrition of heart, the second the confession of sins, i.e. the admission of sins to a spiritual guide, and the third carrying out the canon of repentance. These three steps should be taken by the man who desires to save his soul. He who desires with all his heart to return to God and enter his father’s house like a prodigal son should know that the first door he has to pass through is contrition of heart, which is a great sacrifice made to God: “a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise” [Ps. 51:17].

There are two parts to contrition of heart: the first implies repentance and the complete distancing from past sins; the second implies a firm resolution and true responsibility that we will never sin again in our life. Holy Hierarch teaches¹⁹: The first thing you should do therefore if you truly repent is to hate and despise your sins with all your soul; you should do it with the deepest inner heart-searching and grief: first, you should know that sins bring you perpetual tortures, and that you will lose the kingdom of heaven; secondly, you should know that because of hateful sins you cause grief and pain to the kindest God. For it is our duty to love and venerate the Lord on High more than anything else in this world. We should especially feel pain and worry when we sin before Him and thus lose closeness to Him. We, pitiful people, should shed bitter tears and cry because we have lost the grace of God; we should cry even more bitterly than if we had lost the most expensive thing we possessed, because the greater the loss, the stronger the grief. We should hate sin therefore and become its enemies, because the loss caused by sin is indescribable¹⁹.

He warns a man that there may be plenty of reasons that are worth thinking over and are inspiring, but one should think them over candidly and with a firm will. Saint Anthim underlines the role of personal will in the process of coming back to Christ.

“Man, tell your soul: my wretched soul, open your eyes and see what

you were, and what you have become as a result of sinning; you were the bride of those in heaven, the abode of the living God, an exquisite precious vessel and the true throne of Solomon, that is of Christ; Isaac’s throne of wisdom, the angels’ brother and heir to eternal bliss²⁰.

The essence of the mystery of repentance is confession with the lips, contrition of the heart, and the fulfillment of the law. The epiclesis of this mystery is the power that the Savior gave only to His disciples and apostles, as stated in the 18th chapter of the Gospel of Matthew “Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven”. And the purpose of this sacrament is the cleansing of a person from sins and the re-acceptance of God’s grace. It is the starting point of re-birth in other word re-newed life of Person.

Saint Anthim clearly defines elements of the code of repentance. First of all, it’s recognition of sin – acknowledging that one has sinned against God and others. This involves self-examination through prayer, reflection, or confession, culminating in the admission of sins, often verbally, in private prayer, and in the Sacrament of Confession before a spiritual father. Genuine sorrow for having offended God is an imminent element. It is worthy noticed that, for Saint David the Builder this element takes an important place in the code of repentance. Genuine sorrow is sincere, has an emotional and spir-

itual essence. Contrition is not merely feeling guilty, but truly regretting the sin. Abandonment or turning away from Sin is also emphasized by Saint Anthim – it’s a conscious decision to cease sinful behavior, coupled with prayer and seeking God’s forgiveness. This relies on invoking God’s mercy through prayer, fasting, and other spiritual practices. Reliance on God’s grace is essential, as humans cannot earn forgiveness; it is a gift freely given through Jesus Christ. Commitment to change is one of the important elements of the code – Repentance requires active transformation: changing behavior and avoiding repetition of the same sins. Words alone are insufficient; life must be genuinely transformed. Amends or restitution – where possible, repairing wrongs, such as apologizing to someone harmed, returning what was stolen, or otherwise making restitution. Awakening of the Conscience – Recognition of sin and alienation from God, coupled with the conscious striving to live according to divine will, is core of the code. It forms the basis for ongoing spiritual renewal.

Conclusions

Despite differences in epoch, status, and vocation, both Saint David the Builder and Saint Anthim the Iberian converge in their understanding of repentance as the beginning of renewed life – the rebirth of the soul in Christ.

The saints’ “Code of Repentance” is not a formal legal document but rather a structured approach to practicing genuine repentance.

For both great Saints, the most important and decisive thing is the subjective authenticity of one’s own conscience. The Gospel is the basic saving power for all who receive it by faith. By moving from blind faith into Personal faith. The main theme for both is to draw attention to the changing understanding of the essence of salvation. Direct communion with God is possible only through the discerning ability of conscience, an impartial judge. It is conscience that tells a human whether he/she is abandoned by God or not. Conscience is what brings a person into direct relation with God. It is in this realm of inner truthfulness, and not in external evidences, that the forgiven and saved person is revealed. The church, as the only place of sacred rites, a means of direct communication with God, is losing its primary significance, the process of mystery begins inside every person – such a place and mediator is his/her conscience.

In the Christian world outlook, man is a sinful being by his nature. But at the same time, man is a creature who is capable of realizing it. This subtle difference highlights the different emphases in the theological worldview of this period.

The main focus is on a human’s subjective awareness of his own guilt/sin as the basis for conscious repentance. Both emphasize the pri-

ority of a human's personal consciousness. The sinfulness of human nature is perceptible and real to those who recognize it; a man is ready to acknowledge his finitude, his guilt. The importance of human consciousness in recognizing and overcoming guilt is stressed. The energy directed against the evil within a human must be directed into the depths of his own spiritual world. Before you begin to fight evil in the world, to transform the country, first correct yourself – this is the moral program, the code of repentance that relates Saint Hierarch Antim with Saint David the Builder.

For both great Saints, the most crucial and determinative element is the subjective authenticity of individual conscience. The Gospel constitutes the fundamental salvific power for all who receive it through faith, marking a transition from unreflective or “blind” faith to personal, interiorized faith.

The central theme uniting their thought is a reconfiguration of the understanding of salvation's essence. Direct communion with God is mediated not through external institutions alone but through the discerning faculty of conscience, which functions as an impartial and ultimate judge. It is conscience that discloses to the human person whether he or she stands in a state of divine abandonment or grace. Through conscience, the individual enters into an immediate and unmediated relationship with God.

Salvation is thus revealed within the interior realm of truthfulness,

rather than through external signs or ritual evidence. The Church – traditionally regarded as the exclusive locus of sacred rites and the privileged channel of divine communication – gradually relinquishes its primacy as the sole mediator. The mystery of salvation unfolds within the inner depths of each person, with conscience assuming the role of both sacred place and intermediary.

Within the Christian theological worldview of this period, the human being is conceived as inherently sinful by nature, yet simultaneously endowed with the capacity for self-awareness and moral reflection. This dialectic between innate sinfulness and the ability to recognize it underscores the nuanced theological emphases of the era. The subjective awareness of personal guilt and sin emerges as the foundational precondition for authentic repentance.

Both Saints accord primacy to personal consciousness in the process of salvation. Human sinfulness becomes perceptible and existentially real to those who acknowledge it; such individuals are prepared to confront their finitude and culpability. Consciousness thus plays a decisive role in both recognizing and overcoming guilt. The struggle against evil must begin within the depths of the individual's spiritual life, rather than through external action alone.

Before engaging in efforts to confront societal evils or implement social reform, one must first undertake the rigorous work of self-correction. This ethical and spiritual program,

often conceptualized as the *code of repentance*, is not a singular act but a sustained, lifelong process of moral and spiritual development. It encompasses systematic self-examination, recognition of transgression, sincere sorrow and contrition, deliberate renunciation of sinful behavior, commitment to behavioral change, resti-

tution or reparative action, and the cultivation of a vigilant conscience. This framework of personal moral accountability establishes a profound connection between the approaches to virtue exemplified by Saint Hierarch Antim and Saint David the Builder.

Notes

- ¹ David IV, known as David IV the Builder (1073 – 1125) the official title of the Georgian king was: “King of Kings, of the Abkhazians, Iberians, Ranis, Kakhetians, Armenians of Shaki Alania, and the Rus, Sword of the Messiah, emperor (basileus) of all the East, the invincible, servant and defender of God, the Orthodox king. For some more information on the issue one may read Donald Rayfield, *Edge of Empires: A History of Georgia*, Reaktion Books, 2013; Christian Hannik, „David IV of Georgia”, in *Religion Past and Present*. 1st, 2006, Jost Gippert, Manana Tandashvili, *The Epitaph of David the Builder Archived 2012-03-03 at the Wayback machine*, Gelati Academy of Sciences Project, 2002: Old Georgian texts from the Gelati school (Titus project), Accessed 19 June 2011, Mariam, Lortkipanidze, Roin Metreveli, *Kings of Georgia*, Tbilisi, 2007, pp. 122-130. Blessed David IV the King of Georgia. OCA – Lives of the Saints.
- ² Holy Hierarch Martyr Anthim the Iberian (c. 1650 – 1716), *Metropolitan of Wallachia (1708–1716)*. Saint Anthim the Iberian was born in Georgia (ancient Iberia) and received the name Andria at Holy

Baptism. He himself affirmed his Georgian origin, signing his name in the books he printed, translated, edited, and conducting his correspondence under the title “Anthim the Iberian.” A man of profound faith and extraordinary learning, he was a peerless teacher of repentance and philanthropy. Fluent in many languages, he used his talents in the service of the Church and the people of God. For his great theological works, cultural contributions, and his steadfast defense of the Orthodox faith, he is rightly honored as a “pillar of Orthodoxy.”

- ³ In this regard, the following studies are worth noting: Georgia and the European World – Philosophical – Cultural Dialogue, volume I, II, ed. Anastasia Zakariadze, Tbilisi, TSU press, 2009-2017. Otar Gvinchidze, *Anthim the Iberian-typographer and politician*, Metsniereba, Tbilisi, 1973, Vasile-Lucian V. Goldan, „The Archbishop Anthim the Iberian’s (1708-1716) – Interactions Between the Orthodox Religion, Spirituality and Creativity”, *Management Intercultural*, Vol. XVII, Nr. 2 (34), 2015, pp. 339-346. Fanny Djindjikhashvili, *Anthim the Iberian*, Tbilisi, 1967, Georgeta Marghescu, „Anthim Iverianul and European Identity Building of Romanian

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- ⁴ The Prayers of Remorse of King David IV the Builder, *Le Muséon*, 107(3), (transl. Dodona Kiziria,), 1994, pp. 335-347
- ⁵ Lali Jokhadze, „The State of the Study of David the Builder’s Canon of Repentance Literary Studies, Criticism, Journalism”, *Georgian Almanac*, 2016, pp. 146-156, <https://georgianalmanac.openjournals.ge › article>, (archived 01.08. 2025).
- ⁶ The title translated by Kiziria is questionable and we cannot share it. She translated “repentance” as “remorse. The chant itself is a hymn, a dedication to the Lord, who created humanity in His image. Yet creation cannot respond to the Creator with perfection. Because of this, the author of *Chants* expresses profound regret—a regret meant to guide humans toward correcting imperfection and overcoming sinfulness. Saint King David IV the Builder’s prayers cannot be estimated as a result of his remorse; as remorse is feeling sorry for one’s sin’s consequences. Saint king is sorry enough to stop sinning. He feels repentance. In Saint David’s case we have transformation of remorse into repentance. The intense feeling evoked by the recognition of sins is accompanied by bright tones, hope for human transformation, and a deep faith in one’s perfection. The emergence of a sense of repentance in a person’s consciousness already implies a qualitative transformation of the personality. Repentance prepares the ground for the birth of a new self.
- ⁷ In our study, we use translation by Lali Jokhadze, which is included in her survey. See *op. cit.* p. 151.
- ⁸ *Ibidem*, p 153.
- ⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 149.
- ¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 152.
- ¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 156.
- ¹² Anthim the Iberian, *Didahii and other works*, Dobera, Tbilisi, 2016, (tr.a.), pp. 233-234.
- ¹³ Anthim the Iberian, *Selected works, trilingual parallel texts*, (tr.a and Ambokadze), Logos, Tbilisi, 2022, pp. 166.
- ¹⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 164.
- ¹⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 166-167.
- ¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 167.
- ¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 105.
- ¹⁸ The passages on pages 39 and 129 (see *op. cit.*) are especially significant

for understanding his views on moral humility and social conduct.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 168.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 171.

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Constantin Brâncoveanu and Antim Ivireanul – Culture as a Strategy of Resistance in the Orthodox World under Ottoman Domination

Nicoleta ZAGURA

Abstract: *The martyrdoms of Romanian Prince Brâncoveanu (1714) and Georgian monk Antim Ivireanul (1716) that became Metropolitan of Wallachia, beside its religious and cultural narrative, are pointing their work into a theological and historical model of resistance grounded in faith, education, and dignity. The Brâncovenian era thus appears not merely as a political episode, but as a foundational moment in the articulation of Orthodox culture as a strategy of survival and resilience under Ottoman domination and illustrates the cultural and religious diplomacy between Romania and Georgia.*

Keywords: *Education, Culture, Tradition, Antim Ivireanul, Georgia.*

Constantin Brâncoveanu – the Voivode of Culture and Spiritual Diplomacy

Beginning in 1688, Wallachia entered the reign of one of the most complex and visionary rulers in the history of South-Eastern Europe: Constantin Brâncoveanu¹. A personality of European stature, formed at the confluence of Byzantine tradition and the spirit of the late Renaissance², Brâncoveanu understood that resistance to Ottoman domination could not be waged solely through arms or direct confrontation, but rather through a profound, long-term strategy grounded in culture, education, and the consolidation of spiritual identity among subjugated peoples³.

The Ottoman Empire, which ruled over territories that had once belonged to the Byzantine Empire, exercised not only political control but also cultural and religious domination⁴. In this context, Brâncoveanu conceived culture as a silent weapon – capable of preserving historical memory, language, and faith under pressure. Nicknamed by contemporary sources “the Golden Prince of Europe” because of his considerable wealth, the voivode used his material resources not for personal ostentation but to build an extensive network of Orthodox cultural diplomacy⁵.

This policy materialized in the support of printing and book production across multiple regions under Ottoman influence: Wallachia, Moldova, Transylvania, Georgia, the Levant,

and the Near East. Printing houses supported by Brâncoveanu operated or were initiated in Georgia and in Aleppo, where books were printed in Greek, Arabic, and Georgian, including editions using Arabic script – clear evidence of an open and universal cultural vision⁶. Through the printed book, Brâncoveanu sought to awaken national and religious consciousness among peoples dominated by the Ottomans, preparing the ground for future political emancipation⁷.

Within this vast cultural project, the ruler needed exceptional collaborators – polyglot scholars, printers, theologians, and artists – capable of translating his ideals into concrete achievements. The most brilliant among them would be a Georgian monk who became one of the greatest figures of Romanian culture: Antim Ivireanul.

Antim Ivireanul – the Scholar-Martyr and Founder of the Romanian Liturgical Language



Coat of arms of Metropolitan Antim

The providential encounter between Constantin Brâncoveanu and Antim took place in Iași, where the ruler recognized in the Georgian monk an enlightened mind animated by the same faith in the redemptive power of culture⁸. Born around 1650 in Georgia, Antim's biography reflects the dramatic fate of Orthodox Christians under Ottoman expansion, marked by captivity, exile, and spiritual endurance⁹.

Redeemed by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, Antim received a solid theological and cultural education and was tonsured into monastic life. His subsequent protection by the Patriarchate of Jerusalem and his mission in Moldova placed him at the intersection of the Greek, Arab, and Romanian Orthodox worlds¹⁰.

Summoned to Wallachia around 1690 under the direct protection of Brâncoveanu, Antim became abbot of Snagov Monastery and coordinator of the Metropolitan printing house. In 1694 he founded a printing school at Snagov, consciously linking education, book culture, and spiritual renewal¹¹. His Romanian-language publications aimed not only to make worship accessible but also to refine and elevate the Romanian language, including through the selective introduction of Latin-based vocabulary.

Elected Bishop of Râmnic in 1705 and Metropolitan of Wallachia in 1708, Antim Ivireanul carried out an exceptional printing activity: 63 books, of which 39 were printed by his own hand, 21 in Romanian. By

publishing the first fully Romanian *Liturghier* (1713) and the *Molitfelnic* (1716), he definitively consecrated the Romanian as the liturgical language of the Church¹².

His major work, the *Didahies*, comprising sermons and occasional orations, stands as a masterpiece of Romanian theology and rhetoric and a foundational text of the modern literary and liturgical language¹³. His foundation, the Monastery of All Saints in Bucharest (today Antim Monastery), remains a lasting symbol of the synthesis of art, faith, and culture.

Antim Ivireanul: The Unity of Word, Print, and Architectural Form



Antim Monastery painted by Otar Chacvetadze

Antim Ivireanul's cultural personality stands out in the Brâncovenian era through his capacity to synthesize theology, rhetoric, typography, and architecture into a single spiritual project. His monastery in Bucharest embodies the Brâncovenian artistic

style, characterized by harmony, symbolic ornamentation, and the fusion of Byzantine tradition with Oriental and Renaissance elements¹⁴. At the same time, Georgian influences – stemming from Antim's origins and formation – introduce a distinctive note within Wallachian ecclesiastical arch. Thus, while the *Didahies* represent the supreme expression of theological *logos* in Romanian, Antim Monastery constitutes the material expression of the same thought: a theology of form, in which architecture is not merely a liturgical setting but also a catechetical and symbolic instrument. In this perspective, Antim Ivireanul's work may be understood as a total œuvre, in which the printed word, the spoken sermon, and architectural form converge into a coherent project affirming Romanian spiritual and cultural identity.

Touching the wood of the church's entrance doors, delicately carved by Saint Antim himself, the visitor is permeated by the gentleness of his grace. Enduring across centuries, those doors speak of a man who, coming from the distant lands of Georgia, became a symbol of resistance through education, culture, and faith.

Legacy

Through his long-term political vision and cultural diplomacy, Prince Constantin Brâncoveanu became, in the final years of his reign, an increasingly inconvenient figure for the

Ottoman authorities - his cultural strategy was perceived as subversive¹⁵.

In the spring of 1714, Constantin Brâncoveanu was arrested, dethroned, and transported to **Istanbul**, where he was imprisoned in the dreaded fortress of the Seven Towers, Yedikule. Alongside him were incarcerated his four sons – Constantin, Ștefan, Radu, and Matei – as well as his trusted counselor, Enache Văcărescu.

By order of **Ahmed III**, they were demanded to renounce the Christian faith and convert to Islam, a condition essential for sparing their lives and for abandoning their policy of supporting Orthodoxy and the identity of Christian peoples under Ottoman domination. According to Christian and Western narrative sources, this possibility was offered to them repeatedly.

Constantin Brâncoveanu's firm refusal, coupled with his exhortations

to his sons to remain steadfast in the Orthodox faith, transformed the execution by decapitation into an act of full theological martyrdom. Forced to witness the death of his sons before his own execution, the ruler's ordeal intensified the tragic, exemplary, and symbolic dimension of the event, inscribing it permanently in Christian memory as a model of fidelity to faith and princely dignity.

Like Constantin Brâncoveanu, Antim Ivireanul also paid with his life for his moral uprightness. Arrested in 1716 amid the establishment of the Phanariot regime, unjustly deposed and condemned to exile, he was martyred on the road by Turkish soldiers, his body thrown into the waters of the Tungia River near Adrianople. His sacrifice spiritually completes the Brâncovenian martyrdom, transforming this era into a paradigm of cultural resistance and Christian dignity.

Notes

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¹¹ I.D. Ștefănescu, *Arta brâncovenească*, Meridiane, Bucharest, 1972.

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Slipping and Sliding Between Formalities and Informalities: Lobbying, Interest Groups, and Democratic Governance in Georgia

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Irakli SAMADALASHVILI

Abstract: *This article examines the complex interplay between formal regulatory frameworks and informal political practices through the lens of lobbying in Georgia. As a pioneer among post-Soviet states with its 1998 Law on Lobbying Activities, Georgia presents an instructive case study for analyzing the challenges of institutionalizing transparent interest representation in transitional democracies. Through a synthesis of neo-institutional theory, elite analysis, and comparative policy examination, this study explores the relationship between imported formal institutions and established informal norms. The analysis moves beyond empirical case data to engage in a theoretical and desk-research based investigation of how formal lobbying mechanisms, designed to ensure transparency and accountability, can remain underutilized or bypassed in political cultures where influence is traditionally mediated through personal networks and informal channels. By situating Georgia's experience within broader scholarly debates on post-Soviet democratization, institutional development, and hybrid governance, the paper examines the systemic conditions that can lead to differences between legal design and political practice. It concludes with a discussion of the implications for democratic consolidation and offers a framework for considering how formal and informal systems of influence might be aligned to strengthen governance.*

Keywords: *Political Lobbying, Democratization, Georgia, Post-Soviet Politics, Interest Groups.*

Introduction: The Difference Between Institutional Design and Political Practice

The process of democratic consolidation in transitional societies is frequently characterized by observable differences between newly established formal institutions and resilient informal practices that shape the

actual exercise of power. This dynamic is demonstrated in the domain of political lobbying and interest representation, where laws designed to ensure transparency and equitable access often coexist with, and are sometimes bypassed by, networks of influence that operate less visibly¹. This article investigates this phenomenon through a theoretic-

cal and comparative analysis of lobbying in Georgia, a country that established a comprehensive legal framework for lobbying activities in 1998, yet whose political system continues to be analyzed through the prism of informal governance.

The central inquiry of this study is theoretical and systemic in nature: What does the development and implementation (or limited implementation) of formal lobbying regulation reveal about the nature of institutional change, power distribution, and state-society relations in a post-Soviet transitional democracy? Rather than focusing on the specific outcomes of a single law, the analysis seeks to understand the broader conditions under which formal democratic institutions develop or face challenges in taking root, and how informal practices persist or adapt. This approach allows for an examination of systemic features, historical legacies, and structural factors.

The investigation is guided by three interconnected analytical questions derived from theoretical literature:

A. How can neo-institutional theories, particularly historical and sociological institutionalism, explain the persistence and adaptation of informal influence channels alongside new formal regulatory structures?

B. What are the common structural and procedural features that can affect lobbying legislation effectiveness, as observed in various transitional contexts, and how might these be identified in institutional design?

C. What are the broader implications of differences between formal transparency mechanisms and informal political practice for key democratic principles such as accountability, pluralism, and public trust?

The conceptual framework for this analysis is drawn from two complementary theoretical traditions. Neo-institutional theory provides tools for understanding why informal norms and practices demonstrate such remarkable resilience, continuing alongside new formal rules through processes like decoupling, layering, and symbolic adoption. Elite theory offers insights into the incentives and strategies of powerful actors who may find advantages in maintaining less visible channels of influence, thereby continuing arrangements that ensure their continued access and influence. Methodologically, this research employs a desk-based approach, synthesizing existing academic literature, comparative policy analysis of regulatory models (notably the Georgian and European Union frameworks), and theoretical development to construct a nuanced understanding of the issue.

Georgia's early adoption of lobbying legislation, followed by scholarly observations of its limited practical uptake, serves as a relevant case for examining these theoretical questions and puzzles. The country's post-independence trajectory—marked by aspirations for Euro-Atlantic integration, repeated reform efforts, and a complex Soviet legacy—creates a rich context for analyzing how for-

mal democratic designs interact with informal political realities. This study contributes to the literature on post-Soviet democratization and hybrid regimes by providing a focused, theoretical exploration of one arena where the rules on paper may diverge from the rules in use. It examines this divergence not merely as a technical matter of regulatory compliance but as central to how political power is constituted, contested, and legitimized in transitional settings.

**Theoretical Framework:
Formal Rules, Informal Power,
and Institutional Change**

*Neo-Institutional Theory: The
Continuity of Informal Norms*

Neo-institutional theory posits that institutions—defined broadly as the formal rules, informal norms, and established procedures that structure political, social, and economic life—are powerful and significant determinants of behavior and outcomes². This perspective is particularly illuminating in transitional societies where new, often externally inspired, democratic institutions are superimposed upon deeply embedded informal practices. The result is frequently notable differences between formal prescriptions and actual behavior, differences that can themselves become established over time.

Historical institutionalism emphasizes the substantial influence of legacy and path dependence. It demonstrates that profound institutional change is rarely an abrupt break but

occurs through extended processes of layering (adding new rules alongside existing ones), drift (changing impact of existing rules due to shifting circumstances), and conversion (redirecting existing institutions to new purposes)³. In the post-Soviet context, this theoretical framework means that networks of personal loyalty, reciprocal exchange (*blat*), and clan-based politics that characterized the late Soviet bureaucracy did not simply disappear with independence and new legislation. Instead, they evolved and embedded themselves within the new state apparatus, often providing the operational framework for formal institutions. Political and economic elites who successfully navigated the Soviet system through personal connections are unlikely to abandon strategic approaches that continue to yield results, simply because a formal lobbying registry now exists in legislation.

Sociological institutionalism contributes the important concept of isomorphism or institutional convergence—the observable tendency for organizations and states to adopt similar formal structures to gain legitimacy in their environment, rather than because those structures represent functionally optimal solutions⁴. This logic of appropriateness helps explain why a state like Georgia might adopt a Western-style lobbying law that remains underutilized: the legislation serves important symbolic and legitimizing functions, both domestically and internationally, signaling commitment to democratic

norms and European integration even if it does not substantially alter underlying behavioral patterns. The potential decoupling of formal structure from actual practice is thus a predictable outcome when institutions are adopted for legitimacy rather than functional efficiency.

Elite Theory: Power, Access, and the Characteristics of Limited Transparency

If neo-institutional theory explains how formal rules can be bypassed, elite theory helps identify who might find advantages in such patterns and what their strategic incentives are. Classical elite theorists, from Pareto to Mosca, argued that regardless of a political system's formal design, power inevitably tends to concentrate within a small, organized minority⁵. Modern scholarship refines this analytical view, examining how elites in democracies and transitional systems adapt their strategies to maintain influence within changing institutional landscapes⁶.

In transitional settings like Georgia, established political and economic elites—whether stemming from the Soviet *nomenklatura*, post-independence privatization processes, or newer oligarchic groups—often maintain influence through dense, interlocking networks. When formal channels like a public lobbying registry are perceived as less effective, cumbersome, or—significantly—as imposing unwanted transparency, these elites may rationally choose to rely on familiar, trusted mechanisms: per-

sonal relationships, discreet consultations, and less visible arrangements that have historically served them well. This dynamic can foster networks whose influence spans political, economic, and media spheres, potentially making formal democratic institutions less central to where substantive decisions are actually made⁷.

From this analytical perspective, the underuse of a formal lobbying system is not necessarily a failure but can be a rational outcome for those already possessing privileged access. Formalization raises transaction costs, creates public records, and could empower additional groups by leveling the informational playing field. Therefore, limited engagement with a transparency mechanism can occur when influential actors see greater advantages in existing arrangements, regardless of the technical merits of the formal system.

Lobbying and Interest Representation in Comparative Perspective

The scholarly literature on interest group politics in transitional and post-authoritarian states provides essential context, suggesting that Georgia's hypothesized experience reflects recognizable regional and theoretical patterns. Research across Central and Eastern Europe has consistently highlighted the prevalence of less transparent or shadow lobbying in contexts characterized by developing state capacity, institutional change, and varying levels of public trust⁸. This often involves a complex mix of legitimate advocacy,

various forms of influence, and media campaigns, creating situations where lines between different forms of influence become less distinct⁹.

Studies reveal observable patterns of captured liberalization or elite capture, whereby democratic reforms and new institutions are influenced by incumbent powerful interests and transformed into tools for rent-seeking or legitimization, rather than genuine democratization¹⁰. The remarkable resilience of informal institutions based on kinship, regional affiliation, and patron-client relationships is particularly pronounced in the Caucasus and Central Asia regions. Ethnographic and political science work demonstrates that these informal systems often operate alongside or interact uneasily with formal democratic procedures, creating distinct hybrid political orders¹¹.

This comparative body of scholarly work strongly suggests that challenges in implementing a transparent lobbying system are not unique but are a specific manifestation of a broader, systemic post-Soviet challenge: the difficulty of building impersonal, rule-based institutions in a social and political context long characterized by personalism, informal reciprocity, and variable levels of trust in state institutions.

Analytical Methodology: A Desk-Based Synthesis

This research is grounded in a qualitative, desk-based methodology specifically designed to facilitate the-

oretical exploration and comparative policy analysis without reliance on original empirical data collection. The methodological approach is structured around three interconnected analytical components:

Theoretical Analysis and Literature Synthesis

The foundation of the study is a comprehensive review and application of relevant theoretical frameworks. This involves a systematic engagement with neo-institutional theory (encompassing historical, rational choice, and sociological strands) and elite theory to construct a robust conceptual lens. Furthermore, a wide-ranging review of academic literature on lobbying, interest groups, and civil society in transitional democracies—with a particular focus on post-Soviet and Eastern European contexts—serves to situate the Georgian case within broader scholarly debates. This synthesis identifies key concepts, theoretical areas for further exploration, and analogous cases, informing the analysis of how formal and informal lobbying dynamics interact.

Comparative Legal-Institutional Policy Analysis

A core component is the detailed, systematic examination and comparison of legal and institutional frameworks specifically designed to regulate lobbying activities. This analysis focuses on two primary models:

The Georgian Framework: A detailed analysis of the Law of Georgia

on Lobbying Activities (1998) is conducted based on its legislative text and existing legal commentary. This examination focuses on its stated objectives, key provisions (definitions, registration procedures, ethical standards, transparency measures, and designated venues for lobbying), and its embedded incentives and disincentives. Particular analytical attention is paid to identifying potential structural features, regulatory elements, and the adequacy or inadequacy of envisioned enforcement mechanisms as presented in the law itself.

The European Union Model: As a benchmark representing an evolving, complex supranational system, the EU's approach embodied in the EU Transparency Register and associated codes of conduct is examined. This analysis focuses on its governing principles, registration mechanics (including its conditionally mandatory nature), disclosure requirements, and enforcement protocols. The comparison with the Georgian framework is not meant to suggest a direct template for adoption, but to highlight differing philosophical and practical approaches to managing transparency, access, and accountability in pluralistic systems.

Contextual and Systemic Analysis

Moving beyond the letter of the law, this analytical component involves analyzing the broader political, historical, and social context in which lobbying regulations are meant to function. This includes considering:

Historical Legacies: The substantial impact of Soviet-era practices of informal networking and the absence of a tradition of independent, transparent interest group pluralism.

Political Culture: Prevailing attitudes towards the state, public trust in institutions, and norms governing relationships between business and politics.

State Capacity and Institutional Stability: The ability of state institutions to consistently implement and enforce complex regulations over extended time periods.

Civil Society Landscape: The strength, independence, and resource base of non-governmental organizations and business associations that would be potential natural users of a lobbying system.

This multi-pronged, desk-based methodology allows for a holistic and theoretically informed analysis of why formal lobbying institutions might face challenges in becoming operational, focusing on systemic and design factors rather than specific political events or individual actors.

Comparative Institutional Analysis: The Georgian Framework in Theoretical Perspective

This section provides a detailed analytical overview of the Georgian legal framework for lobbying and situates it within a comparative discussion, drawing primarily on the EU model for instructive contrast. The purpose is not to conduct a forensic audit of implementation but to struc-

turally analyze the design of the framework itself and the systemic environment it exists within.

Georgia's Legal Framework: An Early Innovation

Georgia's Law on Lobbying Activities, adopted in 1998, was a pioneering piece of legislation in the post-Soviet space. Its enactment so soon after independence signaled an ambitious intent to move away from less transparent Soviet governance traditions and to establish transparent, rules-based interactions between society and the state. On paper, the law established a comprehensive system. It provided a broad definition of lobbying, established formal registration procedures for advocates, set qualification criteria, and outlined ethical expectations. It required contracts for lobbying assignments, designated permissible venues for lobbying activities (Parliament, government bodies, municipal councils), and significantly, enshrined the principle of public access to lobbying reports¹².

A theoretical analysis of the law's design, however, reveals potential considerations from a neo-institutional perspective. Firstly, the law can be seen as a classic candidate for isomorphic mimicry-adopting the form of a modern transparency institution to gain external legitimacy, potentially without the concomitant internal drivers or enforcement capacity to make it operational¹³. Secondly, the literature on policy implementation suggests that laws which

impose costs (registration, disclosure) without providing clear, commensurate benefits to users are likely to experience lower levels of compliance. If the formal channel is not perceived as an effective pathway to influence, or if informal channels remain more efficient, rational actors will utilize alternative systems.

Furthermore, the effectiveness of any transparency mechanism is heavily dependent on the enforcement capacity-the monitoring and enforcement capability of the state, and the existence of meaningful sanctions for non-compliance. A law that lacks robust, independent oversight and clear consequences for operating outside its provisions may create a formal shell that is more easily bypassed. The resilience of informal networks, as highlighted by elite theory, means that without a concerted effort to shift the cost-benefit calculation for actors with influence, the existing patterns of operating are likely to persist.

The European Union's Evolving Ecosystem: Integration, Incentives, and Enforcement

The European Union's approach to regulating interest representation offers a contrasting model that has evolved substantially through practice and experience. The EU Transparency Register, a joint initiative of the Parliament, Commission, and Council, represents a system built on integration, pragmatic incentives, and graduated enforcement mechanisms¹⁴.

A key distinguishing difference lies in the linkage between registration and access. While formally voluntary, registration in the EU system functions as a *de facto* requirement for meaningful engagement with institutions. It is tied to practical benefits like obtaining access badges to parliamentary buildings or securing meetings with high-level officials. This creates a powerful functional incentive for compliance that goes beyond mere legal obligation. The system also demands detailed disclosure about an organization's objectives, funding, and legislative interests, fostering a culture of transparency and accountability.

Perhaps most importantly, the EU framework is supported by a detailed Code of Conduct and an enforcement mechanism. Violations can lead to the suspension of access privileges or removal from the register—consequences that carry real professional and reputational significance. This structure reflects an understanding that transparency systems require not just rules, but also a credible threat of consequence for those who would undermine them.

Analysis of Divergent Approaches

The comparison reveals more than merely technical differences; it highlights divergent approaches to institutional design. The EU system attempts to create an ecosystem where transparency and rule-following provide tangible benefits, facilitating access and lending credibility. It is integrated into the daily workings of

the institutions. The Georgian law, as analyzed in theory and context, appears more as a standalone construct—a formal structure that may not be well-integrated into the operational realities and incentive structures of the political system it seeks to regulate.

From an institutionalist viewpoint, the EU model has undergone a process of gradual layering and adaptation based on accumulated experience. The Georgian law, introduced early in the state-building process, may not have had the time or the supportive ecosystem to undergo a similar process of organic development and integration. The result, as suggested by scholarly commentary on such contexts, can be an institution-present in legal code but less present in political practice, its potential underutilized because the informal rules of the game remain more determinative.

Systemic Implications: When Formal Channels Are Underutilized

The hypothetical or observed scenario where formal lobbying channels remain underutilized, while informal networks continue to thrive, has profound systemic implications for democratic governance. This section explores these implications theoretically, drawing on the literature concerning institutional effectiveness, political equality, and democratic legitimacy.

The Challenge to Transparency and Accountability

The primary purpose of lobbying regulation is to provide visibility into the process of influence, allowing citizens to see who is seeking to shape policy and on behalf of which interests. When this process operates primarily in the informal sphere, transparency is fundamentally affected. Decisions may appear to emerge from technocratic or political deliberation, while their true origins in less visible consultations or private negotiations remain unclear. This limited visibility makes it exceptionally difficult to hold power accountable. Conflicts of interest can be concealed, and the public cannot fully assess the arguments of different interests because only the outcomes, not the deliberative process, are visible.

The Continuation of Elite Advantage and Differentiated Access

Informal networks are, by their very nature, selective and exclusive. Access is granted based on personal connections, kinship, shared experience, or patronage—not necessarily on the merit of an argument or the representativeness of a constituency. This creates different tiers of political engagement. Well-established elites, business figures with close ties to power, and insiders with the appropriate connections enjoy more direct pathways to influence. In contrast, newer societal actors, grassroots movements, smaller businesses, and groups advocating for diffuse public

interests (like consumers or environmental protection) may find themselves with fewer opportunities and marginalized. They may lack the social capital to access informal circles and the formal channel is perceived as less effective. This dynamic can perpetuate and can even exacerbate existing patterns of access, which may not align with the democratic principle of pluralism where diverse voices should have the opportunity to be heard¹⁵.

The Effect on Institutional Legitimacy and Public Trust

When citizens perceive that formal, democratic institutions are not the primary arenas where real decisions are made, the legitimacy of those institutions can be significantly corroded. If laws exist but are bypassed by influential actors, it can breed widespread cynicism and a sense that the system does not function as designed. This decoupling can erode public trust, which is the bedrock of a stable democracy. Citizens may disengage from formal political processes, seeing participation as less meaningful or even futile, or they may seek alternative, sometimes destabilizing, avenues to express concerns or discontent. The health of a democracy relies fundamentally on belief in its procedures; when those procedures are seen as disconnected from the actual exercise of power, that belief can weaken substantially.

The Instability of Policy Outcomes

Policies secured through informal arrangements and personal patronage can be inherently less stable. They are tied to specific individuals, relationships, and political moments. When a patron loses power, when a coalition shifts, or when a personal relationship changes, the policy outcomes can be swiftly reversed. This contrasts sharply with change achieved through more formal, transparent processes, where public debate, recorded arguments, and institutional buy-in can provide greater stability and continuity over time. An over-reliance on informalism thus contributes to policy volatility and short-termism, as arrangements are made for immediate advantage rather than long-term public benefit.

The Challenge to Democratic Consolidation

For a transitional democracy like Georgia, the persistence of a robust informal sphere that operates alongside, and sometimes instead of, formal institutions represent a significant consideration for consolidation. Democratic consolidation requires that the rules of the game become internalized by major political actors—that they habitually turn to democratic procedures to resolve conflicts and advance interests. If influential actors consistently bypass these procedures because they find them less efficient or advantageous, the democratic system may remain less developed. It risks becoming a hybrid

regime, maintaining the external forms of democracy while operating on patterns of personalism and less visible power that are more characteristic of different systems. This can affect the development of a genuinely pluralistic and accountable political culture.

Conclusion and Pathways for Scholarly and Policy Reflection

This theoretical and comparative analysis has explored the complex interplay between formal lobbying institutions and informal political practices in transitional democracies, using Georgia's early regulatory framework as a focal point for discussion. The investigation underscores that the creation of formal legal structures—while a necessary first step—is insufficient to guarantee transparent and equitable interest representation. The vitality of such institutions depends profoundly on the broader ecosystem in which they are embedded: the incentives for compliance, the capacity for enforcement, the resilience of competing informal norms, and the genuine commitment of political and economic elites to a rules-based system.

The Georgian case, as analyzed through the lens of theory and comparative practice, illustrates a broader challenge in post-Soviet and transitional contexts: the difficulty of introducing formal democratic institutions into a social and political context still deeply influenced by legacies of informality, personalism, and variable

levels of trust¹⁶. Neo-institutional theory helps explain the persistence of these informal practices, while elite theory illuminates the rational incentives that actors may have to maintain less visible channels of influence. The observed or potential differences between law and practice is thus not an anomaly but a predictable outcome of specific historical, structural, and strategic conditions.

Implications for Democratic Theory and Practice

This analysis holds several important implications for both scholarly understanding and practical efforts at democratic development. Firstly, it reinforces that institutional design should be context-sensitive and tailored. Laws and regulations cannot be mere technical blueprints imported from other democracies; they should be crafted with deep understanding of the local political culture, power structures, and state capacity. Design should consider not only the rules themselves but also the incentive structures needed to encourage their use and the enforcement mechanisms required to deter bypassing.

Secondly, it highlights that building effective formal institutions is a long-term process of integration and acculturation, not a one-time legislative event. It requires persistent, sustained effort to align the formal rules on paper with the rules in use. This may involve complementary reforms in areas like judicial independence,

civil service professionalism, media freedom, and anti-corruption efforts—all of which contribute to an environment where transparency is valued and limited transparency carries meaningful risks.

Thirdly, the analysis suggests that external actors supporting democratic development should look beyond the mere adoption of legislation as a measure of success. Support might be more effectively directed toward building the infrastructure of transparency—such as independent monitoring bodies, investigative journalism, and a vibrant civil society capable of using disclosure tools—and toward fostering a cultural shift where open, rules-based engagement is seen as a source of legitimacy and effectiveness for both advocates and decision-makers.

Avenues for Future Research

This desk-based study opens several productive avenues for future empirical and comparative research:

Comparative Studies: Systematic comparison of lobbying regulation outcomes across multiple post-Soviet states (e.g., Ukraine, Moldova, Armenia, Baltic states) could identify the specific factors—political competition, civil society strength, EU integration pressure—that correlate with more effective institutionalization of transparent lobbying.

Ethnographic and Network Analysis: Qualitative research into the actual practice of influence in

Georgia and similar contexts, mapping the informal networks and strategies used by different types of actors (business, NGOs, diaspora groups), would provide a richer, ground-level understanding of how the formal-informal interplay works in daily practice.

Longitudinal Analysis: Tracking the evolution of interest representation over time in Georgia could reveal whether and under what conditions formal channels begin to gain utilization. Are there tipping points related to political alternation, generational change, or deepening integration with international systems?

Experimental and Survey Research: Investigating the attitudes and preferences of potential users of a lobbying system (business associations, NGOs, professional groups) through surveys or experimental designs could reveal the specific conditions under which they would be willing to utilize formal channels, informing more effective policy design.

Concluding Reflections

The journey from informal, personalized politics to formal, institutionalized pluralism is a central narrative of democratization. The regulation of lobbying sits at the very heart of this transition, as it directly governs how societal interests interact with state power. Georgia's experience, as examined here, offers a valuable window into the dynamics inherent in this process. It demonstrates that the passage of a law is a declaration of intent, but its realization depends on a confluence of factors: design craftsmanship, enforcement will, elite commitment, and cultural change.

Ultimately, the goal is not the elimination of informal networks, which exist in all political systems, but the establishment of a dominant formal institutional framework that is perceived as the primary, legitimate, and effective arena for political contestation and interest aggregation. Achieving this in transitional democracies remains a formidable but essential task for building governments that are truly transparent, accountable, and responsive to their citizens. The scholarly and policy challenge is to better understand the pathways that can lead from democratic form to democratic function.

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Notes

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 - ¹³ M. Andrews, *The Limits of Institutional Reform in Development: Changing Rules for Realistic Solutions*, Cambridge University Press, 2013.
 - ¹⁴ EU Transparency Register, “Transparency Register”, <https://transparency-register.europa.eu>.
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Politoscopie și interculturalitate în Caucazul de Sud post-sovietic: Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaidjan

[Politicoscopy and Interculturality in the Post-Soviet South Caucasus: Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan]

Anton CARPINSCHI

Abstract: *This essay in applied political philosophy proposes a critical analysis of multiculturalism and interculturality in the post-Soviet South Caucasus through an integrated theoretical framework of political analysis and comparative cultural studies. The central argument maintains that the limits of interculturality in Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan cannot be explained exclusively by institutional or geopolitical constraints, but must also be understood as the result of a configuration of cultural values, collective cognitive representations, and political strategies aimed at securitizing difference. The comparative analysis shows that, despite significant variations at the state level, interculturality operates predominantly in the form of an administered multiculturalism, subordinated to the imperatives of stability, loyalty, and national security. European Union integration, as a factor of symbolic activation, highlights the fact that interculturality constitutes a field of imaginary-political competition in which European dialogical norms encounter structural resistance from historically consolidated hierarchical and securitarian mental images.*

Keywords: *applied political philosophy, politosphere, politicoscopy, multiculturalism, interculturality, geopolitics, South Caucasus, Russian Federation, European Union.*

De ce avem nevoie de politosferă, politoscopie și interculturalitate în studiile culturale

Situat între Marea Neagră și Marea Caspică, Caucazul de Sud este un spațiu geocultural complex, marcat de diversitate etno-culturală, conflicte înghețate și rivalități strategice între actori regionali și globali. Cele trei state post-sovietice – Georgia, Armenia

și Azerbaidjan – împărtășesc o moștenire comună de guvernare centralizată a diversității, cu recunoaștere formală, dar control socio-politic strict. Această moștenire explică adesea persistența unei percepții a interculturalismului ca problemă de securitate și administrare, nu ca proces dialogic al diferenței. Prin urmare, interculturalitatea nu mai poate fi înțeleasă ca un ideal armonic sau ca simplă politică

publică sectorială. Ea devine un *indicator al modului în care politicul gestionează pluralitatea*, un teren de tensiune între valori, reprezentări și strategii de putere.

Acest articol își propune să demonstreze că eșecurile, ambiguitățile, caracterul limitat al politicilor interculturale din Georgia, Armenia și Azerbaidjan nu pot fi înțelese exclusiv prin prisma instituțiilor formale sau a constrângerilor geopolitice externe. Aceste fenomene trebuie analizate printr-o abordare integrată care include: 1) moștenirea sovietică în gestionarea diversității; 2) cultura politică profundă, inclusiv componenta religioasă; 3) presiunile geopolitice exercitate de Federația Rusă; 4) dificultățile spațiului post-sovietic de racordare la politicile Uniunii Europene. În aceste circumstanțe se resimte utilitatea unui un cadru analitic capabil să surprindă modul în care politicul produce, ierarhizează și securizează diferențele culturale. Acest rol a revenit în prezentul eseu unui cadru conceptual operațional triadic pe care l-am denumit, *politosfera-politoscopia-interculturalitatea*.

Politosfera – Politoscopia – Interculturalitatea: articularea unui cadru conceptual operațional

Pentru a depăși limitele interculturalismului descriptiv, deziderativ sau exclusiv normativ, este necesară articularea unui cadru conceptual-operațional capabil să surprindă *modul concret în care diferențele culturale*

devin politice. În acest scop, propun integrarea triadică a conceptelor *politosferă*, *politoscopia* și *interculturalitate* într-un orizont filosofico-politic inspirat de Hannah Arendt, dar extins metodologic prin instrumente de analiză culturală comparativă. Plecând de la această premisă, prezenta secțiune propune o *reorientare metodologică* a cercetării interculturalității: nu ca simplă *descriere* a co-existenței diferențelor culturale, nici ca *deziderat normativ* de armonizare sau integrare, ci ca *fenomen politic activ*, ce se constituie și se negociază în interiorul a ceea ce am definit ca fiind, *politosfera*.

Pentru a evita o lectură fragmentară a conceptelor utilizate, este necesară explicitarea relației dintre *politosferă*, *politoscopia* și *interculturalitate* ca arhitectură analitică unitară. Această relație nu este una ierarhică, ci condițională. Politosfera desemnează *nivelul ontologic* al apariției politicului, înțeles ca spațiu relațional al vizibilității, audibilității și capacității de acțiune a pluralității. Politoscopia funcționează ca *nivel metodologic*, oferind lentila analitică prin care sunt investigate practicile politice ce permit sau blochează această apariție. Interculturalitatea constituie *nivelul exploratoriu*, referindu-se la interacțiunea diferențelor culturale relevante politic, nu ca ideal normativ, ci ca proces contextualizat al diferenței. Diferențele culturale devin astfel interculturale doar în măsura în care politosfera permite apariția lor ca acțiune și discurs, apariție ce poate fi analizată politoscopic.

Politosfera: interfața politicului și interculturalității

În tradiția filosofico-politică a Hannei Arendt, *politicul* nu este redus la sfera administrativ-tehnică a guvernării sau la planul normativ al integrării, ci este înțeles ca *spațiul public al apariției pluralității* („space of appearance”), în care persoanele apar una în fața celeilalte prin *acțiune* („action”) și *discurs* („speech”) și își afirmă atât egalitatea ca subiecți politici, cât și diferențele ireductibile ca identități individuale și colective. Arendt susține că *pluralitatea* – în sensul că „noi suntem mereu diferiți unii de alții” – este *condiția ontologică a faptului politic*, deoarece doar în prezența celorlalți pluralitatea face posibilă comuniunea prin vorbe și fapte. Acest spațiu nu este identic cu instituțiile formale ale guvernării, ci este constituit și menținut *în actualizarea continuă prin dialog și acțiune publică*, în care subiecții politici dezvăluie cine sunt și pot reciproc să se recunoască în pluralitatea lor ireductibilă¹.

Dar, articularea publică și intersubiectivă a diferențelor culturale într-o societate înseamnă *interculturalitate*. Condiția ontologică a politicului presupune, așadar, gestionarea diferențelor interculturale într-o pluralitate, altfel spus, *condiția ontologică a politicului este interculturalitatea*. Mergând pe firul acestei gândiri, dacă *politicul* este spațiul public al apariției pluralității intereselor și diferențelor culturale, *politosfera este interfața politicului și interculturalității*. În aceste circumstanțe, ceea ce am de-

numit cu mulți ani în urmă, *politosfera* – „un model intensional de fundamentare a politicului”² – desemnează în noul cadru conceptual operațional destinat interculturalității un *câmp relațional public în care diferențele culturale devin vizibile, audibile, implicite, supuse deliberării și acțiunii comune*. Astfel formulată, *politosfera* funcționează ca un *cadru operațional* care captează atât condițiile de posibilitate ale apariției pluralității culturale, cât și modurile în care aceasta se proiectează, se confruntă sau se negociază în practici politice concrete.

În contextul Caucazului de Sud post-sovietic, *politosfera* este configurată simultan printr-o serie de dimensiuni: moștenirea imperial-sovietică; naționalismele post-independență; conflictele teritoriale; pluralitatea etnică, religioasă și lingvistică; influențele geopolitice concurente. Această complexitate face imposibilă abordarea interculturalității exclusiv ca problemă culturală sau normativă, impunând plasarea ei în orizontul politicului propriu-zis. Am putea spune, așadar, că *politosfera este interfața politicului și interculturalității*, iar politoscopia: *lentila analitică multifocală a percepției politicului*.

Conceptul de *politosferă* prezintă anumite afinități cu noțiuni consacrate din teoria politică și sociologia critică, precum „sfera publică” (Habermas) sau „câmpul social” (Bourdieu), însă se distinge de acestea prin accentul pus pe *condițiile de apariție a pluralității ca fapt politic*. Spre deosebire de sfera publică habermasiană, concepută ca spațiu al deliberării ra-

ționale orientate spre formarea consensului, politosfera nu presupune în mod necesar convergența opiniilor sau primatul raționalității discursive. Ea este definită, în sens arendtian, ca spațiu al apariției pluralității prin acțiune și discurs, inclusiv în forme conflictuale, simbolice sau non-consensuale. Astfel, politosfera nu se limitează la comunicare deliberativă, ci include întreaga gamă a manifestărilor prin care diferențele devin vizibile și audibile politic. În raport cu noțiunea bourdieusiană de câmp, politosfera se distinge prin faptul că nu analizează politicul exclusiv ca relație de forță sau competiție pentru capital simbolic. Dacă în câmp accentul cade pe poziționare strategică și reproducerea ierarhiilor, politosfera urmărește condițiile prin care actorii pot apărea ca subiecți politici în pluralitate. Accentul nu este pus pe distribuția capitalurilor, ci pe posibilitatea apariției politice ca acțiune și discurs, pe includerea sau excluderea diferențelor din spațiul legitim al vizibilității publice. În acest sens, politosfera operează ca un *concept transversal, situat la intersecția ontologiei politice și analizei practice a pluralității*.

Politoscopia: lentila analitică multifocală de percepere a politicului

Dacă *politologia explică politicul, politoscopia îl face vizibil*. Dacă politologia caută legile politicului, politoscopia îi explorează condițiile de apariție și manifestare. Dacă politologia întreabă *ce este și cum funcțio-*

nează politicul, politoscopia întreabă cum poate fi văzut și din ce unghiuri devine inteligibil și ameliorabil. Pentru aceasta, politoscopia propune o *lentilă analitică multifocală* prin care politicul se dezvăluie nu ca un fenomen unitar, ci ca o constelație de straturi și perspective interconectate. Fiecare focalizare permite evidențierea unor dimensiuni diferite – instituționale, discursive, simbolice, conflictuale, geopolitice – împreună conturând complexitatea realității politice. Politoscopia este ansamblul practicilor teoretice și experiențiale prin care politicul este făcut vizibil, inteligibil și discutabil, în funcție de regimul de observare, limbajul utilizat și poziția observatorului. Această poziționare multiplă, permite focalizarea politoscopiei pe multiplele aspecte ale politicului.

Constelație de straturi și perspective interconectate, politicul se dezvăluie ca un *fenomen multiplu*: 1) *fapt existențial* condiționat de pluralitate și diferență (ontologia politică); 2) *fapt empiric*, cuantificabil cu rol în reglarea vieții comunității (politologie); 3) *apariție fenomenală în orizontul conștiinței* (fenomenologia politică); 4) *act și acțiune politică* (praxiologia politică); 5) *discurs cu sens și semnificație* (pragmatica/semiotica discursivă); 6) *set de norme și valori de conviețuire publică* (axiologia politică). Această stratificare politoscopică nu propune o schemă metodologică rigidă, ci un *câmp de rezonanță analitică* în care diferitele dimensiuni ale politicului devin simultan vizibile.

Politoscopia este, deci, un *instrument analitic operațional multiplu-orientat* spre investigarea modurilor concrete în care pluralitatea culturală este vizibilă sau invizibilă, recunoscută sau marginalizată, mobilizată sau neutralizată politic. Metodologic, politoscopia nu pornește de la identități culturale date, ci de la *practici politice*: discursuri publice, politici culturale, mobilizări civice, conflicte simbolice, instituționalizări ale diferenței. Politoscopia analizează *cum* și *în ce condiții* diferențele culturale intră în câmpul politic, nu dacă acestea „ar trebui” să fie tolerate sau integrate. În acest sens, politoscopia funcționează ca o *analitică a apariției politice a interculturalității*, compatibilă cu perspectiva arendtiană asupra acțiunii și pluralității.

Pornind de la această conceptualizare, politoscopia joacă rolul unei *lentile analitice multifocale* pentru investigarea manifestărilor interculturalității în politici publice, discursuri și practici politice. În această ipostază, politoscopia urmărește: *vizibilitatea diferențelor în spațiul public* în condițiile în care identitățile culturale devin sau nu devin vizibile și relevante ca subiecte politice; *audibilitatea și reprezentarea discursivă* prin examinarea traiectoriilor vocilor minoritare sau cultural diverse, a modului în care sunt ascultate sau marginalizate în dezbaterile publice; *capacitatea de acțiune colectivă* care evaluează formele prin care grupurile cultural diverse inițiază și susțin acțiuni publice comune fără a renunța la diferențele lor; *negocierea conflictelor*

și co-constituirea normelor, adică, explorarea practicilor prin care divergențele culturale nu sunt doar moderate, ci transformate în puncte de plecare ale inovării politice.

Această variată orientare metodologică face din politoscopie nu doar un instrument de *analiză descriptivă*, ci și un demers care surprinde *procesul politic de co-construcție a pluralității*. În contrast cu abordările normative ale interculturalismului – care prescriu forme ideale de toleranță sau dialog – politoscopia pune accent pe *condițiile empirice ale apariției politice a diferențelor* și pe *practicile concrete* prin care acestea sunt negociate, contestate și articulate în sfera publică.

Prin urmare, conceptualizarea politosferei și a politoscopiei oferă un *cadru conceptual-operațional robust* pentru cercetarea interculturalismului ca *fenomen politic dinamic*. Acest cadru se aliniază critic cu tradiția arendtiană, dar o extinde metodologic, trecând de la o *hermeneutică a diferențelor* la o *analiză a practicilor politice ale pluralității*. Și acum este rândul să își ocupe locul în această triadă conceptual-operațională, *interculturalitatea* ca nivel exploratoriu al diferențelor culturale.

Interculturalitatea: nivelul exploratoriu al diferențelor culturale. Operaționalizarea interculturalității prin modelele Hofstede-Wursten

În acest demers, interculturalitatea apare în orizontul conceptual politos-

feră-politoscopie nu ca scop normativ (dialog, armonizare), ci ca *nivel exploratoriu și interpretativ* al diferențelor culturale care traversează politosfera. Interculturalitatea desemnează *interacțiunile efective dintre modele culturale distincte*, în măsura în care acestea devin relevante pentru acțiunea politică, discursul public și instituționalizarea pluralității.

Pentru explorarea interculturalității în Caucazul de sud postsovietic, voi folosi într-o manieră complementară modelul *dimensiunilor culturale*³ și modelul *imaginilor mentale*⁴.

În aceste circumstanțe, modelele culturale elaborate de Gert Hofstede și Huib Wursten nu sunt utilizate ca teorii concurente ale interculturalității, ci ca *instrumente analitice de operaționalizare* a acestui nivel exploratoriu. Suprapunerea interculturalității cu aceste modele este una funcțională, nu conceptuală: interculturalitatea indică dimensiunea diferenței culturale relevante politic, în timp ce modelele Hofstede și Wursten oferă grile prin care această dimensiune poate fi analizată comparativ și contextualizat. Utilizarea modelelor Hofstede-Wursten permite identificarea unor orientări culturale recurente – precum raportarea la autoritate, incertitudine, colectivitate sau expresia diferenței – fără a le transforma în explicații deterministe ale comportamentului politic. În cadrul politoscopiei interculturalității, aceste orientări sunt tratate ca *variabile de context*, care pot facilita sau constrânge apariția pluralității ca acțiune și discurs în

politosferă, în funcție de configurațiile politice concrete.

Prin urmare, interculturalitatea nu este redusă la o tipologie culturală fixă și nici absolutizată ca esență identitară. Dimpotrivă, ea este analizată ca *proces contingent*, dependent de interacțiunea dintre orientările culturale și structurile politosferice care le permit sau le blochează apariția publică. Modelele Hofstede-Wursten devin astfel instrumente exploratorii utile pentru citirea tensiunilor, limitelor și potențialelor interculturale ale unui context politic dat, fără a substitui analiza politică propriu-zisă. Această abordare este consonantă cu perspectiva politoscopică asumată în întregul demers: cultura nu explică politicul, dar nici nu este irelevantă pentru acesta; ea devine analitic semnificativă doar în măsura în care este articulată cu condițiile politice ale vizibilității, audibilității și capacității de acțiune a pluralității.

Hofstede propune un cadru analitic cantitativ bazat pe dimensiuni măsurabile care permit compararea sistematică a culturilor naționale. Wursten, în schimb, utilizează aceste dimensiuni ca punct de plecare pentru a construi tipologii culturale sintetice, denumite „imagini mentale”, care descriu moduri dominante de gândire, organizare și leadership („worldviews”). Astfel, în timp ce modelul Hofstede explică *ce valori culturale măsurabile predomină cantitativ într-o societate* – acestea fiind, distanța față de putere, individualism vs. colectivism, evitarea incertitudinii, masculinitate vs. feminitate, ori-

entare pe termen lung vs. scurt, complacere vs. restricție – modelul Wursten evidențiază *modurile în care se combină și se manifestă aceste valori în tipare mentale colective* vizibile și utile în managementul intercultural și leadershipul global. Fiecare imagine mentală reprezintă un set specific de valori și comportamente culturale care influențează stilurile de conducere, comunicare și decizie într-un context global. Această abordare permite trecerea de la simpla măsurare a diferențelor culturale la înțelegerea logicii interne a acțiunii politice și a rezistenței la schimbare instituțională.

Modelul imaginilor mentale al lui Huib Wursten oferă o perspectivă aplicativă asupra culturilor naționale, explicând modul în care combinațiile valorilor culturale generează tipare distincte de leadership, comunicare și luare a deciziilor. Dezvoltat ca o extensie aplicativă a modelului dimensiunilor culturale, modelul celor șapte imagini mentale dominante ale culturii naționale identifică următoarele tipare mentale colective („mental images”) care influențează modul în care societățile gândesc, iau decizii și exercită leadershipul:

Pyramid (ierarhie, autoritate, ordine. Exemple: Franța, Belgia, Spania, Italia, România, Grecia, Coreea de Sud. Caracteristici: ierarhii clare, respect pentru titluri, decizia vine „de sus”, roluri bine definite);

Family (loialitate, protecție, paternalism. Exemple: China, India, Mexic, Turcia, Indonezia, Filipine, Arabia Saudită. Caracteristici: relații perso-

nale puternice, lider ca „figură parentală”, obligații morale reciproce);

Solar system (putere personalizată, centru dominant. Exemple: Rusia, Franța (în leadership politic), Coreea de Nord, Kazahstan, Emiratele Arabe Unite. Caracteristici: putere concentrată într-o persoană sau un nucleu central, loialitate față de lider);

Contest (competiție, dezbatere, pluralism; Statele Unite, Regatul Unit, Australia, Canada, Israel. Caracteristici: dezbatere deschisă, confruntare de idei, leadership competitiv, „câștigătorul ia tot”);

Machine (reguli, proceduri, predictibilitate; Germania, Elveția, Austria, Japonia, Țările nordice - parțial. Caracteristici: sisteme clare, reguli respectate strict, eficiență, impersonalitate instituțională);

Network (rețele, cooperare, consens; Olanda, Suedia, Norvegia, Danemarca, Finlanda. Caracteristici: decizie prin consens, colaborare, structuri plate, leadership participativ);

Village market (negociere informală, flexibilitate; Brazilia, Nigeria, Egipt, Thailanda, Vietnam, Peru. Caracteristici: reguli flexibile, adaptare constantă, negociere informală, relații contextuale)⁵.

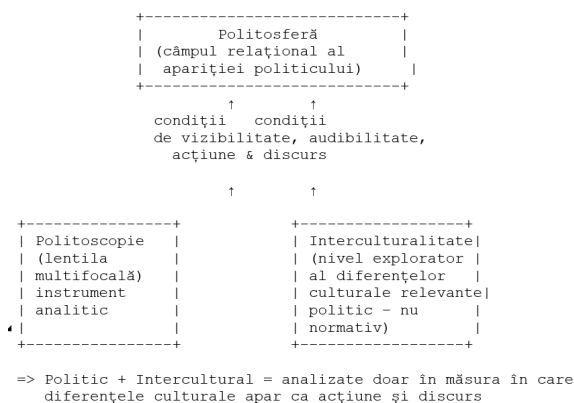
În orizontul exporatoriu politos-copic, modelele culturale Hofstede-Wursten devin relevante în măsura în care influențează formele de participare politică, modelează așteptările față de autoritate și stat, condiționează practicile de negociere a diferențelor, sau afectează capacitatea de acțiune comună în contexte multicultura-

le. Astfel, interculturalitatea este *analizată în interiorul politosferei*, iar politoscopia funcționează ca *mecanism de corelare* a structurilor culturale, practicilor politice concrete și condițiilor de apariție a pluralității în spațiul public.

După clarificarea celor trei concepte-cheie, se impune o reprezentare

sintetică a relațiilor dintre ele, menită să evite o lectură fragmentară și să evidențieze arhitectura analitică unitară a cadrului propus. Schemele conceptuale de mai jos nu au rol ilustrativ, ci funcționează ca instrumente epistemice de orientare a analizei politoscopice a interculturalității.

Schema conceptuală 1. Arhitectura politosferă-politoscopie-interculturalitate



Această schemă reprezintă arhitectura condițională a cadrului conceptual propus. *Politosfera* desemnează nivelul ontologic al apariției politicului, ca spațiu relațional al vizibilității, audibilității și capacității de acțiune a pluralității. *Politoscopia* funcționează ca nivel metodologic, oferind lentila analitică multifocală prin care sunt investigate practicile

politice ce permit sau blochează această apariție. *Interculturalitatea* constituie nivelul exploratoriu, referindu-se la interacțiunea diferențelor culturale relevante politic. Diferențele culturale devin astfel interculturale doar în măsura în care politosfera permite apariția lor ca acțiune și discurs, apariție analizabilă politoscopic.

Schema conceptuală 2. Multiculturalism normativ vs. Politoscoopia interculturalității

MULTICULTURALISM NORMATIV

(normativ & prescriptiv)

Toleranță
↓
Armonizare
↓
Politici publice sectoriale
↓
Idei de armonie între grupuri
Accent pe "că ar trebui"

POLITOSCOPIA INTERCULTURALITĂȚII

(analitic & descriptiv)

Vizibilitate
↓
Apariție politică
↓
Discurs & acțiune
↓
Condiții ale pluralității
Accent pe "cum devine"

A doua schemă evidențiază diferența de poziționare analitică dintre abordările normative ale multiculturalismului și modelul politosferă-politoscopie-interculturalitate. În timp ce multiculturalismul normativ operează preponderent cu valori, idealuri și politici prescriptive ale toleranței și dialogului, politoscoopia interculturalității se concentrează asupra condițiilor politice concrete ale apariției pluralității ca acțiune și discurs. Accentul se deplasează astfel de la ceea ce „ar trebui să fie” interculturalitatea la modul în care diferențele culturale devin sau nu devin politice într-un context dat.

Valorificarea cadrului conceptual operațional în Caucazul de Sud post-sovietic. Studii de caz

Această arhitectură conceptuală operațională permite abordarea comparativă a multiculturalismului din Georgia, Armenia și Azerbaidjan nu din perspectiva „culturilor naționale” distincte, ci din aceea a *configurații-*

lor politosferice diferite, în care: modelele culturale interacționează cu instituțiile politice, conflictele identitare sunt mediate (sau exacerbate) politic, iar interculturalitatea apare ca proces politic contingent, nu ca ideal normativ. Prin urmare, cadrul conceptual operațional *politosferă – politoscopie – interculturalitate* creează premisele unei analize empirice riguroase, capabile să surprindă dinamica reală a multiculturalismului în Caucazul de Sud post-sovietic. Să îl urmărim, în continuare, în studiile de caz situația de pe teren !

Notă metodologică privind utilizarea surselor empirice

Prezentul eseu se înscrie în registrul *filosofiei politice aplicate* și nu urmărește realizarea unei analize empirice exhaustive. Sursele „de teren” (rapoarte instituționale, studii de caz regionale, analize politice și istorice) sunt utilizate ca *ancore politosferice*, menite să fixeze conceptual analiza politoscopică în configurații politice

recognoscibile. Ele nu funcționează ca dovezi cantitative sau ca suport metodologic primar, ci ca indicatori ai modului în care pluralitatea culturală este formulată, administrată, securizată sau simbolizată în spațiul public. În acest sens, materialul empiric este integrat interpretativ în cadrul politosferă-politoscopie-interculturalitate, fiind subordonat scopului teoretic al investigării condițiilor de apariție a pluralității ca acțiune și discurs politic.

**Georgia – Samtskhe-Javakheti:
politosferă periferică și apariția
restrânsă a interculturalității**

Regiunea Samtskhe-Javakheti constituie un studiu de caz paradigmatic pentru analiza politoscopică a interculturalității într-o politosferă periferică post-sovietică. Caracterizată printr-o majoritate armeană într-un stat-națiune georgian construit pe o logică civico-unitară, regiunea ilustrează disjunția structurală dintre *prezența demografică a pluralității culturale și apariția sa politică efectivă*. Această disjunție nu este accidentală, ci rezultatul unei configurații politosferice în care diferența culturală este recunoscută administrativ, dar menținută la distanță de acțiunea politică autonomă. Din perspectivă arendtiană, politicul apare numai acolo unde pluralitatea poate fi articulată public prin acțiune și discurs. În Samtskhe-Javakheti, pluralitatea etno-lingvistică este vizibilă la nivel social și cultural, însă *audibilitatea sa politică este sever limitată*. Această limitare este instituționalizată printr-

un regim al loialității statale, în care revendicările comunității armene sunt adesea interpretate printr-o grilă securitară, ca potențială vulnerabilitate geopolitică, mai ales în proximitatea Armeniei și a conflictelor regionale. Aplicarea lentilei politoscopice permite identificarea a trei mecanisme recurente care structurează această politosferă periferică:

1) *Instituționalizarea limitată a pluralității*. Georgia a dezvoltat, începând cu anii 2000, un cadru normativ relativ coerent privind minoritățile, concretizat în *State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration* (2015–2020; 2021–2030) și în activitatea *Office of the State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality*. Cu toate acestea, studiile realizate de ECMI (European Centre for Minority Issues) arată că aceste politici funcționează predominant ca mecanisme de integrare administrativă și lingvistică, nu ca instrumente de extindere a participării politice autonome a minorităților⁶. Autonomia locală rămâne strict încadrată în logica statului unitar, iar accesul minorităților la poziții decizionale centrale este redus.

2) *Fragmentarea discursivă a pluralității*. Revendicările comunității armene sunt rareori integrate într-un spațiu deliberativ comun georgian. Ele sunt canalizate fie prin organizații etnice locale, fie prin structuri informale, ceea ce limitează capacitatea lor de a se transforma în acțiune politică plurală. Din punct de vedere politoscopic, diferența culturală este astfel menținută într-o zonă de vizibilitate socială, dar *exclusă din câmpul apariției politice legitime*.

3) *Externalizarea geopolitică a diferenței*. Proximitatea Armeniei și istoria conflictelor regionale contribuie la perceperea interculturalității locale ca problemă geopolitică latentă. Această externalizare reduce spațiul de experimentare politică internă a pluralității, transformând interculturalitatea într-un obiect de administrare preventivă, nu într-o resursă politică. Integrarea nivelului intercultural prin modelele Hofstede–Wursten indică orientări culturale caracterizate de distanță relativ ridicată față de putere și evitare a incertitudinii, atât în cultura politică georgiană, cât și în cea armeană. Aceste orientări nu determină conflictul, dar contribuie la explicarea reticenței față de experimente pluraliste și preferinței pentru stabilitate instituțională.

Din perspectivă politoscopică, interculturalitatea din Samtskhe-Javakheti nu eșuează din cauza absenței dialogului cultural, ci din cauza *condițiilor politice restrictive ale apariției pluralității*. Diferențele culturale sunt recunoscute și gestionate, dar rareori sunt lăsate să se manifeste ca inițiative politice autonome. Politosfera regională funcționează astfel ca un spațiu de coexistență reglementată, nu ca unul de acțiune politică plurală.

Armenia: pluralitate, memorie și politosferă post-conflictuală

Cazul Armeniei introduce în analiza politoscopică a interculturalității o dimensiune distinctă: *centralitatea memoriei colective și a experienței conflictuale în configurarea politosferei*. Spre deosebire de Georgia, unde

pluralitatea este marginalizată periferic, Armenia se caracterizează printr-o politosferă dens încărcată afectiv, în care pluralitatea este filtrată printr-un orizont identitar marcat de traumă istorică și insecuritate geopolitică. Memoria *genocidului armean*, conflictele recurente legate de Nagorno-Karabakh și experiența vulnerabilității statale constituie *structuri de profunzime ale politosferei armenie*, care delimitează câmpul legitimității politice. Din perspectivă arendtiană, această configurație tensionează condiția apariției pluralității ca acțiune între egali: unitatea identitară este frecvent privilegiată în raport cu pluralitatea internă. Analiza politoscopică evidențiază trei trăsături structurale:

1) *Politizarea memoriei*. Memoria istorică funcționează ca vector central al discursului politic, nu doar ca element cultural. Ea structurează evaluarea loialității politice și limitează apariția unor discursuri interculturale care pot fi percepute ca relativizare a traumei fondatoare⁷.

2) *Interculturalitatea defensivă*. Deschiderea către alteritate este posibilă, dar condiționată de percepția riscului existențial. După conflictul din 2020, această tendință s-a accentuat, iar politosfera s-a securizat suplimentar, reducând spațiul pentru inițiative politice pluraliste, chiar în contextul reformelor democratice post-2018.

3) *Fragmentarea politosferei*. Spațiul public este traversat de tensiuni între discursuri democratice emergente și reflexe identitare secu-

rizante. Pluralitatea apare politic intermitent, mai ales în contexte civice, culturale sau diasporice, dar întâmpină dificultăți în a se institui ca principiu structural al politosferei. Modelele Hofstede–Wursten indică orientări culturale asociate cu colectivism ridicat și evitare accentuată a incertitudinii, ceea ce poate contribui la reziliența unui imaginar politic centrat pe supraviețuire. Interculturalitatea nu este absentă, dar este *temporal și afectiv condiționată*. Comparativ, Armenia ocupă o poziție mediană între Georgia și Azerbaidjan: pluralitatea este recunoscută, dar filtrată prin memoria conflictului. Interculturalitatea devine posibilă politic doar acolo unde memoria poate fi transformată din limită identitară în *resursă reflexivă a pluralității*.

Azerbaidjan: multiculturalism oficial și politosferă saturată discursiv

Dacă Samtskhe-Javakheti ilustrează o politosferă periferică, iar Armenia una post-conflictuală, Azerbaidjanul oferă un contrast semnificativ: *o politosferă centralizată și saturată discursiv*, în care interculturalitatea este intens vizibilă simbolic, dar strict controlată politic. Statul azer se prezintă constant ca model de multiculturalism și toleranță, această autoreprezentare fiind instituționalizată prin structuri precum *Baku International Multiculturalism Centre*, *Heydar Aliyev Foundation* și prin evenimente internaționale precum *World Forum on Intercultural Dialo-*

gue (2011–). „Year of Multiculturalism” (2016) a consolidat această narațiune ca element al identității politice oficiale. Din perspectivă politoscopică, multiculturalismul azer funcționează ca *dispozitiv de gestionare a pluralității*, nu ca spațiu al apariției politice a diferențelor. Analiza politoscopică evidențiază trei trăsături structurale:

1) *Centralizarea discursului intercultural*. Diferențele culturale sunt formulate de sus în jos și integrate într-o narațiune unificatoare a statului-națiune, reducând posibilitatea apariției unor discursuri alternative sau critice.

2) *Separarea simbolică dintre cultură și politică*. Expresiile culturale ale diversității sunt încurajate în sfera festivă și religioasă, dar sunt disociate de revendicări politice sau de participare civică autonomă.

3) *Neutralizarea conflictului*. Pluralitatea este prezentată ca armonioasă și consensuală, iar tensiunile interculturale sunt excluse din spațiul public legitim. Integrarea dimensiunii interculturale prin modelele Hofstede–Wursten oferă un cadru interpretativ suplimentar pentru înțelegerea acestei politosfere saturate. Orientările culturale dominante asociate Azerbaidjanului – *distanță ridicată față de putere, colectivism și evitare accentuată a incertitudinii* – pot contribui la explicarea acceptării sociale a unui model de multiculturalism administrat. Aceste orientări nu determină configurația politică, dar pot facilita *interanalizarea unei relații ierarhice între stat și pluralitate*, în care diversitatea

este percepută ca resursă simbolică a ordinii, nu ca sursă legitimă de contestare.

Din perspectivă arendtiană, această configurație ridică o problemă fundamentală: interculturalitatea este prezentă în politosferă ca *obiect de discurs*, nu ca *subiect de acțiune*. Diferențele culturale apar public, însă nu prin inițiativa actorilor plural diferiți, ci prin medierea statului, ceea ce limitează caracterul lor politic propriu-zis. În acest sens, politosfera azeră este *una a apariției regizate, nu a apariției emergente*.

Comparativ cu cazul georgian, unde interculturalitatea este constrânsă prin marginalizare politică, Azerbaidjanul ilustrează o constrângere de tip opus: *hiper-vizibilitate discursivă combinată cu restricție a acțiunii politice autonome*. Ambele cazuri indică limitele interculturalismului normativ și confirmă *utilitatea cadrului politosferă-politoscopie-interculturalitate*. Multiculturalismul nu poate fi evaluat doar prin prezența discursului sau a politicilor culturale, ci prin *condițiile politice efective ale apariției pluralității ca acțiune și discurs liber*.

În concluzie, cazul Azerbaidjanului arată că interculturalitatea poate fi integrată în politosferă nu doar prin excludere, ci și prin *absorbție simbolică*, ceea ce transformă pluralitatea într-un element de legitimare a ordinii politice existente. Politoscopia permite astfel identificarea unui paradox central al multiculturalismului oficial: *cu cât diferența este mai vizibil celebrată, cu atât poate*

deveni mai puțin capabilă să apară politic.

Tipologie comparativă a politosferelor în Caucazul de Sud post-sovietic

Analiza politoscopică a Georgiei, Armeniei și Azerbaidjanului permite formularea unei *tipologii politosferice* care depășește clasificările culturale sau instituționale și evidențiază condițiile politice ale apariției interculturalității. În acest orizont politoscopic, distingem următoarele configurații politosferice:

Politosfera periferică: Georgia (Samtskhe-Javakheti)

Mecanism dominant: marginalizare instituțională; pluralitatea culturală este *prezentă demografic*, dar *slab articulată politic*; interculturalitatea rămâne localizată social, fără acces deplin la acțiune publică; politosfera este fragmentată între centru și periferie. *Interculturalitate latentă:* diferențele există, dar nu apar politic ca inițiativă legitimă.

Politosfera post-conflictuală: Armenia

Mecanism dominant: filtrare memorială și securitară; pluralitatea este mediată de memorie, traumă și temporalitatea politică; interculturalitatea apare intermitent și condiționat; spațiul public oscilează între deschidere civică și reflexe identitare. *Interculturalitate condiționată:* diferențele pot apărea, dar sub constrângeri afective și istorice.

Politosfera saturată discursiv: Azerbaidjan

Mecanism dominant: absorbție simbolică și control politic; interculturalitatea este *hiper-vizibilă discursiv*, dar *depolitizată practic*; pluralitatea apare ca obiect de reprezentare, nu ca subiect de acțiune; conflictul este neutralizat prin narațiune consensuală; *Interculturalitate regizată:* diferențele sunt recunoscute, dar nu pot iniția politic.

Concluzie tipologică

Cele trei configurații indică faptul că *multiculturalismul nu eșuează sau reușește cultural*, ci *politosferic*, în funcție de modul în care spațiul politic permite sau restrânge apariția pluralității ca acțiune și discurs.

Politoscopia interculturalității: un model analitic-operațional de filosofie politică aplicată

Analiza politoscopică a interculturalității în Caucazul de Sud post-sovietic arată că multiculturalismul nu poate fi evaluat în mod adecvat nici prin simpla coexistență a diferențelor culturale, nici prin discursuri normative ale toleranței sau recunoașterii. În Georgia, Armenia și Azerbaidjan interculturalitatea se manifestă în moduri profund diferite nu datorită unor „culturi naționale” incompatibile, ci în funcție de *configurațiile politosferice specifice care structurează vizibilitatea, audibilitatea și capacitatea de acțiune a pluralității*.

Prin introducerea binomului conceptual *politosferă-politoscopie* și integrarea *interculturalității* ca nivel exploratoriu, acest eseu propune o deplasare analitică de la multiculturalismul ca problemă culturală sau normativă către multiculturalismul ca *fenomen politic al apariției pluralității*. Studiile de caz demonstrează că diferențele culturale devin relevante politic doar acolo unde sunt capabile să apară public ca inițiative, conflicte și acțiuni comune, nu doar ca identități administrate sau celebrate simbolic.

În acest sens, Caucazul de Sud funcționează nu ca excepție regională, ci ca *laborator politic al modernității târzii*, în care tensiunile dintre pluralitate, suveranitate, memorie și control discursiv devin vizibile în forme concentrate. *Politoscopia interculturalității* oferă astfel un cadru analitic exportabil, capabil să investigheze dinamica multiculturalismului dincolo de granițele acestui spațiu, în orice context în care politicul este pus la încercare de diferență. Prin această schemă conceptuală integratoare, politoscopia interculturalității probează calitățile teoretico-metodologice ale unui *model analitic operațional* și, implicit, resursele *filosofiei politice aplicate*. Atunci când afirm acest lucru, am în vedere următoarea *schema conceptuală integratoare*:

Politoscopia interculturalității

Nivelul ontologic (unde?) → **Politosfera:** câmpul relațional al apariției politicului; condițiile de vizibilitate, audibilitate, acțiune

Nivelul metodologic (cum?) → **Politoscopia:** lentilă analitică asupra practicilor politice investighează apariția, controlul sau blocarea pluralității

Nivelul exploratoriu (ce?) → **Interculturalitatea:** interacțiunea modelelor culturale relevante politic, interpretată contextual, nu normativ

Instrumentele analitice (cu ce ?) → **Modelele Hofstede – Wursten**

grile orientative pentru tensiuni interculturale integrate analizei politosferice

Dinamica generală: Diferențele culturale → devin interculturale → doar dacă politosfera permite → apariția lor ca acțiune și discurs → analizabilă politoscopic.

Structurată ca model analitic operațional al filosofiei politice aplicate, *Politoscopia interculturalității* capătă *coerență conceptuală* (nivel teoretic), *consistență empirică* (studii de caz), *forță metodologică* (model analitic exportabil).

Contribuția centrală a modelului politosferă-politoscopie-interculturalitate constă în *deplasarea analizei multiculturalismului de la nivelul normativ al valorilor și politicilor declarative către nivelul politic al apariției pluralității*. Modelul arată că diferențele culturale nu devin relevante politic prin simpla recunoaștere juridică sau celebrare simbolică, ci doar în măsura în care pot apărea public ca inițiative, conflicte și acțiuni comune. Interculturalitatea nu

este astfel un scop în sine, ci un proces contingent, dependent de configurațiile politosferice care structurează vizibilitatea, audibilitatea și capacitatea de acțiune a pluralității. În absența unei analitici politoscopice, teoriile normative ale multiculturalismului riscă să confunde vizibilitatea simbolică cu participarea politică efectivă, dialogul prescris cu acțiunea posibilă și toleranța declarată cu apariția reală a pluralității ca subiect politic. Politoscopia interculturalității face vizibile aceste decalaje și permite evaluarea multiculturalismului nu prin intenții sau discursuri, ci *prin condițiile politice concrete care permit sau blochează apariția diferențelor ca acțiune și discurs în spațiul public*.

Note

¹ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, ediția a 2-a, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1998, pp.

175-176, pp. 198 -199.

² Anton Carpinski, „Politosfera – un model intensional de fundamentare a politicului”, (The Politosphere: An Intentional Model for Grounding the

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- ³ Geert Hofstede, *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values*, Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1980.
- ⁴ Huib Wursten, *The Seven Mental Images of National Culture*, Itim International, Amsterdam, 2019.
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Geopolitical risks and insecurity in the South Caucasus. The role of geographical constraints in the case of Georgia

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Abstract: *The South Caucasus region is characterised by a high level of geopolitical instability, determined by the overlapping of frozen conflicts, competition between regional and extra-regional actors, and the structural vulnerabilities of the states in the area. In this context, the article analyses the role of geographical constraints in generating and perpetuating insecurity, taking Georgia as a case study. The premise from which the analysis starts is that geography is not a simple passive framework of international relations, but an essential explanatory variable that shapes the strategic options, foreign policy behaviour and security vulnerability of small states. The research uses a qualitative exploratory approach, based on geopolitical analysis, documentation and cartographic processing. Georgia's geographical positioning, territorial fragmentation and exposure to external pressures converge in a model of structural insecurity, which limits the state's ability to diversify its geopolitical options. The article contributes to the regional security literature by highlighting geography as a determinant of geopolitical risk in the South Caucasus and the wider Black Sea region.*

Keywords: *geopolitics, security, geographical constraints, Georgia, South Caucasus, Black Sea Extended Region.*

Introduction

The South Caucasus region is one of the most volatile geopolitical areas in the wider European neighbourhood, characterised by the existence of 'frozen conflicts', competition between global actors (United States of America, European Union, Russian Federation) and persistent structural vulnerabilities of the states in the region (Georgia, Armenia,

Azerbaijan). Located at the crossroads between Europe and Asia, between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, this region is a focus of divergent strategic interests, being simultaneously an energy transit zone, a transport corridor and a geopolitical buffer between competing spheres of influence. The discovery of energy resources in the Caspian Sea has intensified competition between state actors in the region, as well as be-

tween global strategic actors (USA and the Russian Federation) for the exploitation and transport of hydrocarbons to countries in Europe or Asia¹.

The state of security in the South Caucasus is caused by the interaction of historical, military, geographical and ethno-cultural factors. Among the states of the South Caucasus, Georgia stands out due to its problematic geographical position, caught between constant military pressure from the Russian Federation and the need to cultivate peaceful relations with its other neighbours (Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan). Although Georgia is part of the so-called *Black Sea Extended Region*, being a coastal state of this sea, it has rather limited access to strategic manoeuvring space. The conflicts in the separatist regions (South Ossetia and Abkhazia) maintained by the Russian Federation create multiple vulnerabilities in terms of national security. In this context, the geography of Georgia and the entire region becomes a source of geopolitical risks and insecurity.

In general, the South Caucasus is analysed from the perspective of “frozen conflicts” (Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh), competition between Russia, Turkey, EU, NATO and other extra-regional actors, as well as energy security. According to O. Milevski and S. Secieru, a “frozen conflict” is an administratively disputed territory where military confrontation has ceased but for which no sustainable political solution acceptable to all

parties involved has been found, fueling a fragile security environment².

In areas where frozen conflicts exist, violence and armed confrontation can erupt at any time. Georgia is already a classic example of a country that “hosts” two frozen conflicts (Abkhazia and South Ossetia), reactivated by the outbreak of Russian-Georgian hostilities in 2008. In this landscape dominated by military conflicts and fierce competition for energy and transport corridors, the role of geography as an explanatory variable in shaping insecurity is often treated superficially.

This study starts from the premise that geography is not just a passive backdrop to geopolitical dynamics, but a structural constraint that shapes the strategic choices, foreign policy behaviour and security vulnerabilities of small states. In other words, the geography of the South Caucasus is a predictor of geopolitical risks and insecurity in this region, which has been disputed at certain times in history.

The main objective of the article is to analyse how geographical constraints contribute to the generation and perpetuation of geopolitical risks in the South Caucasus, through a case study focused on Georgia. The central research question concerns the extent to which Georgia’s geographical position and territorial configuration limit its ability to ensure its security and diversify its geopolitical options. In this sense, the article aims to highlight the link between geography, insecurity and the strategic op-

tions of a small state in a tense regional space.

Based on the general objective of the paper, the investigative approach is structured around the following research questions:

1. To what extent does Georgia's geographical position contribute to the configuration of a model of structural insecurity in the South Caucasus?

2. What are the main geographical constraints (lack of strategic depth, territorial fragmentation, geopolitical neighbourhood) that limit Georgia's ability to manage its security risks?

3. How does geography influence Georgia's foreign and security policy options in a regional context marked by power asymmetries and strategic competition?

4. How does Georgia's status as a transit state (for energy and transport) transform its geographical position into a simultaneous source of geopolitical opportunity and security vulnerability?

5. To what extent do geographical constraints reduce Georgia's strategic autonomy and condition its Euro-Atlantic orientation?

Literature review

The analysis of geopolitical risks and insecurity in the South Caucasus requires a theoretical approach that goes beyond strictly political-institutional or military explanations and integrates geography as a structural factor in power relations. In this

sense, the theoretical section combines contributions from political geography, classical and critical geopolitics, as well as security studies, to substantiate the role of geographical constraints in producing regional insecurity.

Political geography starts from the premise that space is not politically neutral, but influences the distribution of power, the behaviour of states and the architecture of security systems. Geographical positioning, access to resources, border configuration and regional neighbourhoods generate opportunities, but also structural constraints that limit the room for manoeuvre of state actors. In this logic, geography functions as a relatively stable variable with long-term effects on security and foreign policy. In regions characterised by chronic instability, such as the South Caucasus, these constraints are amplified by the overlapping geopolitical interests of the major powers and the institutional fragility of local states. Thus, geography does not fully explain aspects of insecurity, but it does provide clues about strategic options.

Classical geopolitics attributed a decisive role to geography in explaining the behaviour of states, emphasising the importance of strategic position, territorial size and control of space in the configuration of political power. In the tradition inaugurated by Friedrich Ratzel (1897), the state was conceptualised as an organism dependent on vital space, while Halford J. Mackinder (1904) demonstrated that geographical positioning in the

“pivot of history” influences the global balance of power. Although these approaches were later criticised for their spatial determinism, critical geopolitics (Agnew, 2003; Ó Tuathail, 1996) recognises the continuing relevance of geographical factors, especially in geopolitical border regions such as the South Caucasus, where positional constraints, territorial fragmentation and lack of strategic depth shape states’ foreign and security policy options³.

Critical geopolitics has nuanced the deterministic perspective of the classical tradition, arguing that geography does not generate mechanical effects on state behaviour, but is mediated through representations, discourses and political practices. In this vein, Gearóid Ó Tuathail (1996) demonstrated that geopolitical space is discursively produced and reproduced in the form of narratives on regional and international security issues. Similarly, Simon Dalby (1990) and John Agnew (2003) have emphasised that mental maps, territorial representations and geopolitical interpretations of elites shape the definition of interests and threats. From this perspective, geographical constraints are not immutable, but are interpreted and instrumentalised by political elites according to their strategic projects. In regions marked by geopolitical competition, such as the South Caucasus, geography becomes both a material reality (relief, neighbourhoods, transport routes, energy corridors) and a central element of competing narratives on security, defence and foreign policy⁴.

The literature on regional security shows that insecurity is not evenly distributed, but tends to be concentrated in certain areas where conflictual interactions, historical rivalries and power asymmetries are self-perpetuating. In this regard, Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver develop the concept of a “regional security complex”, showing that threats are more intense within geographical areas characterised by security interdependence⁵.

The concept of the “security dilemma”, originally formulated by John H. Herz (1950) and later systematised by Robert Jervis (1978), is central to this theoretical framework: a state’s defensive measures are interpreted as potential threats by other actors, generating counterbalancing reactions that amplify general insecurity.

In the absence of mutual trust and robust institutional mechanisms, the spiral of insecurity becomes difficult to control⁶. In the wider Black Sea region, which includes the riparian countries (Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Georgia, Ukraine, Russian Federation), the countries of the South Caucasus (Armenia and Azerbaijan) and the Republic of Moldova, there is a security dilemma (security *versus* energy). At present, the Prut River, which forms the eastern border of Romania, European Union and NATO, separates two geopolitical areas: the Euro-Atlantic space, which includes countries with competitive market economies that provide security in the region, and the post-Soviet space (the former USSR or Commonwealth

of Independent States), which includes countries that have energy resources and/or are transit areas for energy pipelines and need security⁷.

In the South Caucasus, insecurity is exacerbated by the proximity of major regional actors (Russian Federation, Turkey, Iran), the existence of frozen conflicts (Abkhazia, South Ossetia, Nagorno-Karabakh) and the lack of functional collective security arrangements. In terms of regional security complex theory, the Caucasus functions as a subsystem in which negative interdependencies prevail. Geography contributes directly to this configuration: territorial fragmentation, lack of strategic depth, and exposure to energy corridors and transit routes reduce the capacity of states, especially Georgia, to autonomously neutralise risks and increase vulnerability to external pressures.

A relevant theoretical contribution to the analysis of structural insecurity is provided by the approach to small states in the international system. David Vital (1967) showed that the vulnerability of small states derives from their reduced capacity to influence the strategic environment and their dependence on the great powers. Subsequently, Robert O. Keohane (1969) emphasised that the status of a "small state" should be understood not only in demographic or territorial terms, but also in relation to the distribution of power and the limited margin of external autonomy⁸.

For small states (e.g. Georgia) in tense regions (South Caucasus), strategic options are often limited to a

few dominant alternatives: alignment with a major actor, integration into broader security structures, or acceptance of a state of chronic insecurity. The choice of one of these options is not exclusively the result of political preferences, but also of geographical and structural constraints. Based on these theoretical contributions, this article treats geography as a central explanatory variable in the analysis of geopolitical insecurity. Geographical constraints are not understood as absolute determinants of the security, but as structural elements that act through mediating mechanisms: power asymmetries, the security dilemma, and the militarisation of regional space.

Research methodology

The methodological approach is based on a descriptive-exploratory analysis that combines geopolitical analysis, based on cartographic tools, with a comparative analysis of composite indices. The article is structured as follows: the first part contextualises the architecture of geopolitical risks in the South Caucasus, while the second part analyses the specific geographical constraints of Georgia and their implications for its insecurity and strategic options.

For the comparative analysis of geopolitical risks and the level of insecurity in the South Caucasus, we have selected a series of composite indices used internationally (Table 1): Human Development Index, Democracy Index, Global Peace Index,

Militarisation Index and State Fragility Index. All these indices allow for a systematic and comparable assessment of the position of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan in the security architecture of the South Caucasus.

Table 1. Composite indices used in the comparative analysis

Index	What It Measures	Type of Indicator
Human Development Index (HDI)	Socio-economic development	Development
Democracy Index	Quality of the political regime	Political
Global Peace Index (GPI)	Level of security and peace	Security
Global Militarisation Index (GMI)	Degree of militarisation	Military
Fragile States Index (FSI)	State stability and vulnerability	Stability

The Human Development Index (HDI), developed by the United Nations Development Programme, measures the level of development by integrating three fundamental dimensions: health (expressed through life expectancy), education (average and expected years of schooling) and standard of living (gross national income per capita). This index reflects a state’s capacity to ensure general conditions of well-being and represents an alternative to exclusively economic indicators, such as gross domestic product⁹.

The political dimension is captured by the Democracy Index, developed by the Economist Intelligence Unit, which assesses the degree of democratisation based on five criteria: the electoral process, government functioning, political participation, political culture and respect for civil liberties. The scores obtained

allow political regimes to be classified as consolidated democracies, imperfect democracies, hybrid regimes and authoritarian regimes, thus providing a synthetic measure of the stability and legitimacy of political institutions¹⁰.

The level of security and conflict is analysed using the Global Peace Index (GPI), developed by the Institute for Economics and Peace, which includes indicators relating to internal and external conflicts, societal security and the degree of militarisation. This index reflects the exposure of states to security risks and provides a comparative assessment of the level of regional and international stability¹¹. Complementary to this, the Global Militarisation Index (GMI), developed by the Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies, measures the military sector’s share in society using indicators such as military ex-

penditure, armed forces and military equipment, thus highlighting the state's strategic priorities and perception of external threats¹².

The Fragile States Index (FSI), developed by the Fund for Peace, provides a comprehensive assessment of state vulnerabilities based on indicators covering demographic pressures, political legitimacy, economic performance and external interventions. This index is widely used to analyse states' capacity to maintain internal stability and cope with political and security risks¹³. Overall, the use of these indices allows for an analysis of the relationship between development, governance and security, providing a solid empirical framework for the comparative assessment of geopolitical risks in the South Caucasus.

Geography, geopolitical risks and regional security

The literature on regional security and geopolitics converges on the idea that geography is a structural factor in international relations, influencing both the distribution of power and the typology of geopolitical risks and the level of insecurity of states. In the South Caucasus, this relationship is particularly relevant, given the nature of the region as a geopolitical and civilisational frontier (majority Christianity in the Russian Federation, Georgia and Armenia *versus* Islam in Turkey and Azerbaijan), marked by competition between major powers and persistent instability.

Classical geopolitics established the idea that geographical positioning and spatial configuration condition the behaviour of states and their vulnerability. Halford J. Mackinder showed that certain geographical spaces generate lasting strategic advantages, while others produce vulnerability and exposure, especially in areas of contact between centres of power¹⁴.

Geography is the most important "stable factor" on which a nation's power depends, argues Hans J. Morgenthau, along with natural resources and raw materials. Added to these are relative factors such as population, political leadership, military, and economic capacity¹⁵. Developing this geographical approach, Nicholas J. Spykman emphasised the role of *rimlands* as areas of intense geopolitical competition where insecurity is structural and recurrent¹⁶. Robert D. Kaplan also shares Spykman's approach, considering that the struggle for space (geography) has never ceased throughout human history. Geographical maps are spatial representations of human divisions, and geography is the backdrop to history itself, Kaplan argues. A state's position on the map is much more important than the philosophy of those who govern it¹⁷.

Applied to the South Caucasus, this perspective suggests that the region's position between Europe and Asia, between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, generates objective constraints that limit the strategic autonomy of local states and expose

them to external pressures. However, the implicit determinism of classical geopolitics was later nuanced by critical approaches.

From the perspective of critical geopolitics, Gearóid Ó Tuathail argues that geography does not produce mechanical effects, but is mediated by political discourses and securitisation processes, through which space is transformed into an object of strategic competition¹⁸. Simon Dalby takes a similar line, highlighting the fact that insecurity is the result of the interaction between the material realities of space and political practices with geopolitical significance¹⁹.

Between geography and insecurity lie geopolitical risks, defined as forms of uncertainty and vulnerability generated by power competition in a given space. Robert D. Kaplan describes these spaces as "areas of geopolitical friction," where geography amplifies political and military tensions, turning risk into a permanent feature of the security environment²⁰.

An essential theoretical framework for analysing these dynamics is the theory of regional security complexes, formulated by Barry Buzan and later developed together with Ole Wæver. According to this perspective, insecurity is structured regionally, and security risks are more intense between actors in geographical proximity²¹. In the South Caucasus, frozen conflicts, historical rivalries and power asymmetries contribute to the consolidation of such a regional security complex.

Recurring geopolitical risks translate, over time, into a state of structural insecurity, conceptualised in security literature through the lens of the security dilemma. John H. Herz has shown that, in the absence of trust and effective collective security mechanisms, one state's defensive measures are perceived as threats by others, generating a vicious circle of insecurity²². This logic was further developed by Robert Jervis, who demonstrated that insecurity is often unintended but deeply structured by the international environment²³.

In regions characterised by frozen conflicts and the lack of a stable security architecture, insecurity tends to become persistent. David Lake points out that, in the absence of a stabilising regional authority, states remain captive in an environment of self-reproducing insecurity²⁴. This perspective is consistent with Barry Buzan's analysis, which defines regional insecurity as the result of the interaction between structure, perceptions and capabilities²⁵.

Regional comparative analysis is an essential tool for understanding how the three Caucasian countries manage their vulnerabilities and build resilience in an environment characterised by strategic competition and frozen conflicts. In this regard, the simultaneous assessment of human development indicators, the quality of democratic governance, the level of militarisation, internal stability and security provides an integrated perspective on the balance between development and insecurity.

The comparative table below (Table 2) highlights these differences and convergences, revealing that relatively similar socio-economic performances coexist with different levels of democratic consolidation and exposure to security risks. At the same time, the indicators analysed

suggest that insecurity in the South Caucasus is not exclusively the result of territorial conflicts, but reflects a combination of structural, institutional and geopolitical factors that influence the capacity of states to ensure long-term stability.

Table 2. Comparative analysis of the main indicators of development in Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia

Indicator	Reference year	Source	Azerbaijan	Level	Georgia	Level	Armenia	Level
Human Development Index (HDI)	2023	UNDP	0,789	High	0,844	Very High	0,811	Very High
Democracy Index	2024	Economist Intelligence Unit	2,80	Low	4,70	Medium	5,35	Medium
Global Peace Index (GPI)	2025	Institute for Economics & Peace	2,07	Medium	2,19	Medium	1,89	Medium
Fragile States Index	2024	Fund for Peace	72,8	Medium	69,3	Medium	68,1	Medium
Global Militarization Index (GMI)	2023	Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies (BICC)	206	High	136	Medium	243	High

The analysis of comparative indicators highlights a region characterised by contrasts between the level of socio-economic development and political and security dynamics. In terms of human development, all three states score relatively high, but Georgia and Armenia stand out as being in the ‘very high’ development category, reflecting more consistent progress in education, health and overall living conditions. Azerbaijan is slightly below this threshold, but still remains in the ‘high’ category, which can be explained by its significant economic dependence on the energy sector and the uneven distribution of the benefits of economic growth.

The differences become more evident at the political level. Azerbaijan’s low score on the Democracy Index

indicates a highly centralised political system and limited political competition, while Georgia and Armenia are classified as hybrid regimes, where electoral mechanisms function but democratic consolidation processes remain incomplete. Armenia scores slightly above Georgia, suggesting a more favourable evolution of political reforms in recent years, although institutional vulnerabilities and internal tensions continue to influence the political stability of both states.

Security indicators confirm the sensitive nature of the regional geopolitical environment. Moderate levels on the Global Peace Index reflect persistent conflicts and geopolitical tensions, particularly in the context of territorial disputes in the region. At the same time, high values on the Militarisation Index for Armenia and

Azerbaijan indicate a strong focus on the defence sector, while Georgia shows a more moderate level of militarisation. The State Fragility Index places all three states in the medium fragility zone, suggesting the existence of functional institutions that remain exposed to socio-economic and political pressures.

Georgia's geographical constraints and vulnerabilities in the South Caucasus security environment

Georgia is a state located in the South Caucasus, at the crossroads of Eastern Europe and Western Asia, its geographical position giving it a geopolitical role as an interface between the Euro-Atlantic space, the Caspian region and the Near East. These geographical characteristics are not just elements of the physical environment, but generate structural constraints that limit the state's strategic depth and increase its security vulnerability²⁶.

The configuration of the relief directly influences the geopolitical structure of the territory. The Greater

Caucasus mountain range, located to the north, forms a strong natural barrier against Russia and limits communications to a few strategic corridors, including the Darial Gorge and the Roki Tunnel, which are of major importance for transport, security and military mobility²⁷. In the south, the Lesser Caucasus Mountains separate Georgia from Armenia and Turkey and contribute to the territorial individualisation of the state, controlling access to the transregional corridors of Anatolia and the Armenian Plateau²⁸.

Between the two mountain ranges lie the main internal transport routes and areas of demographic and economic concentration, namely the Kura (Mtkvari) river basin in the east and the Colchis Plain in the west, regions that constitute the functional core of the state²⁹. The opening to the Black Sea provides access to international maritime routes and strengthens Georgia's role as a transit state for the energy and transport corridors connecting the Caspian region to European markets³⁰.

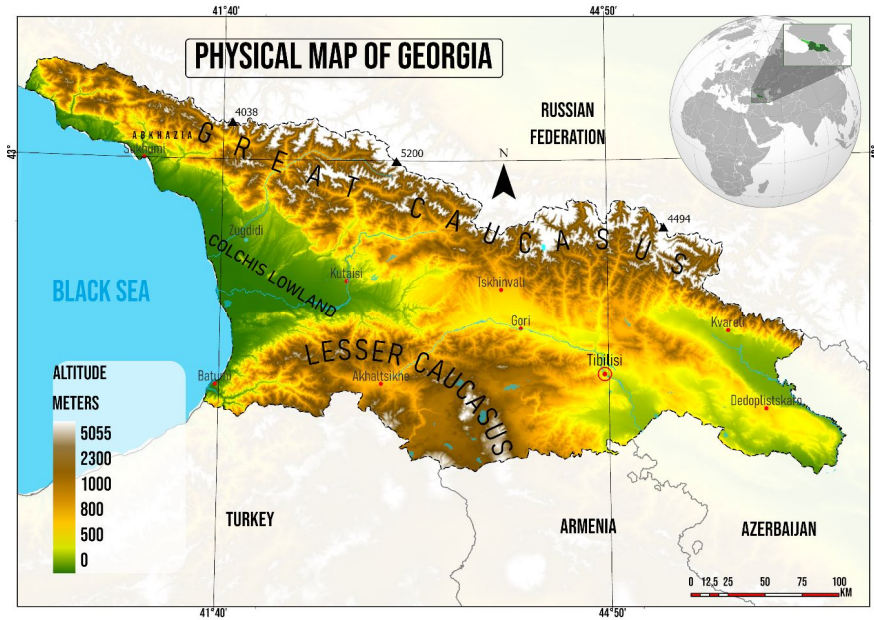


Figure 1. Physical and geographical framework of Georgia and main landforms

From a geopolitical point of view, Georgia borders the Russian Federation to the north, Azerbaijan to the east, Armenia and Turkey to the south, and has access to the Black Sea to the west³¹. This location at the crossroads of areas of major strategic interest amplifies the country's importance as a regional transport hub and, at the same time, generates geopolitical vulnerabilities, especially in the mountainous border areas, where control of access corridors and transport infrastructure has a direct relevance for state security and the functioning of regional corridors³².

During the existence of the Soviet Union, Georgia functioned as a strategic outpost on the southern border of the socialist bloc, directly exposed to Western influence due to its prox-

imity to Turkey, which led to a policy of Russification and, paradoxically, fuelled the consolidation of Georgian nationalism. After gaining independence in 1991, the victory of nationalist forces generated profound internal instability, manifested in the conflict between the ultra-nationalist and reformist currents, as well as in the outbreak of separatist movements in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. These were indirectly supported by Russia, which used the secessions as a tool of geopolitical pressure and as a means of maintaining strategic control over key points, such as the Black Sea coast and the Caucasian communication corridors. In exchange for relative stabilisation and reduced support for the separatists, Georgia agreed to join the Commonwealth of Inde-

pendent States and accept the presence of Russian military bases, which limited its strategic autonomy³³.

Samuel P. Huntington takes a similar view, highlighting Georgia's historical oscillation between independence and subordination to Russia. Although Georgia had periods of autonomy, such as the period prior to the annexation of 1801 and the brief independence after the Russian Revolution, it was forcibly reintegrated into the Russian sphere of control. After the collapse of the Soviet Union (1991), Georgia's newly regained independence was weakened by internal conflicts and external pressures. During Eduard Shevardnadze's presidency, Georgia faced separatist movements in Abkhazia, supported by Russia, which led to major concessions. According to S.P. Huntington, Russia's intervention had a dual function: initially to destabilise Georgian authority and subsequently to keep Georgia within its sphere of influence, thereby limiting the state's real autonomy and confirming the geopolitical constraints that define Georgia's position in the post-Soviet space³⁴.

Post-Soviet Georgia has evolved towards instability, marked by ethno-territorial conflicts and competition between various foreign policy options³⁵. Georgia's declared orientation towards Euro-Atlantic integration has been confronted with the specific security realities of the Caucasus, where the reorganisation of borders after the collapse of the

USSR was accompanied by identity tensions, territorial claims and frozen conflicts³⁶.

In the South Caucasus, the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh had a first phase of war (1988-1994), followed by renewed hostilities and major changes to the *status quo*, including Azerbaijan regaining control in 2023 and the resumption of peace negotiations in 2024-2025. In the north, Georgia indirectly borders several federal entities of the Russian Federation in the North Caucasus. These are mainly organised as national republics, each corresponding to dominant ethnic groups, with autonomous status within the Russian Federation and distinct demographic, economic and political characteristics.

The North Caucasus region has historically been marked by political instability and armed conflict. The Republic of Chechnya was the epicentre of the most violent post-Soviet clashes, and the Republic of Dagestan and the Republic of Ingushetia have also experienced recurrent episodes of insecurity. In contrast, the Republic of North Ossetia-Alania, the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria and the Republic of Karachay-Cherkessia are considered relatively stable, although they too were affected by ethnic tensions and insurgent incidents in the 1990s and early 2000s³⁷.

The border between Georgia and the Russian Federation is, from a geopolitical point of view, the most sensitive border of the Georgian state, even if we ignore the North

Caucasian republics. The situation is mainly determined by the consequences of the 2008 Russian-Georgian conflict and the existence of de facto separation lines within the internationally recognised territory of Georgia. Currently, a significant part of the border sector is associated with the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, where the Russian Federation maintains a military presence and effectively controls the demarcation lines. These lines are not internationally recognised as state borders, but function as militarily controlled boundaries, with severe restrictions on movement and periodic incidents related to the detention of persons, patrols or changes to the route of security fences. This situation reduces Georgia's ability to exercise full control over its northern borders and represents one of the state's main strategic vulnerabilities.

In the sector under the direct control of the Georgian authorities, the mountain border is relatively stable and sparsely populated, characterised by a small number of crossing points, the most important of which is in the Kazbegi-Verkhny Lars area, the main road link between the two states. Due to the difficult terrain and mountain climate, accessibility is limited, and the strategic importance of these crossing points is high both from an economic point of view and in terms of military mobility.

Currently, the Russian-Georgian border is not the scene of open armed conflict, but it remains a heavily militarised and politicised border, where

the lack of a definitive solution for the separatist regions maintains a high level of latent geopolitical tension and constantly influences Georgia's security environment.

Georgia's most stable border is with Turkey, which functions primarily as an area of economic cooperation and regional transit, crossed by major transport and energy infrastructure corridors. Among the most important examples are the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline, which transports oil from the Caspian region to Turkish ports on the Mediterranean Sea, and the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline, part of the southern energy corridor linking Azerbaijan to European markets. Similarly, the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway line reinforces the role of the Georgian-Turkish border as a major Eurasian transport axis, facilitating trade flows between Central Asia, the Caucasus and Europe³⁸.

The proximity to Armenia and Azerbaijan was a potential risk factor during the conflict between the two states, when episodes of military confrontation raised fears of spreading instability and possible refugee flows into Georgian territory. Following military developments in 2020-2023 and the resumption of bilateral negotiations, the risk of the conflict spreading has been significantly reduced, although the regional situation continues to be closely monitored.

Georgia's access to the Black Sea is one of the country's most important geopolitical advantages, as it reduces the isolation caused by its

location in a mountainous and strategically complex region and provides a direct connection to European markets. Through its seaports and associated transport infrastructure, Georgia maintains direct commercial and logistical links with Europe, without being exclusively dependent on regional land routes, which are often affected by geopolitical tensions.

Table 3. Georgia’s relations with its neighbours

Neighbour	Type of Relationship	Risk Level	Strategic Importance
Russia	Conflictual	Very high	Shapes the national security agenda
Turkey	Strategic cooperation	Low	Access to NATO & trade corridors
Armenia	Prudent cooperation	Moderate	Regional stability factor
Azerbaijan	Energy partnership	Low	Energy corridor to Europe

Domestically, ethno-territorial conflicts were one of the main obstacles to the consolidation of the Georgian state after the collapse of the Soviet Union, affecting territorial control, political stability and the institutional capacity of the state. In the early stages of independence, the weakening of central authority, the fragmentation of political elites and identity-based rivalries fostered the emergence of separatist movements in several peripheral regions.

Abkhazia became one of the most important conflict zones in the early 1990s, with tensions between Georgian authorities and local political elites escalating into armed clashes in 1992-1993. The conflict ended with Georgia losing effective control over the region and a significant part of the Georgian population being dis-

placed, profoundly altering the local demographic structure. In the following years, Abkhazia functioned as a de facto separate entity, supported politically, economically and militarily by the Russian Federation. After the 2008 Russian-Georgian conflict, Russia officially recognised the region’s independence, thus consolidating its de facto separation from the Georgian state.

South Ossetia followed a similar path, with ethno-political tensions turning into armed clashes as early as 1991-1992. After a period of calm (“frozen conflict”), the region again became the scene of military clashes in 2008, in the context of escalating Russian-Georgian relations. The Russian Federation’s military intervention led to the consolidation of Russia’s military presence in the re-

gion and the maintenance of de facto separation from the Georgian authorities.

Adjara was a distinct case, as it did not evolve into formal secession, but was characterised in the 1990s and early 2000s by a high degree of de facto autonomy under the leadership of local leader Aslan Abashidze. He consolidated a personalised regional political system, supported by his own security structures and control over local economic resources,

limiting the influence of the central authorities in Tbilisi. The 2004 political crisis in which unfolded against the backdrop of internal transformations generated by the *Rose Revolution* and the consolidation of Georgian state authority, led to Abashidze's removal from power and the region's full reintegration into the state administrative system without major armed confrontation.

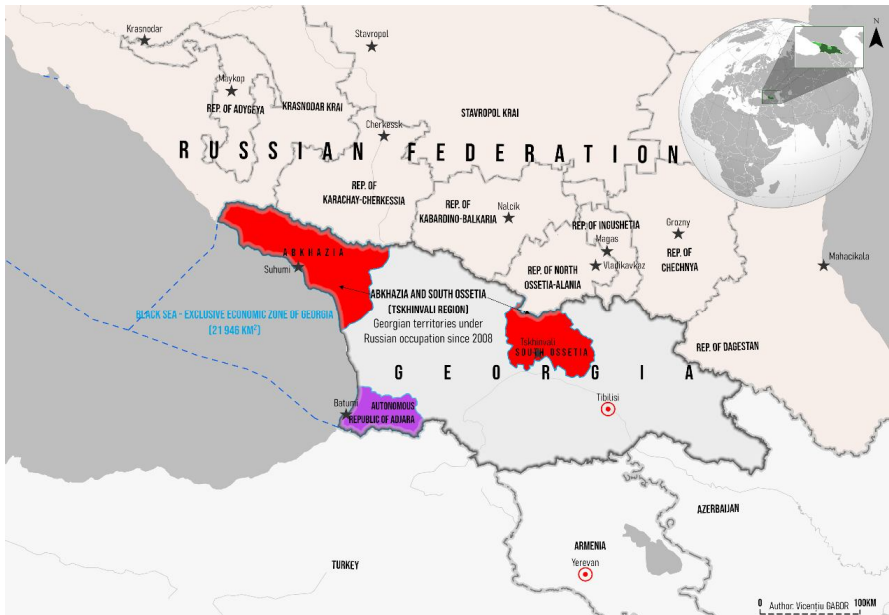


Figure 2. Georgia's neighbours, borders and separatist regions

In the territories under the effective control of the Georgian state, the ethnic structure is relatively stable, but includes several regional minorities concentrated in specific areas,

with political and socio-economic relevance. Georgians represent the majority of the population, approximately 85-87%, dominating the political, administrative and institutional

structure of the state, while ethnic minorities are concentrated mainly in certain border regions.

The largest minority is the Azerbaijani minority, concentrated mainly in the Kvemo Kartli region in the south-east of the country, near the border with Azerbaijan. The community is predominantly rural, and the main difficulties have been associated with linguistic integration and political participation, but overall the region is stable and shows no separatist or hal tendencies. The Armenian community is concentrated in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region in the south, on the border with Armenia. Although there were fears of possible autonomist claims in the 1990s, these did not materialise. The current situation is considered stable, even if differences in economic development and challenges related to linguistic and infrastructural integration persist.

Other ethnic groups, such as Russians, Greeks, Kists (Georgian Chechens) and other smaller communities, are scattered across the territory and have not caused any major geo-

political problems in the post-Soviet period. In this context, Georgia's main ethno-territorial tensions are not associated with minorities under state control, but with the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which are not under the effective administration of the Georgian authorities³⁹.

In the regions controlled by Tbilisi, inter-ethnic relations are generally stable, and the existing challenges are mainly socio-economic and administrative in nature, not separatist. Essentially, Georgia remains a state defined by its geographical position in the Black Sea Extended Region. The mountains offer it protection, but also isolate it. The sea gives it access to the world, but does not completely remove it from the strategic competition of the great powers. And its location between Russia, Turkey and the Caspian region indicates that, regardless of its size, Georgia will continue to play an important role in the geopolitics of the Caucasus.



Figure 3. Ethnic configuration of the Caucasus region.
(Source: U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, 2004)

Its position at the intersection of the Euro-Atlantic space, the Caspian region and the Near East gives Georgia a strategic hub role, but at the same time exposes it to competition between powers. The Greater and Lesser Caucasus mountain ranges offer natural protection, but limit strategic depth and concentrate mo-

bility in a few critical corridors, making transport infrastructure a target with direct security relevance.

The proximity to the Russian Federation and the existence of the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia maintain a state of latent geopolitical tension. The northern border remains militarised and

politicised, and the lack of a definitive solution to the frozen conflicts reduces the state's ability to exercise full control over its territory. This reality places Georgia in a situation of permanent structural vulnerability, even in the absence of direct armed confrontation. In contrast, the southern and western borders – particularly the relationship with Turkey and access to the Black Sea – function as strategic balancing factors. Energy and transport corridors (BTC, BTE, Baku–Tbilisi–Kars) strengthen Georgia's geopolitical relevance and offer it alternatives for external connectivity, reducing the risk of isolation.

A recent European Commission report (2024) shows that Georgia is going through a period of internal political and strategic insecurity, characterised by deep political polarisation, democratic regression and a deterioration in its relationship with the European Union. These developments generate an indirect geopolitical risk by weakening the state's Euro-Atlantic anchoring. The adoption of legislation on “transparency of foreign influence”, regression in the rule of law and the limitation of civic space are assessed as backsliding and have effectively blocked the path to EU accession⁴⁰.

From a national security perspective, the European Commission emphasises that the low level of alignment with the Common Foreign and Security Policy (49%), partial adherence to European sanctions against the Russian Federation, which invaded Ukraine (2022), and the intensifi-

cation of air connections with Russia amplify Georgia's geopolitical vulnerability. Domestically, deficiencies in the electoral process, intimidation of political and civic actors, and weak democratic oversight of the security services, as noted by the OSCE, contribute to a profile of institutional insecurity, with a direct impact on the state's ability to manage external and hybrid risks⁴¹.

Cooperation between NATO and Georgia takes place at both the political and military levels. Georgia has consistently participated in NATO-led operations, including the Kosovo Force (1999-2008). Georgia has distinguished itself as one of the most important non-NATO states to the International Security Assistance Force and the Resolute Support Mission. At the same time, Georgia supports NATO maritime operations in the Mediterranean (Active Endeavour and, since 2016, Sea Guardian), strengthening cooperation in the field of maritime security⁴².

Beyond the military dimension, the partnership with NATO includes Trust Fund projects for the destruction of ammunition and the reduction of security risks, as well as the development of crisis management capabilities through cooperation with the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre. Georgia's ongoing involvement in NATO's Science for Peace and Security Programme extends cooperation to areas such as cyber security, CBRN, energy and the Women, Peace and Security agenda. Overall, these contribu-

tions support Georgia's status as an active security provider and confirm the substantial nature of its rapprochement with NATO in a regional

context marked by structural insecurity⁴³. Table 4 summarises the most important milestones in the partnership between NATO and Georgia

Table 4. Milestones in NATO-Georgia cooperation

Dimension	Main Milestones	Significance for Georgia's Positioning
Maritime operations	Operation Active Endeavour; Operation Sea Guardian (since 2016)	Integration into NATO's maritime security architecture
Stabilisation operations	Kosovo Force (KFOR), 1999–2008	Early interoperability with NATO multinational forces
Combat and training missions	International Security Assistance Force (ISAF); Resolute Support Mission	Strongest indicator of strategic commitment and operational credibility
Physical security	Trust Fund projects – ammunition disposal, mine and UXO clearance (Skra depot)	Reduction of internal security risks and post-Soviet military modernisation
Crisis management	Cooperation with the Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC)	Enhanced national resilience and crisis-response interoperability
Science and security	NATO Science for Peace and Security Programme (since 1994)	Expansion of cooperation into cyber defence, CBRN protection, energy security and Women, Peace and Security agenda

Analyses published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the International Crisis Group converge on the idea that Georgia plays a pivotal role in the South Caucasus, being both a border state of the Euro-Atlantic area and a buffer zone between Russia and the Caspian region. From the perspective of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Tbilisi is the main pro-Western partner in the region,

with a strategic function in the energy and transport corridor linking the Caspian Sea to the Black Sea and the European market, reducing the EU's dependence on routes controlled by Moscow⁴⁴.

However, reports provided by the International Crisis Group highlight the structural vulnerability of the Georgian state, marked by frozen conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which limit its regional pro-

jection capacity and strengthen Russia's influence⁴⁵. The analyses of these think tanks show that Georgia is a regional actor with systemic relevance but limited strategic autonomy. In conclusion, internally, the main risks to Georgian security do not come from minorities under the control of the authorities in Tbilisi, where inter-ethnic relations are relatively stable, but from territories outside the effective control of the state. Georgian insecurity should be understood as a product of geographical constraints and regional dynamics, not just as an effect of episodic political crises.

Conclusions

Our study confirms the hypothesis that started the investigation: geography is not simply a backdrop to international relations, but a structural explanatory variable in the configuration of geopolitical risks and regional insecurity. In the South Caucasus, the positioning of countries at the intersection of Europe and Asia, between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, generates a framework of persistent geopolitical competition, in which small states operate with a limited margin of strategic autonomy.

From a theoretical point of view, the article integrates contributions from political geography, classical and critical geopolitics, and the theory of regional security complexes, demonstrating that structural insecurity results from the interaction between geographical constraints, pow-

er asymmetries, and securitisation processes. Geography acts through mediated mechanisms – border militarisation, control of energy corridors, territorial fragmentation – rather than through mechanical determinism. Thus, space becomes both a material reality and a strategic construct.

At the regional level, the South Caucasus functions as a regional complex of insecurity, characterised by "frozen conflicts", negative interdependencies and the absence of a stable collective security architecture. Competition between the Russian Federation, Turkey, the European Union and other extra-regional actors amplifies the structural vulnerabilities of the states in the area. Geopolitical risks are not circumstantial but recurrent, and geographical proximity intensifies the security dilemma.

Applied to the case of Georgia, the analysis highlights a pattern of geographically determined structural insecurity. Its position between Russia and the Euro-Atlantic space, territorial fragmentation and lack of strategic depth limit the country's ability to manage security risks autonomously. The existence of the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the militarisation of the northern border and dependence on a few strategic transit corridors make geography a permanent factor of vulnerability.

Its status as an energy transit and transport country gives Georgia a geopolitical relevance that is disproportionate to its size. Energy corri-

dors and access to the Black Sea represent both strategic opportunities and vulnerabilities. Thus, its geographical position creates a strategic paradox: it increases the country's external importance but reduces its decision-making autonomy. Internally, the conclusions show that Georgian insecurity is not fuelled primarily

by active inter-ethnic dynamics in the territories controlled by Tbilisi, but by the loss of control over externally supported separatist regions. Therefore, the main vulnerability is geopolitical-territorial in nature, not internal ethno-social.

Notes

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A Bridge Across the Black Sea – Why Georgia and Romania Matter Strategically

Minister for Foreign Affairs of Georgia, Maka Botchorishvili



Sabin Drăgulin: The Romanian state has been one of Georgia's most constant friends for the past 33 years. The Black Sea brings us closer but at the same time separates us. What, in your opinion, should be done to intensify bilateral ties in as many areas as possible?

Maka Botchorishvili: Georgia and Romania have developed a solid partnership over time, grounded in shared European values and a common commitment to regional stability. In the context of today's rapidly shifting geopolitical landscape, the relationship between Georgia and Romania

carries growing strategic importance for both countries, as they navigate overlapping security, economic, and connectivity challenges and opportunities in the wider Black Sea region. The Black Sea should be seen not as a dividing line, but as a strategic bridge connecting the two countries. Romania serves as the western gateway of the Middle Corridor, while Georgia is a key transit hub linking the Black Sea with the Caspian region. Together, they form complementary pillars of an emerging East-West connectivity network. Strengthening maritime, rail, and port links between Constanța and Georgia's ports would boost trade, secure supply chains, and unlock new economic opportunities – yet much of this potential remains untapped. Transport links, energy, digital infrastructure, and security must all work together to form a truly strategic partnership. The Black Sea Submarine Cable Project, connecting energy systems and creating a digital corridor, would integrate Georgia more closely

into the European market, while Romania's NATO experience can help strengthen regional security. Aligning connectivity, economic, and security initiatives ensures that growth and stability advance together, reinforcing the Black Sea as a zone of prosperity and resilience for both countries – and for entire Europe.

Sabin Drăgulin: We live in a global world, in which information reaches all citizens of the world in real time. In certain situations, it can be presented, interpreted, depending on several types of interests. We know that the Georgian people have been greatly tested by the vicissitudes of history and by the misfortune of having very powerful neighbors. However, Georgians have a strong cultural and civilizational vocation of the Western type. What do you consider to be the ways, methods, etc., for this country's objective to be achieved?

Maka Botchorishvili: We live in an age of instant information, where narratives circulate globally and are often weaponized for political purposes. Georgia faces sustained disinformation campaigns aimed at undermining our sovereignty, national interests, and European aspirations. These efforts seek to distort facts, sow division, and weaken public trust, yet our commitment to Western values remains steadfast. This resilience is rooted in centuries of history. From ancient Iberia and Colchis – with the Golden Fleece legend and

ties to the Roman and Byzantine worlds – through the early adoption of Christianity and the cultural heights of the medieval Georgian renaissance, to one of the most progressive constitutions of the early twentieth century, Georgia's place within European civilization runs deep. These experiences continue to shape the values, identity, and outlook of the modern Georgian state. Today, this historical conviction is reflected in clear political choices. European Union membership is Georgia's central foreign policy objective, enshrined in the constitution and supported by an overwhelming majority of the population. Georgia seeks not only to join the European project, but also to contribute to its security and stability from the Union's eastern frontier. Our government remains committed to peace, sovereignty, and the peaceful restoration of territorial integrity, even as parts of the country remain under Russian occupation. At the same time, partnership must rest on mutual respect – European integration cannot be used as a tool for political pressure or interference in Georgia's internal affairs.

Sabin Drăgulin: Geography and history have positioned Georgian state in a place where the Caucasus and the Black Sea meet. Obviously, the entire region is in the attention of the world's major political actors. Can you tell us how Georgia considers it should position itself on the great chessboard of geopolitics?

tics between the European Union, the Russian Federation, Turkey, China and the United States of America?

Maka Botchorishvili: Geography has never given Georgia the luxury of indifference. We are located between the Black Sea and the Caucasus, at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, and throughout history we have had to manage the ambitions of larger powers. That reality has not changed. What has changed is our ability to respond strategically. For Georgia, the question is not whether to choose geography, but how to use it wisely. Our long-term political and civilizational choice is clear: anchoring Georgia firmly within Europe. At the same time, we approach the broader geopolitical environment with realism, not ideology. We pursue pragmatic, economy – and connectivity-driven engagement with regional and global partners. Georgia's role as a connectivity hub is central to this approach. As a transit country for eight landlocked states, we are investing in transport, energy, and digital infrastructure to strengthen the Middle Corridor linking Asia and Europe. Our goal is to serve as a platform for cooperation rather than confrontation, supporting diversified and secure trade routes. Relations with Russia remain constrained by hard realities. Twenty percent of Georgia's territory is under Russian occupation, and the security threat is real. Under these conditions, our priority is to preserve peace, avoid esca-

lation, and protect our long-term national interests – without compromising sovereignty or our strategic direction. Georgia does not seek to be a pawn or an arena for geopolitical rivalry. We seek to be a reliable partner – open to cooperation and committed to stability in one of the world's most sensitive regions.

Sabin Drăgulin: Mutual knowledge is fundamental to understanding who we are about each other. When I refer to knowledge, this is both between our peoples and countries and between Georgia and other cultural and political spaces. In history, there are moments when national political elites had to position themselves to decide which path(s) should be followed for their own people to enjoy prosperity and peace. Romania faced such situations in 1859, when the national elites decided to create the modern nation-state, in 1877, when Romania participated in the war of independence, in 1916, when it was decided to enter the war in the First World War, or in the contemporary period when, following a major social and political crisis, the Snagov Declaration" (1995) was adopted, which demonstrated the will of all relevant political forces to follow the necessary steps to prepare for accession to the European Union. Each time there was a negotiation process between the different political forces and power groups, which had different visions. But what always took

precedence was the desire to reconnect to the European cultural and civilizational space, even if the modalities proposed by each side were different. During this period, a process is observed in which new balances of power are discussed in different areas of the world. What are, in your opinion, the political actions that the different political options in your country should undertake in order for the desire of the Georgian people to be connected to the space of Western culture and civilization to be realized?

Maka Botchorishvili: Since restoring independence, Georgia has pursued its European path with consistency and purpose. As an Associated Partner since 2014, we have implemented far-reaching reforms to strengthen democracy, the rule of law, and economic resilience, while safeguarding fundamental rights and freedoms. These efforts have produced tangible results. Georgia now ranks first in Eastern Europe and Central Asia in the Rule of Law Index and leads the region in key areas such as the absence of corruption and open government. This strong institutional foundation is also reflected in our economic performance: Georgia ranks 35th globally and 20th in Europe in the Index of Economic Freedom, ahead of several EU member and candidate states. As Prime Minister Irakli Kobakhidze has stated on multiple occasions, we firmly believe that “by 2030, Georgia will be the most prepared among the candi-

date countries to become a full-fledged member of the European Union.” Against this background, the current difficulties in relations with the European Union are deeply regrettable. The lack of meaningful dialogue between Brussels and Tbilisi risks eroding trust and obscuring the progress achieved together over many years. From Georgia’s perspective, this situation is neither fair nor productive. We have repeatedly signaled our readiness for open and constructive engagement with EU institutions and member states on all outstanding issues. There remains a strong belief in Tbilisi that strategic thinking will ultimately prevail in European capitals. At a time when Europe faces growing pressure on its eastern flank, a reform-driven and reliable Georgia should be seen not as a problem to be managed, but as a partner to be embraced.

Sabin Drăgulin: **Madam Minister, you have a rich and solid diplomatic experience in international relations. Over the years, you have worked both at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia and as the country's representative in Belgium, Austria and in international organizations. For more than a year, you have held the portfolio of Minister for Foreign Affairs. What do you consider to be the main objectives of Georgia in terms of cultural diplomacy?**

Maka Botchorishvili: Georgia’s rich cultural and civilizational heritage is

one of its greatest strategic assets – and one that naturally aligns the country with Europe. Despite centuries of external pressures and the presence of powerful neighbors, Georgian identity has remained anchored in values deeply European in character: respect for human dignity, tolerance, creativity, and openness to dialogue. Georgia's contribution to Europe is not only political or strategic but also profoundly cultural. This culture reflects a longstanding connection to the European space, from early Christianity and medieval literature to enduring traditions of art, music, and coexistence. It demonstrates that Georgia's European orientation is not a recent political

choice, but a historical reality. Georgian culture enriches Europe by adding diversity and depth, particularly at a time when Europe is redefining itself in a rapidly changing world. By investing in education, cultural institutions, and international cultural cooperation, Georgia ensures that its Western vocation is not only preserved but actively shared. In this sense, Georgia's culture is not merely a legacy of the past – it is a living bridge between Europe and the wider region, and a meaningful asset for Europe's future.

Interview conducted by
Sabin DRĂGULIN

Un pod peste Marea Neagră – De ce Georgia și România sunt importante din punct de vedere strategic

Interviu cu ministrul Afacerilor Externe al Georgiei, Maka Botchorishvili



Sabin Drăgulin: Statul român a fost unul dintre cei mai fideli prieteni ai Georgiei în ultimii 33 de ani. Marea Neagră ne apropie, dar în același timp ne desparte. Ce ar trebui făcut, în opinia dumneavoastră, pentru a intensifica legăturile bilaterale în cât mai multe domenii?

Maka Botchorishvili: Georgia și România au dezvoltat de-a lungul timpului un parteneriat solid, ancorat în valori europene comune și pe un angajament comun față de stabilitatea regională. În contextul peisajului geopolitic actual, aflat în rapidă schimbare, relația dintre Georgia și România are o importanță strategică tot mai mare pentru ambele țări, pe măsură ce acestea navighează printre provocări și oportunități care se su-

prapun în materie de securitate, economie și conectivitate în regiunea extinsă a Mării Negre. Marea Neagră ar trebui văzută nu ca o linie de demarcație, ci ca un pod strategic care leagă cele două țări. România servește drept poartă de acces vestică a Coridorului Mijlociu, în timp ce Georgia este un nod cheie de tranzit care leagă Marea Neagră de regiunea Caspică. Împreună, acestea formează piloni complementari ai unei rețele emergente de conectivitate Est-Vest. Consolidarea legăturilor maritime, feroviare și portuare dintre porturile Constanței și cele ale Georgiei ar stimula comerțul, ar securiza lanțurile de aprovizionare și ar debloca noi oportunități economice – însă o mare parte din acest potențial rămâne neexploatat. Legăturile de transport, energia, infrastructura digitală și securitatea trebuie să funcționeze împreună pentru a forma un parteneriat cu adevărat strategic. Proiectul cablului submarin al Mării Negre, care conectează sistemele energetice și creează un coridor digital, ar integra Georgia mai strâns în piața europeană, în timp ce experiența României în NATO poate contribui la consolidarea securității regionale. Alinierea

inițiativelor de conectivitate, economie și securitate asigură că creșterea economică și stabilitatea avansează împreună, consolidând Marea Neagră ca o zonă de prosperitate și reziliență pentru ambele țări – și pentru întreaga Europă.

Sabin Drăgulin: Trăim într-o lume globală, în care informațiile ajung la toți cetățenii lumii în timp real. În anumite situații, acestea pot fi prezentate, interpretate, în funcție de mai multe tipuri de interese. Știm că poporul georgian a fost mult încercat de vicisitudinile istoriei și de nenorocul de a avea vecini foarte puternici. Cu toate acestea, georgienii au o puternică vocație culturală și civilizațională de tip occidental. Care considerați că sunt căile, metodele etc., pentru ca obiectivul acestei țări să fie atins?

Maka Botchorishvili: Trăim într-o eră a informației instantanee, în care narațiunile circulă la nivel global și sunt adesea folosite ca armă în scopuri politice. Georgia se confruntă cu campanii susținute de dezinformare care vizează subminarea suveranității noastre, a intereselor naționale și a aspirațiilor europene. Aceste eforturi urmăresc să distorsioneze faptele, să semene diviziune și să slăbească încrederea publică, însă angajamentul nostru față de valorile occidentale rămâne neclintit. Această rezistență este înrădăcinată în secole de istorie. De la antică Iberia și Colchida – cu legenda Lânii de Aur și legăturile cu lumea romană și bizantină – trecând

prin adoptarea timpurie a creștinismului și culmile culturale ale Renașterii medievale georgiene, până la una dintre cele mai progresiste constituții de la începutul secolului al XX-lea, locul Georgiei în cadrul civilizației europene este profund. Aceste experiențe continuă să modeleze valorile, identitatea și perspectiva statului georgian modern. Astăzi, această convingere istorică se reflectă în alegeri politice clare. Apartenența la Uniunea Europeană este obiectivul central de politică externă al Georgiei, consacrat în constituție și susținut de o majoritate covârșitoare a populației. Georgia își propune nu doar să se alăture proiectului european, ci și să contribuie la securitatea și stabilitatea sa de la frontiera estică a Uniunii. Guvernul nostru își menține angajamentul față de pace, suveranitate și restabilirea pașnică a integrității teritoriale, chiar dacă anumite părți ale țării rămân sub ocupație rusă. În același timp, parteneriatul trebuie să se bazeze pe respect reciproc – integrarea europeană nu poate fi folosită ca instrument de presiune politică sau de interferență în afacerile interne ale Georgiei.

Sabin Drăgulin: Geografia și istoria au poziționat statul georgian într-un loc unde se întâlnesc Caucazul și Marea Neagră. Evident, întreaga regiune se află în atenția principalilor actori politici ai lumii. Ne puteți spune cum consideră Georgia că ar trebui să se poziționeze pe marea tablă de șah a geopoliticii dintre Uniunea Europeană, Federația

Rusă, Turcia, China și Statele Unite ale Americii?

Maka Botchorishvili: Geografia nu i-a oferit niciodată Georgiei luxul indiferenței. Suntem situați între Marea Neagră și Caucaz, la intersecția dintre Europa și Asia, și de-a lungul istoriei a trebuit să gestionăm ambițiile unor puteri mai mari. Această realitate nu s-a schimbat. Ceea ce s-a schimbat este capacitatea noastră de a răspunde strategic. Pentru Georgia, întrebarea nu este dacă să aleagă geografia, ci cum să o folosească cu înțelepciune. Alegerea noastră politică și civilizațională pe termen lung este clară: ancorarea fermă a Georgiei în Europa. În același timp, abordăm mediul geopolitic mai larg cu realism, nu cu ideologie. Urmărim un angajament pragmatic, bazat pe economie și conectivitate, cu partenerii regionali și globali. Rolul Georgiei ca centru de conectivitate este esențial pentru această abordare. În calitate de țară de tranzit pentru opt state fără ieșire la mare, investim în infrastructura de transport, energie și digitală pentru a consolida Coridorul Mijlociu care leagă Asia de Europa. Scopul nostru este de a servi drept platformă pentru cooperare, mai degrabă decât pentru confruntare, sprijinind rute comerciale diversificate și sigure. Relațiile cu Rusia rămân constrânse de realități dure. Douăzeci la sută din teritoriul Georgiei se află sub ocupație rusă, iar amenințarea la adresa securității este reală. În aceste condiții, prioritatea noastră este să menținem pacea, să

evităm escaladarea și să ne protejăm interesele naționale pe termen lung - fără a compromite suveranitatea sau direcția noastră strategică. Georgia nu își propune să fie un pion sau o arenă pentru rivalitatea geopolitică. Ne propunem să fim un partener de încredere - deschiși cooperării și dedicați stabilității într-una dintre cele mai sensibile regiuni ale lumii.

Sabin Drăgulin: Cunoașterea reciprocă este fundamentală pentru a înțelege cine suntem și cât ne cunoaștem între noi. Când mă refer la cunoaștere, aceasta este atât între popoarele și țările noastre, cât și între Georgia și alte spații culturale și politice. În istorie, există momente în care elitele politice naționale au trebuit să se poziționeze pentru a decide ce cale (căi) trebuie urmate pentru ca propriul popor să se bucure de prosperitate și pace. România s-a confruntat cu astfel de situații în 1859, când elitele naționale au decis să creeze statul-națiune modern, în 1877, când România a participat la războiul de independență, în 1916, când s-a decis intrarea în război în Primul Război Mondial sau în perioada contemporană când, în urma unei crize sociale și politice majore, a fost adoptată „Declarația de la Snagov” (1995), care a demonstrat voința tuturor forțelor politice relevante de a urma pașii necesari pentru pregătirea aderării la Uniunea Europeană. De fiecare dată a existat un proces de negociere între diferitele forțe politice și grupuri de putere, care aveau

viziuni diferite. Dar ceea ce a avut întotdeauna prioritate a fost dorința de reconectare la spațiul cultural și civilizațional european, chiar dacă modalitățile propuse de fiecare parte au fost diferite. În această perioadă, se observă un proces în care se discută noi raporturi de putere în diferite zone ale lumii. Care sunt, în opinia dumneavoastră, acțiunile politice pe care diferitele opțiuni politice din țara dumneavoastră ar trebui să le întreprindă pentru ca dorința poporului georgian de a fi conectat la spațiul culturii și civilizației occidentale să se realizeze?

Maka Botchorishvili: De la redobândirea independenței, Georgia și-a urmat calea europeană cu consecvență și hotărâre. În calitate de Partener Asociat din 2014, am implementat reforme ample pentru a consolida democrația, statul de drept și reziliența economică, protejând în același timp drepturile și libertățile fundamentale. Aceste eforturi au produs rezultate tangibile. Georgia ocupă acum primul loc în Europa de Est și Asia Centrală în Indicele Statului de Drept și este lider în regiune în domeniul cheie, cum ar fi absența corupției și un guvern deschis. Această bază instituțională solidă se reflectă și în performanța noastră economică: Georgia ocupă locul 35 la nivel global și locul 20 în Europa în Indicele Libertății Economice, devansând mai multe state membre și candidate ale UE. Așa cum a declarat în repetate rânduri prim-ministrul Irakli

Kobakhidze, credem cu tărie că „până în 2030, Georgia va fi cea mai pregătită dintre țările candidate să devină membru cu drepturi depline al Uniunii Europene”. În acest context, dificultățile actuale din relațiile cu Uniunea Europeană sunt profund regretabile. Lipsa unui dialog semnificativ între Bruxelles și Tbilisi riscă să erodeze încrederea și să umbrească progresele realizate împreună de-a lungul multor ani. Din perspectiva Georgiei, această situație nu este nici justă, nici productivă. Ne-am semnalat în repetate rânduri disponibilitatea pentru un dialog deschis și constructiv cu instituțiile UE și statele membre cu privire la toate problemele nerezolvate. La Tbilisi rămâne o convingere fermă că gândirea strategică va prevala în cele din urmă în capitalele europene. Într-un moment în care Europa se confruntă cu o presiune tot mai mare pe flancul său estic, o Georgia orientată spre reforme și fiabilă ar trebui văzută nu ca o problemă de gestionat, ci ca un partener de îmbrățișat.

Sabin Drăgulin: Doamnă ministru, aveți o experiență diplomatică bogată și solidă în relațiile internaționale. De-a lungul anilor, ați lucrat atât la Ministerul Afacerilor Externe al Georgiei, cât și ca reprezentant al țării în Belgia, Austria și în cadrul organizațiilor internaționale. Timp de aproape un an, dețineți portofoliul de ministru al Afacerilor Externe. Care considerați că sunt principalele obiective ale Georgiei în materie de diplomație culturală?

Maka Botchorishvili: Bogata moștenire culturală și civilizațională a Georgiei este unul dintre cele mai mari atuuri strategice ale sale – și unul care aliniază în mod natural țara cu Europa. În ciuda secolelor de presiuni externe și a prezenței unor vecini puternici, identitatea georgiană a rămas ancorată în valori cu un caracter profund european: respectul pentru demnitatea umană, toleranța, creativitatea și deschiderea către dialog. Contribuția Georgiei la Europa nu este doar politică sau strategică, ci și profund culturală. Această cultură reflectă o legătură îndelungată cu spațiul european, de la creștinismul timpuriu și literatura medievală până la tradiții durabile de artă, muzică și coexistență. Aceasta demonstrează că orientarea europeană a Georgiei nu

este o alegere politică recentă, ci o realitate istorică. Cultura georgiană îmbogățește Europa prin adăugarea de diversitate și profunzime, în special într-un moment în care Europa se redefinește într-o lume în rapidă schimbare. Investind în educație, instituții culturale și cooperare culturală internațională, Georgia se asigură că vocația sa occidentală nu este doar păstrată, ci și împărtășită activ. În acest sens, cultura Georgiei nu este doar o moștenire a trecutului – este o punte vie între Europa și regiunea mai largă și un atu semnificativ pentru viitorul Europei.

Interviu realizat de

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Strategic partnership based on 300 years of historical relationship

H. E. Tamar Beruchashvili, Ambassador of Georgia to Romania



Ioana Cristea Drăgulin: Madam Ambassador, you have a rich diplomatic experience in international relations as well. In November 2025, it will be three years since you were appointed ambassador to Romania. What impressions did Romanians and Romania make on you? What were the positive surprises and difficulties you encountered during this period in our country?

Tamar Beruchashvili: Twenty-five years in public service have given me the unique opportunity to be part of Georgia's historic transformation and to build new relationships as an independent nation. I am proud to have served in various roles, including Foreign Minister, first State Minister

of European Integration, Minister of Trade and Foreign-Economic Relations, and as Georgia's first female Ambassador to the UK and Permanent Representative to the International Maritime Organization. I am honored to serve as the first Georgian woman Ambassador to Romania, a role I have held since November 1, 2022. I am delighted by the new opportunities created by our historic Declaration on Strategic Partnership, which will further strengthen the bonds of friendship between our nations.

I would like to mention that my tenure has coincided with Russia's unprovoked military aggression against Ukraine, an event that has profoundly altered the security landscape of the wider Black Sea region. Consequently, diplomacy itself must adapt to these new realities, and for us, as diplomats, these are indeed demanding times.

Since the late 1990s, I have had the privilege of visiting Romania in various capacities, including as the first State Minister of European Integration and Foreign Minister, approximately every 5-7 years. I witnessed firsthand Romania's remarkable de-

velopment and its transformation into a valued member of the EU and NATO. These changes are a testament to the hard work of the Romanian people and the strong support of EU and NATO partners. Over the years, I have developed a deep affection for Romania and its people, with whom I feel a genuine bond. From my first day here, I felt truly at home, meeting and befriending many wonderful individuals along the way.

Romania is a country that 'lives in the future, but is always thinking about the past' – that's a quote I've heard attributed to Mircea Eliade and it kind of sums up the country's vibe for me. Romania is a country where the past and present coexist, where tradition and modernity blend in a fascinating mix. The natural beauty here is breathtaking: the Carpathian Mountains, the Black Sea coast and the Danube Delta are all must-see destinations. Romania's architecture is also a stunning blend of old and new. The medieval charm of Sibiu's squares, the intricate details of Bucharest's Belle Époque buildings, New Romanian style palaces and the majestic Peleş Castle are amazing! And let's not forget my favorite – the splendid Ateneul Român in Bucharest, a masterpiece of neoclassical architecture and a hub for the country's rich musical heritage. The Orthodox churches and monasteries, like those in Moldavia's Bucovina region, are breathtaking with their vibrant frescoes and tranquil atmosphere. Romania's Orthodox traditions share similarities with Georgia's –

both countries have a deep spiritual heritage, beautiful chanting and sophisticated church architecture. And the musical culture is amazing: from the hauntingly beautiful doina folk songs to haunting melodies of Orthodox music that touch the soul as well as the powerful orchestras like the George Enescu Philharmonic, Romania's musical heritage is incredible. It was an unforgettable moment to attend performance in recently renovated historic Casino in Constanta during the Enescu festival in September.

On a more practical note, navigating Romania's infrastructure can be a challenge. The roads and railways often feel like they are still catching up with the rest of Europe. It's a bit of a contrast to the country's natural beauty and warm hospitality.

Ioana Cristea Drăgulin: On June 25, 1992, diplomatic relations between the two countries were established. This year marks 33 years of friendship. What can you tell us about the relations between our countries?

Tamar Beruchashvili: Although official diplomatic relations between Georgia and Romania were established 33 years ago, the roots of our friendship reach far deeper into history, spanning more than three centuries. The historic relationship between the two nations rests on three remarkable historical figures: Saint Anthim the Iberian, a Romanian cleric and public figure of Georgian origin and Metropolitan of Hungaro-

Wallachia (†1716); Saint Martyr Constantin Brâncoveanu, the Prince of Wallachia (†1714); and King Vakhtang VI Bagrationi (†1737), the ruler of Kartli (east of Georgia). As often happens in history, these distinguished personalities met tragic ends, yet they left behind an enduring legacy that continues to inspire pride and respect in both nations. Among their many contributions, establishment of a strong foundation for Georgian–Romanian relations, including the creation of the first Georgian typography is particularly remarkable.

The 300-year historical relationship between Georgia and Romania is based on the Christian-Orthodox traditions. A distinguished symbol of this bond is the religious and public figure Anthim the Iberian (1650–1716), Saint Antim Ivirianul (ანთიმოზ ივერიელი, in Georgian), the iconic figure whose life and works represent the deep connection between faith, identity, language and cultural memory. As a common Saint of the Georgian and Romanian sister churches since 1992, Saint Antim stands as a solid spiritual, historic, and cultural bridge between our countries.

Later in XX century, when people of Georgia restored its statehood, Romania de jure recognized the independence of the First Democratic Republic of Georgia on February 18, 1921. In 2018, in the center of Bucharest, a memorial plaque was unveiled on the building of the Ramada Bucharest Majestic Hotel (formerly the Majestic Hotel), informing that in 1919, the

first diplomatic mission of the Democratic Republic of Georgia in Romania was located in this building, led by Sosipatre Asatiani. After the break up of the Soviet Union, Romania was the first country to recognize Georgia's independence on August 27, 1991. Since then, our relations have developed dynamically and now encompasses political dialogue, cooperation in the fields of energy, transport, innovation, trade, tourism and culture. Our countries are connected not only by the Black Sea, but also by a shared vision for peace, development and regional cooperation.

Today Romania is our Strategic partner, a staunch supporter of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and our European and Euro-Atlantic integration path, which bears even greater significance today. In this regard, Romania was the first EU member state to ratify the Association Agreement between Georgia and the European Union on July 3, 2014. On October 12, 2022, a new chapter has opened in the history of bilateral cooperation between our countries: the Presidents of Georgia and Romania signed a declaration on the establishment of Strategic cooperation between Georgia and Romania. Within the framework of strategic partnership, new opportunities are opening up for further activating our relations in political, defense and security, people-to-people interaction, transport (especially in the maritime sector) and energy sectors. An important step has already been taken in this direction: on December 17, 2022

a historic agreement was signed in Bucharest on the strategic partnership of Georgia, Azerbaijan, Romania, and Hungary in the development and transmission of green energy. Considering Georgia's renewable energy potential and geographical location, it has high potential to become a key country in terms of generating and transmitting green energy to the EU market. Taking into account the new geopolitical reality and challenging environment, the strategic partnership between our countries opens new geopolitical and geo-economic opportunities. Georgia and Romania, as neighbors on the Black Sea, have a special role to play to insure better connectivity, energy security and transportation essential to strengthen the stability and development of the region to promote more trade, more business and more tourism.

Now, the task of the Georgian embassy in Bucharest is to make every effort to turn these opportunities into concrete results.

In addition, cultural exchanges, academic programs, tourism, and joint business initiatives are creating lasting bonds of trust and understanding between our societies. In the 2025, tourism from Romania to Georgia increased by 8% that shows growing interest in cultural and business interaction. It is no secret that wine is Georgia's best Ambassador! Currently Georgian wine is exported in more than 60 countries worldwide promoting Georgian culture and tradition. It also attracts tourists to explore wine routes in Georgia. Some years ago, a

tourist visiting Georgia for the first time used to receive a bottle of wine from the border officer as a welcome gesture, together with a stamp in their passport!

Good news is that Romanians enthusiastically started discovering the Georgian wine. There is a high interest to taste Saperavi from its country of origin together with many other unique Georgian varieties. As a result, the Georgian wine export to Romania almost doubled during last year. On the same line, we plan to activate Wine-Diplomacy for better awareness about 8000-year old uninterrupted unique winemaking tradition of Georgia in Romania.

Ioana Cristea Drăgulin: What are the main characteristics of this beautiful country located in the heart of the Southern Caucasus?

Tamar Beruchashvili: I have honor and privilege to represent a country that has lots of to show and share – centuries old culture and history, unique alphabet and polyphony, 8000 years of wine tradition, art, cinema, hospitality, and much more...

Georgia, a Black Sea country nestled in the heart of the Caucasus, is a land of breathtaking beauty and rich cultural heritage. With a history dating back thousands of years, Georgia is home to some of the world's oldest traditions. As a Christian state since 326, Georgia has a deep spiritual heritage reflected in its stunning churches and monasteries.

The country's natural beauty, from the Black Sea shores to the snow-capped mountains of Svaneti and the sun-kissed valleys of Kakheti, are matched only by the diversity of its people and its unique blend of European and Asian influences has shaped a distinct history and culture. The country is also a major tourist destination, offering a rare combination of majestic mountains and a beautiful seaside, alongside its deep cultural and historical heritage.

Among all aspects of Georgian culture, perhaps the most cherished is winemaking. Archaeological evidence suggests that wine was first produced in Georgia around 8,000 years ago. This statement finds scientific backing in the discovery of 8000-year-old seeds of the cultivated grape variety, *Vitis vinifera sativa*, along with the massive clay wine-fermenting amphora, called "Qvevri" (ქვევრი) in the Neolithic settlement in the Eastern Georgia in 2015. The Qvevri - an egg-shaped clay vessel used for fermenting, aging, and storing wine - is a central element of this tradition. Further research by international team of experts has confirmed the early existence of winemaking in the region, which is how Georgia came to be known as the "cradle of wine." Many etymologists even consider the modern generic word "wine" to be derived from the Georgian equivalent - "gvino" (ღვინო). In 2013, the ancient Georgian method of winemaking in "qvevri" was inscribed on UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. This unique method distin-

guishes Georgian wine from all others and remains a symbol of the country's enduring connection to its land and history.

Together with wine, food and cuisine represent increasingly popular soft power tools that can communicate a country's culture as well as enhancing its trade and tourism. Georgia's rich and diverse culinary tradition and table culture was formed over centuries and has been passed down from one generation to another. While making a journey to Georgia in 1672, famous French traveller Jean Chardin described the way that Georgians used to feast as an expression of heartfelt generosity and hospitality. For 2026, Forbes highlights Georgia's capital, Tbilisi, as a top trending destination, praising its emerging cultural scene, historic sites, unique culinary experience and affordability.

The Georgian alphabet is another source of national pride. It is one of only 14 unique alphabets in existence today. Over centuries, the Georgian script underwent three major transformations, resulting in three distinct writing styles. In 2016, UNESCO inscribed the living culture of Georgia's three writing systems on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Georgia's artistic traditions are equally captivating and diverse. Georgian polyphonic singing and folk dancing are unforgettable expressions of the nation's spirit and creativity.

Yet Georgia is also a country that is embracing modernity, with a thriving

arts scene, innovative architecture and a growing economy. From the bustling streets of Tbilisi to the modern infrastructure of its cities, Georgia is a nation that is looking to the future while honoring its past.

But what truly sets Georgia apart is its resilience. Despite facing many challenges throughout its history, the country has always shown remarkable determination and strength. From the ancient struggles against invaders to the modern day commitment to the peaceful, prosperous and European future for united Georgia, Georgians have always found a way to thrive.

Ioana Cristea Drăgulin: **Madam Ambassador, from the rich experience accumulated in a life in which international relations were an integral part, in which areas do you consider that Romania and Georgia have a strong and lasting partnership and where is there a possibility for them to be improved in the future?**

Tamar Beruchashvili: By signing the Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership in 2022, our countries declared readiness for deepening and widening cooperation in various fields. We hope that related bilateral Action Plan will be finalized soon to be endorsed during long-awaited meeting of our foreign ministers.

It is important, that Georgia and Romania are united not only by the waters of the Black Sea, but by the same vision about the Black Sea region that is “secure, prosperous, in-

terconnected, and free from threats to territorial integrity and from economic coercion”. Furthermore, we commend Romania's role and contributions to the Black Sea regional security and stability. We believe that Strategic partnership between our countries has high potential to reinforce this role by opening new geo-political and geo-economic opportunities. In this regard, we welcome launching the EU's recent “Black-sea Strategy” and are look forward to collaborative opportunities.

In the current environment of global turbulence and shifting political dynamics, the importance of connectivity across the Black Sea is clearer than ever. Georgia, as the EU's gateway to Asia offers the shortest alternative route connecting Europe and Asia.

In recent years, strategic projects of common interest have further reinforced our partnership: The final text of the Black Sea-Caspian Sea International Transport Route has been agreed (February, 2025) and will be signed in near future. Once operational, this route will connect Poti, Batumi (and future Anaklia) with Constanța, through Baku and Turkmenbashi, significantly enhancing trade and regional connectivity between Europe and Asia. The Green Energy Corridor/Black Sea Submarine Cable Project continues to advance, linking Georgia and Romania's electricity systems and contributing to European energy security. The institutional cooperation between our leading agencies of technology and innovation will facilitate joint re-

search, start-up collaboration, knowledge transfer, and innovation ecosystem development. Chambers of Commerce of Georgia and Romania continue to actively support business development, facilitating trade missions, networking, and sectoral partnerships. In parallel, Georgia has established regular ferry connections across the Black Sea – Poti–Constanța, strengthening maritime links and enabling efficient multimodal transport solutions that increase resilience and flexibility for supply chains.

These initiatives demonstrate that Georgia and Romania are natural partners linking Europe and Asia, contributing to a more integrated, resilient, and sustainable Black Sea region. Cooperation with Romania in the development of the Black Sea Submarine Cable and the Green Energy Corridor is of particular importance. The Black Sea Submarine Cable project was initiated by the Georgian side and, thanks to excellent cooperation between the Georgian and Romanian electricity transmission system operators, in December 2025 was successfully granted by the European Commission at the status of a Project of Mutual Interest (PMI).

Despite regional challenges, bilateral trade in the third quarter of 2025, has increased by 45% and amounted to 255.73 million USD. In the third quarter of 2025, exports to Romania increased by 6% and amounted to 26.77 million USD. In the third quarter of 2025, imports from Romania increased by 51% and amounted to

228.95 million USD). This demonstrates that a great economic potential between our countries is still largely untapped. With the expansion of transport, energy, and innovation projects, Romanian companies can increasingly benefit from the opportunities Georgia offers, while Georgian businesses continue exploring the Romanian market.

I am very optimistic about the future of our relations and I'd like to quote the President of Romania H.E. Nicușor Dan, "I look with optimism to strengthening and extending our people's bonds. I express my full trust for jointly working for further concrete cooperation between Romania and Georgia to advance democracy, peace and regional stability, as well as to consolidate the connectivity initiatives at the Black Sea."

Ioana Cristea Drăgulin: Mutual knowledge is fundamental to understanding who we are about each other. What are, in your opinion, the main cultural differences, as well as the similarities between Romania and Georgia? What are the main areas in which our countries collaborate culturally and where do we find the closest collaboration: literature, music, dance, visual arts, etc.?

Tamar Beruchashvili: The cultural and literary ties between Georgia and Romania are long-standing and multifaceted.

Last year marked 375 years since the birth of Saint Hierarch Antim Ivireanul

(1650-1716), the great spiritual and cultural figure, the common Saint of the Orthodox sister churches of Romania and Georgia. He is the most vivid symbol of the Georgian-Romanian historical and cultural relations.

Saint Antim's journey took him to Romania, where he played a significant role in the development of the Romanian literary language. As Metropolitan of Bucharest, he promoted the use of Romanian language in church services and masterminded the printing of important liturgical texts in Romanian. The number of books printed with his involvement is estimated to be over 68 to 90, with some sources placing the number even higher. He published these books in multiple languages, including Romanian, Greek, Church Slavonic, and Arabic. What is the most important for us, Georgians, he was critically instrumental in establishing the first Georgian printing press in Tbilisi and printing books there, such as the first Georgian Gospels in 1709 with support of Constantin Brâncoveanu, ruler of Wallachia and Vakhtang VI Bagration, ruler of Kartli. Following a line of Georgian scholars, Anthim Iverianul represents one of the most distinguished theorists and practitioners of Western Enlightenment at that time. In Georgia, we just started translation of his works into Georgian language – most of his writings were originally in Romanian, while his correspondence in Greek and Arabic are currently found in different libraries worldwide. UNESCO has announced 2016 as the year of

Saint Anthim Iverianul. On the same year, we celebrated the 300 years' anniversary of cultural relations between Georgia and Romania with a special exhibition in the National Museum in Bucharest.

Georgian Embassy privileged to maintain strong connections with Saint Antim Monastery, which is a very special place for every Georgian visiting Bucharest, and not only. I would like to express our high appreciation to His Beatitude Daniel, The Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, for his blessings supporting various bilateral initiatives related to the Saint Hierarch Antim Ivireanul as well as promoting reach religious and cultural heritage of Georgia. Among them, collaboration with the Library of the Holy Synod as we as partnerships with Basilica agency, Basilica Travel and Trinitas TV and University of Bucharest and their partners in Georgia to promote pilgrimage and initiate joint projects.

On the occasion of the 375 years since the birth of Saint Hierarch Antim Ivireanul, the Georgian Embassy in Romania has organized a series of special events. Among them joint choral chanting of Georgian and Romanian choirs at Saint Antim Monastery, academic conference during the Bucharest Poetry Festival, and others. One of the highlights is a play written by Georgian writer Basa Janikashvili, inspired by an idea from Prof. Manana Anasashvili and funded by the Georgian Ministry of Culture. Soon this play will be published as a bilingual book in Georgian and Ro-

manian, marking a unique precedent in cultural exchange between the two countries. We also agreed that later, students from the Tbilisi and Bucharest Theater and cinema Universities would perform the play in Tbilisi and Bucharest. In addition, on the occasion of Saint Hierarch Antim Ivireanul's commemoration, the National Bank of Romania has issued an anniversary golden coin for numismatic purposes. We perceive this fact as a remarkable tribute to the iconic person who established the lasting bond between our countries.

Coming back to the end of the 18th century, I would like to mention the Georgian poet-diplomat Bessarion Gabashvili who lived in Iasi and contributed to building literary relations. In the more recent past, in January 1950, Georgian poet and translator Giorgi Leonidze visited Romania to mark the anniversary of Romanian poet Mihai Eminescu, which was the first Romanian poet to introduce Romanian Romanticism to the Georgian audience.

In addition, Romania's Victor Kernbach was one of the earliest Romanian translators of Georgian poetry, including the 12th-century epic poem of the iconic Georgian poet Shota Rustaveli, "The Knight in the Panther's Skin." In modern times, Georgian authors such as Aka Morchiladze (with "Journey to Karabakh), Nino Haratischwili (author of "The Eighth Lives") and Zurab Karumidze (with "Dagny, or a Love Feast") have been translated into Romanian and became bestsellers. Conversely, Romanian

literary greats like Eminescu, Ion Creangă and Lucian Blaga have been translated into Georgian, particularly through academic efforts in Tbilisi.

Cultural cooperation also spans cinema, dance and folklore: Georgian films appear at Romanian festivals such as the Transilvania International Film Festival (TIFF) and the Astra Film Festival in Sibiu, Georgian national-dance groups perform in Romanian cities like Bucharest and Cluj; and joint folk-music and choral performances take place under Black Sea regional programs in cities such as Constanta SEAS Festival.

In May 2022, the Georgian Embassy in Romania and the Institute for Advanced Studies in Levantine Culture and Civilization presented a Romanian-language edition of the book *History of Georgia*, bringing Georgian history to a Romanian-speaking audience for the first time.

A recent and noteworthy example of Georgian–Romanian cultural cooperation is the 2024 trilingual publication (in Georgian, Romanian, and English) of selected works by Nikoloz Baratashvili and Mihai Eminescu. This project was initiated by the Embassy of Georgia in Romania and developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture of Georgia and the Mihai Eminescu Cultural Centre in Bucharest.

It is remarkable, that during the 2025 Bucharest poetry festival, the heads of four institutions: the Writers' House of Georgia, the Museum of Georgian Literature, the National Museum of Romanian Literature and

the Union of Romanian Writers, signed a quadrilateral memorandum of cooperation aimed at promoting literary exchange and popularization of Georgian and Romanian literature.

Ioana Cristea Drăgulin: Cultural, economic and trade relations have always created a bridge for strengthening political ties between countries. What advantages does your country offer to the Romanian business world and foreign investors?

Tamar Beruchashvili: Indeed, cultural, economic, and trade ties are essential to strengthen political partnership. In the current environment of global turbulence and shifting political dynamics, the importance of connectivity across the Black Sea is clearer than ever. Georgia, as the EU's gateway to Asia offers the shortest alternative route connecting Europe and Asia. We are dedicated to further invest in strengthening Georgia's connectivity potential within the framework of the Middle Corridor by upgrading airports and ports infrastructure. Just recently, French ADP Group has invested approximately 150 million USD in the development of Tbilisi International Airport's infrastructure. Nowadays, 77 airlines perform flights to 125 direct destinations from all three international airports of the country. The development of the aviation sector is directly proportional to the sustainable and diversified development of the tourism sector — in 2025, we

achieved unprecedented success in the tourism sector – Georgia, with population of 3,7 mil., hosted more than 5,5 million visitors!

December 2025 marked the completion of the 14-years railway modernization project - one of the largest investments in Georgia's transport sector projecting higher cargo capacity, shorter transit times between, Tbilisi and Batumi reduced by 30 minutes. It's main highlight being the overhaul of the central, mountainous, and technically challenging pass that links eastern and western Georgia.

Tbilisi Dry Port is another demonstration of Government's priority to enhance trade and connectivity. Officially opened in June 2025, it is a large-scale, multimodal logistics hub implemented by Abu Dhabi Ports Group, the Norwegian Wilhelmsen Port Service and the local company Inveco. It strengthens Georgia's transport and logistics capabilities and is an important part of the Middle Corridor. Port's strategic location with all types of transport networks provides access to important transport hubs including railways, airports, Black sea ports of Batumi and Poti. The Tbilisi Dry port shall be developed in 3 phases over an area of 286 000 m². The first phase with \$ 21 mil. investment value has already been completed.

In addition to existing PACE terminal in Poti (investment from US Overseas Private Investment Corporation, OPIC (currently The U.S. International Development Finance corporation, DFC) in June, 2025 Poti

Multimodal Terminal was officially opened-a multimodal container terminal located near the Poti port on 9 hectare area and with 31.5 mln \$ investment value. The terminal serves both international and local shipments. In 2026, Georgia will start the active phase of construction of the Anaklia deep-sea port, complete the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway and fully commission of the East-West Highway.

The Deep-Sea Port in Anaklia will be capable of receiving large-capacity PANAMAX-type cargo ships. In August 2024 a Belgian company Jan De Nul won an international tender for provision of construction works of the marine infrastructure of the Anaklia Deep Sea Port.

The East-West Highway is a strategic transit route between Europe and Central Asia, when Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway directly connects Turkey, Georgia and Azerbaijan and reduces the shipment period from 35 to 15-17 days.

All listed above represent a clear political and strategic messages of Georgia to continue to be a key, reliable and indispensable link in the Middle Corridor, ensuring fast, safe and uninterrupted movement of goods and positioning the route as the most reliable, secure and efficient corridor in the region.

In a global context marked by the green transition and the need for energy security, Georgia intend to become a green energy exporter and a reliable partner of the European Union. Georgia's abundant hydro-power resources remain the main

source of domestic electricity generation, with up to 80% of local production coming from renewable energy. We are accelerating the development of our renewable energy potential by supporting green energy projects in solar, wind and hydropower. We are also encouraging the introduction of new technologies, such as hydrogen. At the same time, we are working to strengthen our grid by building new transmission lines, strengthening existing ones, and improving grid flexibility. For example, we are promoting the introduction of battery energy storage, which will expand the integration of variable renewable sources into the system. These efforts are complemented by cross-border initiatives with Romania - notably the Black Sea Submarine Cable and the Green Energy Corridor, which can transform the region into a foothold of European energy security.

Georgia with the significant hydro-power potential aims to diversify its energy mix by investing in solar, wind and hydrogen energy, as well as by modernizing the grid and integrating new technologies.

In addition, Georgia offers liberal economic and tax policies supporting the country's economic development and attracting foreign investments: Georgia is a member of WTO having free trade agreements with the EU (DCFTA), UK, Turkey, Ukraine, CIS countries, EFTA (European Free Trade Association) countries, China (including Special Administrative Region - Hong Kong), United Arab Emirates. Georgia also enjoys GSP

regimes with Canada and Japan. Just six flat taxes (Corporate Profit Tax - 0% or 15%, Personal Income Tax - 20%, Value Added Tax - 18%, Property Tax up to 1%, Customs/Import Tax - 0%, 5% or 12%, Excise Tax (depends on goods). In addition, strong protection for foreign investments are guarantee under the legal frameworks and international treaties. Georgia's favorable investment climate is reflected in the following international institutions ratings. Georgia holds leading position in Business Ready 2024 ranking. In particular, Georgia ranks 2nd in operational efficiency pillar and 3rd in regulatory framework pillar. Further, Georgia scores highest in Business Location, Labor, and Dispute Resolution topics: within these areas, the economy implements good practices in its labor dispute resolution mechanisms and land dispute mechanisms, and offers substantive legal safeguards in mediation. In the 2025 Index of Economic Freedom (Heritage Foundation), Georgia's economic freedom score is 69 with Moderately Free status, making its economy the 35th freest among 184 countries; also, Georgia is ranked 20th out of 44 countries in the Europe region, and its overall score is well above the world and regional averages. OECD SME Policy Index 2024 (covers Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine), places Georgia at the top in 11 out of 12 categories, ranging from institutional and regulatory framework, operating environment, insolvency and second chances,

entrepreneurial training and women's entrepreneurship. TRACE Bribery Risk Matrix 2024 – Georgia ranks 44th among 194 countries in terms of assessment of Bribery Risk to Business. Fitch – BB “Stable” . Standard and Poor's – BB “Stable”.

Ioana Cristea Drăgulin: A final question: Polis is a political science journal and therefore please allow me to move the plane of our discussions to the geopolitical one. From a geostrategic perspective, the entire Caucasus region seems to be an area in which great powers, or regional powers, compete for influence. How do you think this fluid geopolitical situation influences Georgia?

Tamar Beruchashvili: Indeed, our geographic space, which connects Europe and Asia, has always been a crossroads of civilizations. Through centuries, Georgia witnessed numerous trials and turbulences. After restoration of independence in 1991, with strong efforts of the Georgian people and support of our friends, Georgia has emerged as a valuable partner and ally. As the EU candidate country since 2023, Georgia remains committed to the process of the European and Euro-Atlantic integration that is a choice of the Georgian people enshrined in our Constitution. Despite challenges of Russian occupation of Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali/South Ossetia (20% of our territories) as a result of Russian invasion in 2008,

today Georgia continues to maintain strong economic growth reaching 7 % and tries to strengthen its geopolitical, economic, and cultural ties globally. We highly value Strategic partnership between Georgia and the U.S. as well as Strategic partnerships with our immediate neighbors Türkiye, Azerbaijan and Armenia.

In times of distractions and unpredictability, we are committed to ensuring peace and stability in the South Caucasus. Lasting peace is not just a desirable condition; it is the very foundation upon which prosperity, resilience and shared development must be built. Therefore, peace in Ukraine is essential not only for the Ukrainian people, but also for safeguarding the stability of Europe and the Black Sea region. Therefore, Georgia supports all efforts aimed at achieving a lasting and just peace based on international law and respect for the sovereignty and territo-

rial integrity of states. I would also like to underscore the historic opportunity before our region: a sustainable peace agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia that transformed the security landscape of the South Caucasus unlocking vast potential for the entire Black Sea region in terms of economic development and connectivity.

To quote the Speaker of the Parliament of Georgia, H.E. Shalva Papuashvili: “We believe that connectivity - physical, digital, economic and human – must be one of the central pillars of our cooperation in the Black Sea region and beyond. Georgia remains committed to this vision: a bridge between regions, a partner for trade and a platform for sustainable connectivity”.

Interview conducted
by Ioana CRISTEA DRĂGULIN

Georgia și România: Parteneriat strategic bazat pe o relație istorică de 300 de ani

E.S. doamna Tamar Beruchashvili
Ambasadoarea Georgiei în România



Ioana Cristea Drăgulin: Doamnă ambasador, aveți o bogată experiență diplomatică și în relațiile internaționale. În noiembrie 2025 se vor împlini trei ani de când ați fost numit ambasador în România. Ce impresii v-au făcut românii și România? Care au fost surprizele pozitive și dificultățile pe care le-ați întâmpinat în această perioadă în țara noastră?

Tamar Beruchashvili: Douăzeci și cinci de ani în serviciul public mi-au oferit oportunitatea unică de a face parte din transformarea istorică a Georgiei și de a construi noi relații ca națiune independentă. Sunt mândră că am ocupat diverse funcții, inclusiv

cea de ministru de externe, primul ministru de stat al Integrării Europene, ministru al Comerțului și Relațiilor Economico-Externe și prima femeie ambasador a Georgiei în Regatul Unit și reprezentant permanent la Organizația Maritimă Internațională. Sunt onorată să fiu prima femeie ambasador georgiană în România, rol pe care îl dețin din 1 noiembrie 2022. Sunt încântată de noile oportunități create de Declarația noastră istorică privind Parteneriatul Strategic, care vor consolida și mai mult legăturile de prietenie dintre națiunile noastre.

Aș dori să menționez că mandatul meu a coincis cu agresiunea militară neprovocată a Rusiei împotriva Ucrainei, un eveniment care a modificat profund peisajul de securitate al regiunii extinse a Mării Negre. Prin urmare, însăși diplomația trebuie să se adapteze la aceste noi realități, iar pentru noi, ca diplomați, acestea sunt într-adevăr vremuri dificile.

De la sfârșitul anilor 1990, am avut privilegiul de a vizita România în diverse funcții, inclusiv ca primul ministru de stat pentru Integrări Europene și ministru de externe, aproximativ la fiecare 5-7 ani. Am fost martor direct

la dezvoltarea remarcabilă a României și la transformarea sa într-un membru valoros al UE și NATO. Aceste schimbări sunt o dovadă a muncii asidue a poporului român și a sprijinului puternic al partenerilor UE și NATO. De-a lungul anilor, am dezvoltat o afecțiune profundă pentru România și poporul său, cu care simt o legătură autentică. Încă din prima mea zi aici, m-am simțit cu adevărat ca acasă, întâlnind și împrietenindu-mă cu mulți oameni minunați pe parcurs. România este o țară care „ trăiește în viitor, dar se gândește mereu la trecut ” - acesta este un citat pe care l-am auzit atribuit lui Mircea Eliade și care rezumă cumva atmosfera țării pentru mine. România este o țară în care trecutul și prezentul coexistă, unde tradiția și modernitatea se îmbină într-un amestec fascinant. Frumusețea naturală de aici este uluitoare: Munții Carpați, coasta Mării Negre și Delta Dunării sunt destinații obligatorii. Arhitectura României este, de asemenea, o combinație uimitoare de vechi și nou. Farmecul medieval al piețelor Sibiului, detaliile complexe ale clădirilor Belle Époque din București, palatele în stil românesc nou și maiestuosul Castel Peleş sunt uimitoare! Și să nu uităm de preferatul meu — splendidul Ateneul Român din București, o capodoperă a arhitecturii neoclasică și un centru pentru bogata moștenire muzicală a țării. Bisericele și mănăstirile ortodoxe, precum cele din regiunea Bucovina din Moldova, sunt uluitoare cu frescele lor vibrante și atmosfera liniștită. Tradițiile ortodoxe ale României au

asemănări cu cele ale Georgiei - ambele țări au o moștenire spirituală profundă, imnuri frumoase și o arhitectură bisericească sofisticată. Iar cultura muzicală este uimitoare: de la doinele populare de o frumusețe tulburătoare, la melodiile vibrante ale muzicii ortodoxe care ating sufletul, la fel și orchestrele puternice precum Filarmonica George Enescu, moștenirea muzicală a României este incredibilă. A fost un moment de neuitat să particip la un spectacol în Cazinoul istoric recent renovat din Constanța, în timpul festivalului Enescu, în septembrie.

Într-o notă mai practică, navigarea prin infrastructura României poate fi o provocare. Drumurile și căile ferate par adesea că încă mai recuperează terenul față de restul Europei. Este un contrast oarecum cu frumusețea naturală și ospitalitatea caldă a țării.

Ioana Cristea Drăgulin: Pe 25 iunie 1992 au fost stabilite relațiile diplomatice dintre cele două țări. Anul acesta se împlinesc 33 de ani de prietenie. Ce ne puteți spune despre relațiile dintre țările noastre?

Tamar Beruchashvili: Deși relațiile diplomatice oficiale dintre Georgia și România au fost stabilite în urmă cu 33 de ani, rădăcinile prieteniei noastre ajung mult mai adânc în istorie, acoperind mai mult de trei secole. Relația istorică dintre cele două națiuni se bazează pe trei figuri istorice remarcabile: Sfântul Antim Ivireanul, cleric și figură publică românească de origine georgiană și Mitropolit al

Ungariei-Țării Românești (†1716); Sfântul Martir Constantin Brâncoveanu, Principele Țării Românești (†1714); și Regele Vakhtang al VI-lea Bagrationi (†1737), conducătorul orașului Kartli (estul Georgiei). Așa cum se întâmplă adesea în istorie, aceste personalități distinse au avut sfârșituri tragice, dar au lăsat în urmă o moștenire durabilă care continuă să inspire mândrie și respect în ambele națiuni. Printre numeroasele lor contribuții, stabilirea unei baze solide pentru relațiile georgiano-române, inclusiv crearea primei tipografii georgiene, este deosebit de remarcabilă.

Relația istorică de 300 de ani dintre Georgia și România se bazează pe tradițiile creștino-ortodoxe. Un simbol distinctiv al acestei legături este figura religioasă și publică Antim Ivireanul (1650-1716), (ანთიმოზ ივრიელი, în georgiană), figura iconică a cărei viață și opere reprezintă legătura profundă dintre credință, identitate, limbă și memorie culturală. Ca sfânt comun al bisericilor surori georgiană și românească din 1992, Sfântul Antim reprezintă o punte spirituală, istorică și culturală solidă între țările noastre.

Mai târziu, în secolul XX, când poporul Georgiei și-a restabilit statalitatea, România a recunoscut de jure independența Primei Republici Democrate Georgia la 18 februarie 1921. În 2018, în centrul Bucureștiului, a fost dezvelită o placă memorială pe clădirea Hotelului Ramada Bucharest Majestic (fostul Hotel Majestic), care informează că în 1919, prima misiune diplomatică a Republicii

Democrate Georgia în România a avut sediul în această clădire, condusă de Sosipatre Asatiani. După destrămarea Uniunii Sovietice, România a fost prima țară care a recunoscut independența Georgiei, la 27 august 1991. De atunci, relațiile noastre s-au dezvoltat dinamic și cuprind acum dialog politic, cooperare în domeniile energiei, transporturilor, inovării, comerțului, turismului și culturii. Țările noastre sunt conectate nu doar prin Marea Neagră, ci și printr-o viziune comună pentru pace, dezvoltare și cooperare regională.

Astăzi, România este partenerul nostru strategic, un susținător ferm al suveranității și integrității teritoriale a Georgiei și al drumului nostru de integrare europeană și euro-atlantică, care capătă o semnificație și mai mare astăzi. În acest sens, România a fost primul stat membru al UE care a ratificat Acordul de Asociere dintre Georgia și Uniunea Europeană, la 3 iulie 2014. La 12 octombrie 2022, s-a deschis un nou capitol în istoria cooperării bilaterale dintre țările noastre: președinții Georgiei și României au semnat o declarație privind stabilirea cooperării strategice dintre Georgia și România. În cadrul parteneriatului strategic, se deschid noi oportunități pentru activarea în continuare a relațiilor noastre în domeniul politic, al apărării și securității, al interacțiunii interpersonale, al transporturilor (în special în sectorul maritim) și al energiei. Un pas important a fost deja făcut în această direcție: la 17 decembrie 2022 a fost semnat la București un acord istoric privind

parteneriatul strategic dintre Georgia, Azerbaidjan, România și Ungaria în dezvoltarea și transmiterea energiei verzi. Având în vedere potențialul energetic regenerabil și locația geografică a Georgiei, aceasta are un potențial ridicat de a deveni o țară cheie în ceea ce privește generarea și transmiterea energiei verzi către piața UE. Ținând cont de noua realitate geopolitică și de mediul dificil, parteneriatul strategic dintre țările noastre deschide noi oportunități geopolitice și geoeconomice. Georgia și România, în calitate de vecini la Marea Neagră, au un rol special de jucat în asigurarea unei conectivități mai bune, a securității energetice și a transporturilor, esențiale pentru consolidarea stabilității și dezvoltării regiunii, în vederea promovării unui comerț mai intens, a mai multor afaceri și a unui turism mai intens.

Acum, sarcina ambasadei Georgiei la București este de a depune toate eforturile pentru a transforma aceste oportunități în rezultate concrete.

În plus, schimburile culturale, programele academice, turismul și inițiativele de afaceri comune creează legături durabile de încredere și înțelegere între societățile noastre. În 2025, turismul din România către Georgia a crescut cu 8%, ceea ce demonstrează un interes tot mai mare pentru interacțiunea culturală și de afaceri. Nu este un secret faptul că vinul este cel mai bun ambasador al Georgiei! În prezent, vinul georgian este exportat în peste 60 de țări din întreaga lume, promovând cultura și tradiția georgiană. De asemenea, atrage turiștii să

exploreze rutele vinicole din Georgia. Cu câțiva ani în urmă, un turist care vizita Georgia pentru prima dată primea o sticlă de vin de la ofițerul de frontieră ca gest de bun venit, împreună cu o ștampilă în pașaport!

Vestea bună este că românii au început cu entuziasm să descopere vinul georgian. Există un interes ridicat pentru a degusta Saperavi din țara sa de origine, împreună cu multe alte soiuri unice georgiene. Drept urmare, exportul de vin georgian către România aproape s-a dublat în ultimul an. În aceeași ordine de idei, intenționăm să activăm Wine-Diplomacy pentru o mai bună conștientizare a tradiției unice și neîntrerupte de vinificație a Georgiei în România, veche de 8 000 de ani.

Ioana Cristea Drăgulin: Care sunt principalele caracteristici ale acestei frumoase țări situate în inima Caucazului de Sud?

Tamar Beruchashvili: Am onoarea și privilegiul să reprezint o țară care are multe de arătat și de împărtășit – cultură și istorie seculară, alfabet și polifonie unice, 8 000 de ani de tradiție vinicolă, artă, cinema, ospitalitate și multe altele...

Georgia, o țară de la Marea Neagră situată în inima Caucazului, este un ținut de o frumusețe uluitoare și un bogat patrimoniu cultural. Cu o istorie de mii de ani, Georgia găzduiește unele dintre cele mai vechi tradiții din lume. Ca stat creștin din anul 326, Georgia are o moștenire spirituală profundă reflectată în bisericile și mănăstirile sale uimitoare.

Frumusețea naturală a țării, de la țărmurile Mării Negre până la munții înzăpeziți din Svaneti și văile înSORITE din Kakheti, este egalată doar de diversitatea locuitorilor săi, iar amestecul unic de influențe europene și asiatice a modelat o istorie și o cultură distincte. Țara este, de asemenea, o destinație turistică majoră, oferind o combinație rară de munți maiestuoși și un litoral frumos, alături de o moștenire culturală și istorică profundă.

Dintre toate aspectele culturii georgiene, probabil cel mai prețuit este vinificația. Dovezile arheologice sugerează că vinul a fost produs pentru prima dată în Georgia acum aproximativ 8 000 de ani. Această afirmație își are susținerea științifică în descoperirea semințelor vechi de 8 000 de ani ale soiului de struguri cultivat, *Vitis vinifera sativa*, împreună cu amfora masivă din lut pentru fermentarea vinului, numită „Qvevri” (ქვევრი) într-o așezare neolitică din estul Georgiei în 2015. Qvevri - un vas de lut în formă de ou folosit pentru fermentarea, învechirea și depozitarea vinului - este un element central al acestei tradiții. Cercetări ulterioare efectuate de o echipă internațională de experți au confirmat existența timpurie a vinificației în regiune, motiv pentru care Georgia a ajuns să fie cunoscută drept „leagănul vinului”. Mulți etimologi consideră chiar că termenul generic modern „vin” este derivat din echivalentul georgian – „gvino” (ღვინო). În 2013, metoda georgiană antică de vinificație „qvevri” a fost înscrisă pe Lista Patrimoniului Cultural Imaterial UNESCO. Această

metodă unică distinge vinul georgian de toate celelalte și rămâne un simbol al legăturii durabile a țării cu pământul și istoria sa.

Împreună cu vinul, mâncarea și bucătăria reprezintă instrumente din ce în ce mai populare de putere soft, care pot comunica cultura unei țări, precum și pot îmbunătăți comerțul și turismul acesteia. Tradiția culinară bogată și diversă a Georgiei și cultura mesei s-au format de-a lungul secolelor și au fost transmise de la o generație la alta. În timp ce efectua o călătorie în Georgia în 1672, celebrul călător francez Jean Chardin a descris modul în care georgienii obișnuiau să se ospăteze ca pe o expresie a generozității și ospitalității sincere. Pentru anul 2026, Forbes evidențiază capitala Georgiei, Tbilisi, ca o destinație de top, laudând scena sa culturală emergentă, siturile istorice, experiența culinară unică și accesibilitatea.

Alfabetul georgian este o altă sursă de mândrie națională. Este unul dintre cele doar 14 alfabete unice existente astăzi. De-a lungul secolelor, scrierea georgiană a suferit trei transformări majore, rezultând trei stiluri distincte de scriere. În 2016, UNESCO a înscris cultura vie a celor trei sisteme de scriere ale Georgiei pe Lista Reprezentativă a Patrimoniului Cultural Imaterial al Umanității.

Tradițiile artistice ale Georgiei sunt la fel de captivante și diverse. Cântecul polifonic și dansul popular georgian sunt expresii de neuitat ale spiritului și creativității națiunii.

Totuși, Georgia este și o țară care îmbrățișează modernitatea, cu o sce-

nă artistică înfloritoare, o arhitectură inovatoare și o economie în creștere. De la străzile aglomerate din Tbilisi până la infrastructura modernă a orașelor sale, Georgia este o națiune care privește spre viitor, onorându-și în același timp trecutul.

Dar ceea ce diferențiază cu adevărat Georgia este rezistența sa. În ciuda numeroaselor provocări întâmpinate de-a lungul istoriei sale, țara a dat întotdeauna dovadă de o determinare și o forță remarcabile. De la luptele antice împotriva invadatorilor până la angajamentul modern față de viitorul pașnic, prosper și european al Georgiei unite, georgienii au găsit întotdeauna o modalitate de a prospera.

Ioana Cristea Drăgulin: Doamnă ambasador, din bogata experiență acumulată într-o viață în care relațiile internaționale au fost o parte integrantă, în ce domenii considerați că România și Georgia au un parteneriat puternic și durabil și unde există posibilitatea ca acestea să fie îmbunătățite în viitor?

Tamar Beruchashvili: Prin semnarea Declarației Comune privind Parteneriatul Strategic în 2022, țările noastre și-au declarat disponibilitatea de aprofundare și extindere a cooperării în diverse domenii. Sperăm că Planul de Acțiune bilateral aferent va fi finalizat în curând pentru a fi aprobat în cadrul mult așteptatei reuniuni a miniștrilor noștri de externe.

Este important ca Georgia și România să fie unite nu doar de apele Mării Negre, ci și de aceeași viziune despre

regiunea Mării Negre, care este „sigură, prosperă, interconectată și liberă de amenințări la adresa integrității teritoriale și de coerciție economică”. În plus, apreciem rolul și contribuțiile României la securitatea și stabilitatea regională a Mării Negre. Credem că parteneriatul strategic dintre țările noastre are un potențial ridicat de a consolida acest rol prin deschiderea de noi oportunități geopolitice și geoeconomice. În acest sens, salutăm lansarea recentei „Strategii a Mării Negre” a UE și așteptăm cu nerăbdare oportunități de colaborare. În contextul actual de turbulențe globale și dinamici politice schimbătoare, importanța conectivității peste Marea Neagră este mai evidentă ca niciodată. Georgia, poarta UE către Asia, oferă cea mai scurtă rută alternativă care leagă Europa de Asia.

În ultimii ani, proiecte strategice de interes comun au consolidat și mai mult parteneriatul nostru: Textul final al Rutei de Transport Internațional Marea Neagră-Marea Caspică a fost convenit (februarie 2025) și va fi semnat în viitorul apropiat. Odată operațională, această rută va conecta Poti, Batumi (și viitoarea Anaklia) cu Constanța, prin Baku și Turkmenbashi, sporind semnificativ comerțul și conectivitatea regională dintre Europa și Asia. Proiectul Coridorului Energetic Verde/Cablului Submarin al Mării Negre continuă să avanseze, conectând sistemele electrice ale Georgiei și României și contribuind la securitatea energetică europeană. Cooperarea instituțională dintre agențiile noastre de top în domeniul teh-

nologiei și inovării va facilita cercetarea comună, colaborarea între start-up-uri, transferul de cunoștințe și dezvoltarea ecosistemului de inovare. Camerele de Comerț din Georgia și România continuă să sprijine activ dezvoltarea afacerilor, facilitând misiunile comerciale, crearea de rețele și parteneriatele sectoriale. În paralel, Georgia a stabilit conexiuni regulate cu feribotul peste Marea Neagră - Poti-Constanța, consolidând legăturile maritime și permițând soluții eficiente de transport multimodal care sporesc reziliența și flexibilitatea lanțurilor de aprovizionare.

Aceste inițiative demonstrează că Georgia și România sunt parteneri naturali care leagă Europa de Asia, contribuind la o regiune a Mării Negre mai integrată, rezilientă și sustenabilă. Cooperarea cu România în dezvoltarea Cablului Submarin al Mării Negre și a Coridorului de Energie Verde este de o importanță deosebită. Proiectul Cablului Submarin al Mării Negre a fost inițiat de partea georgiană și, datorită excelenței cooperării dintre operatorii de sistem de transport al energiei electrice din Georgia și România, în decembrie 2025 a primit cu succes de la Comisia Europeană statutul de Proiect de Interes Reciproc (PMI).

În ciuda provocărilor regionale, comerțul bilateral în trimestrul al treilea al anului 2025 a crescut cu 45% și s-a ridicat la 255,73 milioane USD. În trimestrul al treilea al anului 2025, exporturile către România au crescut cu 6% și s-au ridicat la 26,77 milioane USD. În trimestrul al treilea al

anului 2025, importurile din România au crescut cu 51% și s-au ridicat la 228,95 milioane USD. Acest lucru demonstrează că un potențial economic imens între țările noastre este încă în mare parte neexploatat. Odată cu extinderea proiectelor în domeniul transporturilor, energiei și inovării, companiile românești pot beneficia din ce în ce mai mult de oportunitățile oferite de Georgia, în timp ce afacerile georgiene continuă să exploreze piața românească.

Sunt foarte optimistă în ceea ce privește viitorul relațiilor noastre și aș dori să-l citez pe Președintele României, E.S. Nicușor Dan: „Privesc cu optimism consolidarea și extinderea legăturilor dintre popoarele noastre. Îmi exprim deplina încredere pentru a lucra împreună pentru o cooperare concretă și mai strânsă între România și Georgia, în vederea promovării democrației, păcii și stabilității regionale, precum și pentru consolidarea inițiativelor de conectivitate la Marea Neagră”.

Ioana Cristea Drăgulin: Cunoașterea reciprocă este fundamentală pentru a înțelege cine suntem și cât ne cunoaștem între noi. Care sunt, în opinia dumneavoastră, principalele diferențe culturale, precum și asemănările dintre România și Georgia? Care sunt principalele domenii în care țările noastre colaborează cultural și unde găsim cea mai strânsă colaborare: literatură, muzică, dans, arte vizuale etc.?

Tamar Beruchashvili: Legăturile culturale și literare dintre Georgia și România sunt de lungă durată și multiple. Anul trecut s-au împlinit 375 de ani de la nașterea Sfântului Ierarh Antim Ivireanul (1650-1716), marea figură spirituală și culturală, sfântul comun al bisericilor ortodoxe surori din România și Georgia. El este simbolul cel mai viu al relațiilor istorice și culturale georgiano-române.

Călătoria Sfântului Antim l-a dus în România, unde a jucat un rol semnificativ în dezvoltarea limbii literare românești. Ca mitropolit al Bucureștilor, a promovat utilizarea limbii române în slujbele bisericești și a orchestrat tipărirea unor texte liturgice importante în limba română. Numărul de cărți tipărite cu implicarea sa este estimat la peste 68 până la 90, unele surse plasând numărul chiar mai mare. A publicat aceste cărți în mai multe limbi, inclusiv româna, greaca, slava bisericească și araba. Cel mai important lucru pentru noi, georgienii, este că a jucat un rol esențial în înființarea primei tipografii georgiene din Tbilisi și în tipărirea de cărți acolo, cum ar fi primele Evanghelii georgiene în 1709, cu sprijinul lui Constantin Brâncoveanu, domnitorul Țării Românești, și al lui Vakhtang al VI-lea Bagration, domnitorul Kartliului. Urmând o linie de savanți georgieni, Antim Ivireanul reprezintă unul dintre cei mai distinși teoreticieni și practicieni ai Iluminismului occidental la acea vreme. În Georgia, tocmai am început traducerea operelor sale în limba georgiană – majoritatea scrierilor sale au fost inițial în

limba română, în timp ce corespondența sa în greacă și arabă se găsește în prezent în diferite biblioteci din întreaga lume. UNESCO a proclamat anul 2016 drept anul Sfântului Antim Ivireanul. În același an, am sărbătorit 300 de ani de la stabilirea relațiilor culturale dintre Georgia și România cu o expoziție specială la Muzeul Național din București.

Ambasada Georgiei are privilegiul de a menține legături puternice cu Mănăstirea Sfântul Antim, care este un loc cu adevărat special pentru fiecare georgian care vizitează Bucureștiul, și nu numai. Aș dori să exprim deosebita noastră recunoștință față de Preafericitul Daniel, Patriarhul Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, pentru binecuvântările sale în sprijinirea diverselor inițiative bilaterale legate de Sfântul Ierarh Antim Ivireanul, precum și pentru promovarea patrimoniului religios și cultural al Georgiei. Printre acestea, colaborarea cu Biblioteca Sfântului Sinod, precum și parteneriatele cu agenția Basilica, Basilica Travel și Trinitas TV, Universitatea din București și partenerii lor din Georgia pentru a promova pelerinajul și a iniția proiecte comune.

Cu ocazia împlinirii a 375 de ani de la nașterea Sfântului Ierarh Antim Ivireanul, Ambasada Georgiei în România a organizat o serie de evenimente speciale. Printre acestea se numără intonarea corală comună a corurilor georgiene și românești la Mănăstirea Sfântul Antim, o conferință academică în cadrul Festivalului de Poezie de la București și altele. Unul dintre punctele de atracție este o

piesă de teatru scrisă de scriitorul georgian Basa Janikashvili, inspirată de o idee a prof. Manana Anasashvili și finanțată de Ministerul Culturii din Georgia. În curând, această piesă va fi publicată ca o carte bilingvă, în georgiană și românească, marcând un precedent unic în schimbul cultural dintre cele două țări. De asemenea, am convenit ca ulterior, studenți de la universitățile de teatru și cinema din Tbilisi și București să interpreteze piesa la Tbilisi și București. În plus, cu ocazia comemorării Sfântului Ierarh Antim Ivireanul, Banca Națională a României a emis o monedă aniversară de aur în scop numismatic. Considerăm acest fapt ca un omagiu remarcabil adus persoanei emblematice care a stabilit legătura durabilă dintre țările noastre.

Revenind la sfârșitul secolului al XVIII-lea, aș dori să-l menționez pe poetul și diplomatul georgian Bessarion Gabașvili, care a locuit la Iași și a contribuit la construirea relațiilor literare. În trecutul mai recent, în ianuarie 1950, poetul și traducătorul georgian Giorgi Leonidze a vizitat România pentru a marca aniversarea poetului român Mihai Eminescu, primul poet român care a introdus romantismul românesc publicului georgian.

În plus, Victor Kernbach, românul, a fost unul dintre primii traducători români de poezie georgiană, inclusiv poemul epic din secolul al XII-lea al emblematicului poet georgian Șota Rustaveli, „Cavalerul în pielea pantelei”. În timpurile moderne, autori georgieni precum Aka Morchiladze (cu „Călătorie în Karabah”), Nino

Haratischwili (autorul „A opta viață”) și Zurab Karumidze (cu „Dagny sau un ospăț de dragoste”) au fost traduși în limba română și au devenit bestselleruri. În schimb, mari nume ale literaturii române precum Eminescu, Ion Creangă și Lucian Blaga au fost traduși în limba georgiană, în special prin eforturi academice la Tbilisi.

Cooperarea culturală se întinde și pe domeniul cinematografiei, dansului și folclorului: filme georgiene apar la festivaluri românești precum Festivalul Internațional de Film Transilvania (TIFF) și Festivalul de Film Astra de la Sibiu, grupuri naționale de dans georgiene susțin spectacole în orașe românești precum București și Cluj; iar spectacole comune de muzică populară și corală au loc în cadrul programelor regionale ale Mării Negre în orașe precum Festivalul SEAS de la Constanța.

În mai 2022, Ambasada Georgiei în România și Institutul pentru Studii Avansate în Cultura și Civilizația Levantină au prezentat o ediție în limba română a cărții *Istoria Georgiei*, aducând pentru prima dată istoria Georgiei în fața unui public vorbitor de limbă română.

Un exemplu recent și remarcabil de cooperare culturală dintre Georgia și România este publicarea trilingvă din 2024 (în georgiană, română și engleză) a unei selecții de lucrări de Nikoloz Baratashvili și Mihai Eminescu. Acest proiect a fost inițiat de Ambasada Georgiei în România și dezvoltat în colaborare cu Ministerul Culturii din Georgia și Centrul Cultural Mihai Eminescu din București.

Este remarcabil faptul că, în cadrul festivalului de poezie de la București din 2025, conducătorii a patru instituții: Casa Scriitorilor din Georgia, Muzeul Literaturii Georgiene, Muzeul Național al Literaturii Române și Uniunea Scriitorilor din România, au semnat un memorandum cvadrilateral de cooperare menit să promoveze schimbul literar și popularizarea literaturii georgiene și române.

Ioana Cristea Drăgulin: Relațiile culturale, economice și comerciale au creat întotdeauna o punte pentru consolidarea legăturilor politice dintre țări. Ce avantaje oferă țara dumneavoastră lumii afacerilor românești și investitorilor străini?

Tamar Beruchashvili: Într-adevăr, legăturile culturale, economice și comerciale sunt esențiale pentru consolidarea parteneriatului politic.

În mediul actual de turbulențe globale și dinamici politice în schimbare, importanța conectivității la Marea Neagră este mai evidentă ca niciodată. Georgia, poarta UE către Asia, oferă cea mai scurtă rută alternativă care leagă Europa de Asia. Ne-am dedicat investițiilor suplimentare în consolidarea potențialului de conectivitate al Georgiei în cadrul Coridorului Mijlociu prin modernizarea infrastructurii aeroporturilor și portuare. Recent, Grupul francez ADP a investit aproximativ 150 de milioane de dolari în dezvoltarea infrastructurii Aeroportului Internațional Tbilisi. În prezent, 77 de companii aeriene efectuează zboruri către 125 de destinații

directe de pe toate cele trei aeroporturi internaționale ale țării. Dezvoltarea sectorului aviatic este direct proporțională cu dezvoltarea durabilă și diversificată a sectorului turistic – în 2025, am obținut un succes fără precedent în sectorul turistic – Georgia, cu o populație de 3,7 milioane de locuitori, a găzduit peste 5,5 milioane de vizitatori!

Decembrie 2025 a marcat finalizarea proiectului de modernizare a căilor ferate, care a durat 14 ani - una dintre cele mai mari investiții din sectorul transporturilor din Georgia, care preconizează o capacitate de marfă mai mare și timpi de tranzit mai scurți între Tbilisi și Batumi, reduși cu 30 de minute. Principalul său punct culminant este renovarea trecătorii centrale, muntoase și dificile din punct de vedere tehnic, care leagă estul și vestul Georgiei.

Portul uscat Tbilisi este o altă demonstrație a priorității Guvernului de a îmbunătăți comerțul și conectivitatea. Deschis oficial în iunie 2025, este un centru logistic multimodal la scară largă, implementat de Abu Dhabi Ports Group, Serviciul Portuar Norvegian Wilhelmsen și compania locală Inveco. Acesta consolidează capacitățile de transport și logistică ale Georgiei și este o parte importantă a Coridorului Mijlociu. Locația strategică a portului, cu toate tipurile de rețele de transport, oferă acces la importante centre de transport, inclusiv căi ferate, aeroporturi, porturile Mării Negre Batumi și Poti. Portul uscat Tbilisi va fi dezvoltat în 3 faze pe o suprafață de 286 000 m². Prima

fază, cu o valoare a investiției de 21 de milioane de dolari, a fost deja finalizată.

Pe lângă terminalul PACE existent din Poti (investiție de la US Overseas Private Investment Corporation, OPIC (în prezent U.S. International Development Finance Corporation, DFC), în iunie 2025 a fost deschis oficial Terminalul Multimodal Poti – un terminal de containere multimodal situat în apropierea portului Poti, pe o suprafață de 9 hectare și cu o valoare a investiției de 31,5 milioane de dolari. Terminalul deservește atât transporturi internaționale, cât și locale.

În 2026, Georgia va începe faza activă de construcție a portului maritim Anaklia, va finaliza calea ferată Baku-Tbilisi-Kars și va pune în funcțiune completă autostrada est-vest.

Portul maritim Anaklia va putea primi nave de marfă de mare capacitate, de tip PANAMAX. În august 2024, compania belgiană Jan De Nul a câștigat o licitație internațională pentru furnizarea de lucrări de construcție a infrastructurii maritime a portului maritim Anaklia.

Autostrada est-vest este o rută de tranzit strategică între Europa și Asia Centrală, calea ferată Baku-Tbilisi-Kars conectând direct Turcia, Georgia și Azerbaidjanul și reducând perioada de transport de la 35 la 15-17 zile.

Toate cele enumerate mai sus reprezintă mesaje politice și strategice clare ale Georgiei de a continua să fie o legătură cheie, fiabilă și indispensabilă în Coridorul Mijlociu, asigurând o circulație rapidă, sigură și neîntreruptă a mărfurilor și poziționând ruta ca

fiind cel mai fiabil, sigur și eficient coridor din regiune.

Într-un context global marcat de tranziția verde și de nevoia de securitate energetică, Georgia intenționează să devină un exportator de energie verde și un partener de încredere al Uniunii Europene. Resursele hidroenergetice abundente ale Georgiei rămân principala sursă de generare a energiei electrice interne, până la 80% din producția locală provenind din energie regenerabilă. Accelerăm dezvoltarea potențialului nostru de energie regenerabilă prin sprijinirea proiectelor de energie verde în domeniul energiei solare, eoliene și hidroenergetice. De asemenea, încurajăm introducerea de noi tehnologii, cum ar fi hidrogenul. În același timp, lucrăm la consolidarea rețelei noastre prin construirea de noi linii de transport, consolidarea celor existente și îmbunătățirea flexibilității rețelei. De exemplu, promovăm introducerea stocării energiei în baterii, ceea ce va extinde integrarea surselor regenerabile variabile în sistem. Aceste eforturi sunt completate de inițiative transfrontaliere cu România – în special Cablul Submarin al Mării Negre și Coridorul Energetic Verde, care pot transforma regiunea într-un punct de sprijin al securității energetice europene.

Georgia, cu un potențial hidroenergetic semnificativ, își propune să își diversifice mixul energetic prin investiții în energia solară, eoliană și hidrogen, precum și prin modernizarea rețelei și integrarea de noi tehnologii.

În plus, Georgia oferă politici economice și fiscale liberale care sprijină dezvoltarea economică a țării și atrag investiții străine: Georgia este membră a OMC, având acorduri de liber schimb cu UE (DCFTA), Regatul Unit, Turcia, Ucraina, țările CSI, țările AELS (Asociația Europeană a Liberului Schimb), China (inclusiv Regiunea Administrativă Specială - Hong Kong), Emiratele Arabe Unite. Georgia se bucură, de asemenea, de regimuri SPG cu Canada și Japonia. Doar șase impozite unice (impozitul pe profitul societăților - 0% sau 15%, impozitul pe venitul persoanelor fizice - 20%, taxa pe valoarea adăugată - 18%, impozitul pe proprietate până la 1%, taxa vamală/de import - 0%, 5% sau 12%, accize (în funcție de bunuri). În plus, o protecție solidă pentru investițiile străine este garantată în temeiul cadrelor juridice și al tratatelor internaționale.

Climatul investițional favorabil al Georgiei se reflectă în următoarele evaluări ale instituțiilor internaționale. Georgia deține o poziție de lider în clasamentul Business Ready 2024. În special, Georgia ocupă locul 2 în ceea ce privește pilonul eficiență operațională și locul 3 în ceea ce privește pilonul cadrului de reglementare. În plus, Georgia obține cele mai mari scoruri în ceea ce privește locația afacerilor, forța de muncă și soluționarea litigiilor: în aceste domenii, economia implementează bune practici în mecanismele sale de soluționare a litigiilor de muncă și mecanismele litigiilor funciare și oferă garanții juridice substanțiale în mediere. În

Indexul Libertății Economice din 2025 (Heritage Foundation), scorul libertății economice a Georgiei este de 69, cu statutul de Moderat Liberă, ceea ce face ca economia sa să fie a 35-a cea mai liberă dintre 184 de țări; de asemenea, Georgia este clasată pe locul 20 din 44 de țări din regiunea Europei, iar scorul său general este cu mult peste mediile mondiale și regionale. Indicele OCDE pentru politicile IMM-urilor 2024 (acoperă Armenia, Azerbaidjanul, Georgia, Moldova și Ucraina) plasează Georgia pe primul loc în 11 din 12 categorii, de la cadrul instituțional și de reglementare, mediul operațional, insolvență și a doua șansă, formare antreprenorială și antreprenoriat feminin. Matricea riscului de mită TRACE 2024 - Georgia ocupă locul 44 din 194 de țări în ceea ce privește evaluarea riscului de mită pentru afaceri. Fitch – BB „Stabil”. Standard and Poor's – BB „Stabil”.

Ioana Cristea Drăgulin: O ultimă întrebare: Polis este o revistă de științe politice și, prin urmare, vă rog să-mi permiteți să mut planul discuțiilor noastre la cel geopolitic. Dintr-o perspectivă geostrategică, întreaga regiune a Caucazului pare a fi o zonă în care marile puteri, sau puterile regionale, concurează pentru influență. Cum credeți că influențează această situație geopolitică fluidă Georgia?

Tamar Beruchashvili: Într-adevăr, spațiul nostru geografic, care leagă Europa de Asia, a fost întotdeauna o

răscruce de civilizații. De-a lungul secolelor, Georgia a fost martora a numeroase încercări și turbulențe. După restaurarea independenței în 1991, cu eforturi susținute ale poporului georgian și sprijinul prietenilor noștri, Georgia a devenit un partener și aliat valoros. În calitate de țară candidată la UE din 2023, Georgia rămâne angajată în procesul de integrare europeană și euro-atlantică, care este o alegere a poporului georgian, consacrată în Constituția noastră.

În ciuda provocărilor reprezentate de ocupația rusă a regiunilor georgiene Abhazia și Țhinvali/Osetia de Sud (20% din teritoriile noastre), ca urmare a invaziei rusești din 2008, Georgia continuă să mențină o creștere economică puternică, atingând 7%, și încearcă să-și consolideze legăturile geopolitice, economice și culturale la nivel global. Apreciem foarte mult parteneriatul strategic dintre Georgia și SUA, precum și parteneriatele strategice cu vecinii noștri imediați, Turcia, Azerbaidjanul și Armenia.

În vremuri de distragere a atenției și imprevizibilitate, ne angajăm să asigurăm pacea și stabilitatea în Caucazul de Sud. Pacea durabilă nu este doar o condiție dezirabilă; este însăși temelia pe care trebuie construite prosperitatea, reziliența și dezvoltarea comună.

Prin urmare, pacea în Ucraina este esențială nu numai pentru poporul ucrainean, ci și pentru protejarea stabilității Europei și a regiunii Mării Negre. Prin urmare, Georgia sprijină toate eforturile care vizează realizarea unei păci durabile și juste, bazate pe dreptul internațional și pe respectarea suveranității și integrității teritoriale a statelor. Aș dori, de asemenea, să subliniez oportunitatea istorică care se află în fața regiunii noastre: un acord de pace durabil între Azerbaidjan și Armenia, care a transformat peisajul de securitate al Caucazului de Sud, deblocând un potențial vast pentru întreaga regiune a Mării Negre în ceea ce privește dezvoltarea economică și conectivitatea.

Pentru a-l cita pe președintele Parlamentului Georgiei, E.S. Shalva Papuashvili: „Credem că conectivitatea – fizică, digitală, economică și umană – trebuie să fie unul dintre pilonii centrali ai cooperării noastre în regiunea Mării Negre și nu numai. Georgia rămâne angajată față de această viziune: o punte între regiuni, un partener pentru comerț și o platformă pentru conectivitate durabilă”.

Interviu realizat
de Ioana CRISTEA DRĂGULIN
Traducere din engleză
în română realizată
de Ancuța Antoaneta Brașoveanu

Politica algoritmilor în 2024-2025: analiza unei strategii electorale bazate pe AI și impactul asupra normalizării discursului instigator la ură cu accente mesianice, antieuropene și pro-ruse

[Algorithmic Politics in 2024-2025: Analysis of an AI-Based Electoral Strategy and the Impact on the Normalization of Messianic, Anti-European, and Pro-Russian Hate Speech]

Alexandru MURARU

Abstract: *Electoral analysis is transforming before our eyes. Whereas in previous decades “spin doctors” were defined by their mastery of the audiovisual media environment – particularly radio and television – recent trends clearly indicate that social media platforms and their underlying algorithms have become paramount. We have at our disposal the case study of Romania’s annulled presidential elections, invalidated on grounds related to the manipulation of these algorithms. The conclusion advanced in this article is that not only must electoral campaigns adapt, but the very manner in which states construct and safeguard the guarantees of fair, free, and honest political competition must be fundamentally reconsidered.*

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence, democracy, electoral campaigns, algorithms.*

Introducere: De la politica media la politica algoritmilor

Timp de trei decenii și jumătate, analiza electorală în România s-a concentrat pe „politica media” – un domeniu definit cu precădere de influența posturilor de televiziune și

reglementat, cu imperfecțiunile de rigoare, de Consiliul Național al Audiovizualului (CNA). Anul electoral 2024 a marcat o ruptură fundamentală a acestei paradigme, culminând cu decizia fără precedent a Curții Constituționale a României (CCR) de a anula primul tur al alegerilor prezi-

dențiale¹. Miza alegerilor nu s-a mai jucat în spațiul media tradițional, ci a fost câștigată – și ulterior invalidată – într-un nou teatru de operațiuni: spațiul algoritmic.

Acest fenomen nu este unic, ci reprezintă o tendință globală. Literatura de specialitate confirmă că expansiunea rapidă a inteligenței artificiale este folosită atât pentru automatizarea comunicării politice (microtargeting, astroturfing, optimizarea mesajelor), cât și pentru producerea de conținut sintetic (deepfakes, texte generate robotic), cu scopul de a modifica percepția alegătorilor². Studiile academice au avertizat că astfel de campanii pot compromite integritatea electorală, pot accelera dezinformarea și pot alimenta discursuri instigatoare la ură, slăbind încrederea în instituții³.

Această analiză definește „politica algoritmilor” ca fiind utilizarea strategică a sistemelor de recomandare ale platformelor, a datelor predictive și a inteligenței artificiale (AI) generative pentru a modela discursul public, a fabrica un consens anorganic și a obține rezultate politice specifice, adesea prin eludarea completă a cadrului legal tradițional. Criza electorală din 2024 nu a fost un accident sau un fenomen „grassroots” spontan. A fost rezultatul demonstrabil al unei operațiuni de război hibrid, sofisticate și pre-poziționate. Această operațiune a utilizat o infrastructură tehnică avansată, bazată pe AI (generare, țarghetare, amplificare), suprapusă cu atacuri cibernetice directe asupra infrastructurii electorale (AEP și BEC)⁴, pentru a atinge un obiectiv

strategic: normalizarea și validarea publică a unui discurs extremist tripartit – mesianic, anti-european și prorur – vectorizat prin campania candidatului independent Călin Georgescu.

Teza centrală a acestui articol este că strategia AI a creat o „inegalitate flagrantă”⁵ în competiția electorală, exploatând un vid sistemic de reglementare. În timp ce instituțiile tradiționale de supraveghere (CNA, AEP) au rămas fixate pe un model de campanie depășit, o armă algoritmică a reușit să vicieze fundamental procesul democratic, demonstrând vulnerabilitatea critică a statelor membre UE în fața noilor tehnologii de influență⁶.

Anatomia unei arme electorale: Deconstrucția strategiei AI

Analiza campaniei care a dus la anularea scrutinului din 2024 relevă o operațiune complexă, a cărei arhitectură tehnică depășește radical capacitățile unei campanii independente tradiționale.

Paradoxul „zero cheltuieli”, dovada campaniei anorganice

Punctul de plecare al oricărei investigații asupra acestei campanii este paradoxul financiar. Rapoartele tehnice ale organizațiilor de monitorizare, precum Expert Forum (EFOR), au semnalat prompt că, în datele publicate de Autoritatea Electorală Permanentă (AEP), candidatul Călin Georgescu a raportat „zero venituri și zero cheltuieli”⁷. Într-o ana-

liză transmisă AEP, EFOR a catalogat această situație ca fiind „nevero-similă”⁸ pentru o campanie care a obținut aproape 23% din voturi la nivel național.

Acest paradox nu este o simplă omisiune birocratică; el reprezintă dovada *prima facie* a naturii anorganice a operațiunii. Datele serviciilor de informații confirmă acest lucru: deși candidatul a declarat „0 lei buget”⁹, platforma *TikTok* a confirmat autorităților române că doar utilizatorul „bogpr” (Bogdan Peșchir) a efectuat plăți în valoare de 381.000 de dolari în perioada 24 octombrie – 24 noiembrie 2024 către conturi implicate în promovarea candidatului¹⁰. Alte metode de finanțare au inclus contactarea influencerilor români de către „FA Agency”, o firmă de origine sud-africană, care oferea 1 000 de euro pentru un singur videoclip de promovare¹¹. Modelul „zero cheltuieli” anulează *de facto* întreaga legislație privind finanțarea partidelor și a campaniilor, demonstrând că AEP nu dispune de instrumentele necesare pentru a audita o campanie algoritmică.

Generarea de conținut (AI generativ și “firehose of falsehood”)

Strategia de conținut a candidatului Călin Georgescu a fost caracterizată de evitarea deliberată a mass-mediei tradiționale și a dezbaterilor publice, optând în schimb pentru o comunicare directă, neintermediată, prin social media și podcast-uri¹². Această „industrie a conținutului sin-

tetic” este un mecanism tehnic prin care IA este folosită pentru a genera un volum mare de texte, imagini și videoclipuri, capabile să creeze iluzii despre fapte sau evenimente. Acest volum masiv de conținut, necesar pentru a satura spațiul digital, se aliniază modelului de dezinformare „firehose of falsehood” (furtuna de minciuni)¹³, menționat inclusiv în analizele Ministerului Public¹⁴.

Rapoartele serviciilor de informații plasează această tactică într-un context internațional: agresiunea informațională și „folosirea inteligenței artificiale pentru crearea rapidă de conținut” este un *modus operandi* specific operațiunilor rusești¹⁵. Mai mult, s-a constatat că „campania informațională <Echilibru și Verticalitate> este identică cu campania <Frate lângă Frate> derulată de Federația Rusă în Ucraina”, ambele bazându-se pe manipularea unor micro-influenceri legitimi¹⁶. Deși nu direct atribuit campaniei Georgescu, ecosistemul de dezinformare din 2024 a inclus și utilizarea de deepfakes pentru a discredita oponentii sau a crea narațiuni false conexe, precum escrocheria „Neptun Deep” care a folosit în mod fals imaginea lui Georgescu¹⁷.

Micro-targetarea de precizie și exploatarea algoritmică

Conținutul generat nu a fost pur și simplu publicat; a fost injectat strategic în ecosistemul algoritmic al platformelor, cu precădere *TikTok*. Această tactică, microtargeting-ul, este faci-

litată de IA prin analiza datelor personale și a comportamentului online, permițând influențarea opțiunii electorale într-un mod subtil și greu de detectat¹⁸. Campania nu s-a limitat la a posta, ci a *manipulat* activ algoritmul de recomandare al platformei¹⁹.

Datele CSAT / MAI arată că un număr de peste 100 de influenceri, care însumau peste 8 milioane de urmăritori activi, au fost cooptați (adesea prin manipulare, fără a cunoaște beneficiarul real) și plătiți (de exemplu cu 400 de lei pentru 20.000 de urmăritori) pentru a promova hashtag-uri predefinite precum #echilibrusiverticalitate, #prezidentiale2024 și #unliderpotrivitpentrumine²⁰. Această campanie a generat o creștere abruptă, „explozia” vizualizărilor având loc după 25 noiembrie 2024²¹. Rezultatul a fost o creștere a candidatului de la sub 1% în sondaje (30 octombrie – 5 noiembrie) la 10.6% (20-21 noiembrie) și, în final, la 22,94% în ziua votului²², „păcălind” algoritmul să promoveze exponențial conținutul.

Amplificarea anorganică (boți, conturi latente și coordonare off-platform)

Dacă AI-ul generativ a creat „mușnița” și algoritmi predictivi au localizat „țintele”, infrastructura de amplificare anorganică a reprezentat „artileria”. Aceasta nu a fost o mișcare „grassroots”, ci o operațiune tehnică complexă, cu resurse semnificative. Dovezile tehnice din documentele CSAT/SRI sunt incontestabile:

1. **Rețeaua de bază:** O rețea formată inițial din 25 000 de conturi *TikTok* a devenit foarte activă cu două săptămâni înainte de scrutin²³.
2. **Tactica „Sleeper Cell” (Conturi Latente):** Dovada crucială a premeditării și a naturii de operațiune hibridă: 797 dintre conturile din această rețea „au fost create încă din anul 2016”. Aceste conturi au avut o „activitate foarte redusă (1%) până la 11 noiembrie 2024, moment la care a fost activată la capacitate maximă întreaga rețea”²⁴. Aceasta este o tactică specifică operațiunilor de influență pre-poziționate, nu unei campanii electorale spontane.
3. **Tehnici avansate de eludare:** Un detaliu tehnic de mare importanță relevă un actor sofisticat: „nu au fost utilizate resurse tehnice comune și nu au fost observate adrese IP partajate (IP sharing). Concret, conturile de *TikTok* în cauză au avut alocate adrese IP unice”²⁵. Utilizarea de IP-uri unice pentru mii de conturi este o metodă extrem de costisitoare, menită să evite detecția automată a platformelor și indică un operator cu resurse de nivel statal.
4. **Coordonare umană Off-Platform:** Amplificarea a fost coordonată „uman” prin aplicația Telegram, pe canalul „@propagatorcg”²⁶. Administratorii ofereau instrucțiuni precise „voluntarilor” despre cum să manipuleze algoritmul: „indicații pentru eludarea mecanismelor de

verificare ale platformei TikTok (înregistrarea ecranelor și modificarea conținutului pentru a fi percepute de platformă drept conținut original)”²⁷.

5. **Evaluarea Platformei: TikTok** însăși a apreciat că această creștere nu a fost organică, numind-o o ”mass guerilla political campaign”²⁸ și suspectând coordonarea de către un „actor statal” care „operează mai discret din afară” folosind tehnici de „roiuri” (swarming)²⁹.

Această operațiune a fost dublată de atacuri cibernetice directe: peste 85.000 de atacuri (SQL Injection, XSS) au vizat infrastructura AEP și STS, iar credențiale de acces pentru bec.ro și roaep.ro au fost publicate pe „platforme de criminalitate cibernetică de sorginte rusă”³⁰.

Impactul strategic: Fabricarea consimțământului pentru extremism

Această infrastructură AI nu a fost doar un megafon; a fost un laborator de inginerie socială conceput pentru a normaliza un discurs extremist specific. Preocuparea centrală, confirmată de literatura de specialitate, este diseminarea mesajelor instigatoare la ură facilitată de cadrele narrative manipulate ale sistemelor AI, care re-modelează percepția publică spre ostilitate³¹. Strategia a funcționat pe trei axe simultane.

Axa 1: Ingineria mesianismului ca tehnică politică

Prima axă a fost construirea încrederii. Discursul lui Călin Georgescu a fost analizat ca fiind o tehnologie politică de marketing. Cu vintechieile specifice: „poporul roman”, „demnitatea poporului roman”, „pacea”, „familia” și „Dumnezeu”³² au fost transformate de rețeaua AI în unități de conținut viral. Auto-definirea candidatului ca „o chemare”³³ și nu o campanie electorală, a fost proiectată special pentru publicul anti-sistem. Dezinformarea alimentată de IA, așa cum s-a văzut în acest caz, este proiectată pentru a reduce încrederea în instituțiile consacrate. Pentru a întări această imagine, operațiunea a inclus crearea a zeci de conturi TikTok false care au utilizat sigla SRI și titulatura „Brigada Antiteroristă” (BAT), „inducând astfel, în fals, ideea că instituțiile statului îl susțin pe acesta”³⁴.

Axa 2: Normalizarea euroscepticismului radical (anti-UE)

A doua axă a fost crearea unei failli de nemulțumire. Strategia AI a preluat un euroscepticism legitim și l-a transformat într-un discurs al urii anti-UE și anti-occidental. Un raport de analiză al Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES)³⁵ identifică „suveranismul” ca fiind un „ambalaj” conceptual folosit pentru a livra o „retorică extremist”, xenofobă și anti-imigrație³⁶. Algoritmii, prin însăși natura lor, favorizează conținutul polarizant³⁷. Strategia AI a exploatat conștient acest ”algorithmic bias”. Narațiuni despre „dic-

tatura de la Bruxelles” sau „Occidentul decadent”³⁸ au fost injectate în rețea. Această tactică se aliniază perfect cu obiectivele documentate ale Federației Ruse de a „sprijinirea unor candidați eurosceptici” în statele de pe flancul estic³⁹.

Axa 3: Operaționalizarea narațiunilor pro-ruse

A treia axă reprezintă finalitatea strategică a operațiunii: erodarea sprijinului României pentru arhitectura de securitate euro-atlantică. Legătura de cauzalitate este susținută de dovezi multiple:

1. Avertismentul pre-electoral:

Încă din septembrie 2024, un raport EFOR avertiza că „narațiuni-mascate pro-Kremlin fuzionează și devin virale”⁴⁰ și, profetic, că acestea „sunt cele folosite ulterior de Georgescu”.

2. Infrastructura de diseminare:

Raportul Ministerului Public privind acțiunile hibride confirmă „diseminarea prin intermediul unor grupuri de socializare utilizate pentru distribuirea propagandei pro-ruse la nivel național”, numind explicit grupuri de Telegram precum „PRO RUSIA” și „BRICS/Румынско-русская дружба”⁴¹. TikTok a confirmat, de asemenea, identificarea unei rețele de conturi afiliate cu publicația rusă Sputnik, care viza utilizatorii din România și Republica Moldova⁴².

3. Profilul Susținătorilor: Datele CSAT / MAI arată că unii dintre susținătorii implicați în promova-

rea online și cumpărarea de voturi sunt „exponenți ai mediilor extremiste ... implicate anterior în promovarea unor narative proruse, antisemite, anti NATO sau împotriva Ucrainei”⁴³. Un susținător identificat, care a afirmat că a susținut financiar campania, avea postate pe profilul său fotografii mai vechi de promovare a lui Vladimir Putin⁴⁴.

4. Mesajul Livrat: Cuvântul-cheie

„pacea” este un eufemism standard al propagandei Kremlinului (capitularea Ucrainei)⁴⁵. Acesta a fost completat de atacuri directe la adresa NATO, numită „o organizație ofensivă”⁴⁶, subminând direct pilonii de securitate ai României, un obiectiv prioritar al Rusiei, care consideră România o „țintă pentru acțiuni hibride agresive”, conform documentelor SIE prezentate în CSAT și desecretizate.

Vidul de reglementare: Eșecul sistemic în fața războiului algoritmic

Anularea alegerilor din 2024 nu este doar eșecul unui candidat, ci un eșec sistemic al întregului aparat de reglementare democratică, atât la nivel național, cât și european.

Decalajul fatal: Orbirea reglementatorului tradițional (CSAT/CNA)

În timp ce operațiunea algoritmică descrisă mai sus se afla în plină des-

fășurare, implicând 25.000 de conturi și finanțări nedeclarate de sute de mii de dolari, reglementatorul media tradițional, CNA (CSAT / CNA), era preocupat de un război complet diferit: analiza legislației și practicilor de reglementare media (ex. Legea 33/2007) arată un focus pe media tradițională (TV, radio, presă scrisă).

Candidatul Georgescu a câștigat alegerile printr-o strategie de *arbitraj de reglementare*. Acesta a evitat deliberat și complet media tradițională, făcând astfel întregul aparat de supraveghere al CNA irelevant. Chiar și atunci când Biroul Electoral Central (BEC) a acționat, prin Decizia nr. 175D din 20 noiembrie 2024, dispunând înlăturarea materialelor de propagandă nemarcate, eșecul a fost total. *TikTok* a confirmat primirea solicitării, dar nu a șters conținutul, catalogând postările pur electorale drept „postări de divertisment” (entertainment) și permițând astfel ca acestea să continue să fie disponibile, inclusiv în ziua alegerilor.

Limitele noilor instrumente: Cazul României ca „test de stress” eșuat pentru DSA

Alegerile din România au reprezentat primul „test de stress” real la scară largă pentru noul cadru legislativ european, Actul privind Serviciile Digitale (Digital Services Act – DSA). Testul a fost un eșec preventiv.

DSA, menit să responsabilizeze platformele foarte mari (VLOPs) pentru riscurile sistemice pe care le

generează, s-a dovedit a fi un instrument pur reactiv. Comisia Europeană a deschis proceduri formale împotriva *TikTok* pentru eșecul în gestionarea riscurilor electorale abia pe 17 decembrie 2024⁴⁷, după ce procesul electoral fusese deja anulat de CCR și dauna fusese consumată. Așa cum subliniază o analiză de la TechPolicy.Press, „inegalitatea flagrantă” creată de candidatul care a „manipulat tehnologiile digitale” a demonstrat că DSA, în forma sa actuală de implementare, nu a reușit să asigure un mediu electoral echitabil⁴⁸.

Pericolul iminent: Eșecul de proiectare al AI Act

Privind spre viitor, cea mai alarmantă concluzie este că nici măcar Actul privind Inteligența Artificială (AI Act), în forma sa finală, nu ar fi prevenit această situație. Problema constă într-un defect de proiectare fundamental.

Conform analizelor, AI Act clasifică sistemele AI ca fiind „cu risc ridicat” (high-risk) – și, prin urmare, supuse unor reglementări stricte – dacă sunt *intenționate* („intended”) să influențeze rezultatul alegerilor (Anexa III, Secțiunea 8(b)). Această formulare este fatală. O platformă precum TikTok va susține întotdeauna că sistemul său *nu* este „intenționat” să influențeze alegerile; el este „intenționat” să maximizeze timpul petrecut pe platformă (*engagement*). Faptul că acest sistem este *vulnerabilitatea perfectă* pentru a fi *exploatat* de actori terți este exact ceea ce de-

monstrează datele SIE: actori ostili dezvoltă „module de inteligență artificială generative” pentru a crea mesaje de propagandă „adaptate, în timp real, la nivel de individ”, exploatând exact sistemul de recomandare⁴⁹.

Concluzii și strategii de răspuns pentru era AI

Anularea alegerilor din 2024 nu trebuie privită ca un eveniment izolat, ci drept *Cazul Zero* al războiului electoral algoritmic pe teritoriul Uniunii Europene. Cazul României este o demonstrație de laborator a faptului că AI (predictiv și generativ) a devenit o armă strategică capabilă să creeze un candidat din obscuritate, să-i fabrice sprijinul popular (folosind conturi latente din 2016 și IP-uri unice) și să-i normalizeze discursul extremist, toate acestea fiind suprapuse peste atacuri cibernetice directe asupra infrastructurii electorale, ducând la vicierea reală a procesului democratic.

Pentru a supraviețui acestei noi ere, răspunsul strategic trebuie să depășească complet paradigma reglementării media tradiționale. În pregătirea pentru alegerile din viitor, pot fi luate în calcul următoarele direcții de acțiune:

1. **Audit algoritmic obligatoriu și în timp real:** Trebuie să depășim modelul auditurilor *post-factum* prevăzute de DSA. Este necesară impunerea unor „teste de stres” (stress tests) algoritmice obligatorii, realizate de terți independenți (cercetători, societate civilă), în

timpul perioadelor electorale critice. Aceste audituri necesită acces real la datele platformelor pentru a identifica în timp real campaniile de „astroturfing” și manipulare.

2. **Re-calibrarea AI Act (de la intenție la impact):** Legislația europeană trebuie amendată. Sistemele de recomandare ale Platformelor Online Foarte Mari (VLOPs) trebuie clasificate *automat* ca fiind „cu risc ridicat” (*high-risk*) în contexte electorale, pe baza *impactului* lor sistemic demonstrat asupra discursului civic, nu pe baza „intenției” declarate a producătorului.
3. **Alfabetizare media focusată pe AI (Pre-bunking):** Eforturile de educație publică trebuie să treacă de la „de-bunking” (demonstrarea știrilor false) la „pre-bunking”. Programele naționale de alfabetizare media trebuie să educe publicul cu privire la *mecanismele* AI: cum să recunoască un deepfake⁵⁰, cum funcționează micro-targetarea și cum să identifice semnele unei campanii anorganice (astroturfing)⁵¹.
4. **Transparența finanțării digitale (“Follow the Data”):** Este vital ca Autoritatea Electorală Permanentă (AEP) să fie obligată să colaboreze structural cu ANCOM (Coordonatorul Serviciilor Digitale). Rapoartele financiare care arată „zero cheltuieli” trebuie corelate automat cu datele din bibliotecile de publicitate (ex. Meta Ad Library) și cu rapoartele de risc ale platformelor, pentru a identifi-

ca și investiga proactiv campaniile anorganice nedecarate, precum plățile de 381 000 de dolari identi-

ficate pe *TikTok*. Aceste măsuri sunt vitale pentru consolidarea rezilienței instituționale.

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De la „Trădare să fie...” la aplauze și scandaluri: Parlamentarismul românesc prin patru epoci

[“From ‘Let There Be Treason...’ to Applause and Scandals: Romanian Parliamentarism Across Four Eras”]

Dacian VASINCU

Abstract: *This essay traces the evolution of the Romanian Parliament across four distinct eras, highlighting how the institution has reflected and shaped national political culture. Beginning with the post-1866 constitutional order and the limited but ceremonious parliament of the late 19th century, it follows the interwar explosion of democratic energy, the hollow unanimity of the Communist period, and the turbulent post-1989 transition to contemporary politics. Through anecdotes, satirical references and key legislative milestones, it shows how the Romanian legislature has oscillated between moments of high principle and episodes of moral decline and populist spectacle. The study concludes that the Parliament remains a mirror of broader societal transformations and that its legitimacy depends on renewed ethical standards and civic engagement.*

Keywords: *Romanian Parliament, political history, interwar democracy, Communist regime, parliamentary culture.*

Introducere

România a traversat o cale istorică complexă și tumultuoasă în construirea unui sistem parlamentar solid, reflectând tranziția de la elite tradiționale la un sistem democratic bazat pe participarea largă a cetățenilor. Evoluția parlamentarismului românesc este un exemplu fascinant al modului în care reformele politice și evenimentele istorice majore, precum Constituțiile din 1866 și 1923 și Marea Unire din 1918, au influențat dezvoltarea democrației. Analiza de

față propune o comparație succintă între toate perioadele când Parlamentul României a fost martorul tuturor transformărilor naționale majore din ultimii aproape 150 de ani – de la proclamarea Independenței în 1877 până la crizele contemporane ale pandemiei și războiului de la graniță. În acest lung răstimp, scena parlamentară a cunoscut momente de glorie și momente de comedie amară, a produs atât legi fundamentale cât și farse legislative. Vom porni într-o călătorie narativ-investigativă prin istoria parlamentarismului românesc,

trecând prin patru epoci distincte: *perioada antebelică (1877-1914)*, *interbelică (1918-1938)*, *comunistă (1947-1989)* și *post-decembristă (1990-2025)*. Fiecare epocă are eroii și anti-eroii săi, discursurile ei memorabile și scandalurile ei pitorești. Iar în oglindă, profilul parlamentarului român evoluează de la boierul elegant cu joben din Belle Époque la activistul vocal în tricou inscripționat din zilele noastre și cu # (haștag) la purtător. Să explorăm, așadar, cum s-a transformat această instituție – cândva templu al elocinței elitiste, altădată tribună a unanimității forțate, astăzi un amestec pestriț de voci democratice și stridente populiste – păstrând mereu ceva din spiritul locului.

Parlamentul antebelic (1877-1914): elita politică între satire și statornicie

Epoca antebelică a parlamentarismului românesc se desfășoară sub semnul **monarhiei constituționale** instaurate de Carol I. După războiul de Independență, tânărul regat avea o Constituție modernă (adoptată în 1866) și un Parlament bicameral (Senat și Adunarea Deputaților) inspirat de modelele democratice occidentale. Însă, în practică, **democrația era limitată se sistemul de vot censitar** – dreptul de vot aparținea doar unui segment restrâns (bărbați cu avere și educație), așa încât forul legislativ era dominat de **elita boierească și burgheză** în formare. În această perioadă regăsim două mari partide care se succed la putere și își

împart scena politică: Partidul Conservator (înființat în 1871) și Partidul Național-Liberal (1875)¹. Conservatorii reprezentau vechile familii boierești și marii proprietari funciari, pleddând pentru menținerea ordinii tradiționale, în timp ce liberalii, grupați în jurul energiceii dinastii Brătianu, promovau interesele burgheziei emergente, industrializarea și modernizarea statului. Una din modalitățile alese pentru a realiza stabilitatea guvernamentală a fost **rotativa guvernamentală** – alternanța la putere a celor două partide prin alegeri adesea *aranjate* – a devenit o practică obișnuită în timpul domniei Regelui Carol I, garantând o *stabilitate de fațadă*, chiar dacă uneori majoritățile parlamentare erau obținute prin **alegeri de operetă** (se glumea că rezultatul se cunoaște dinainte, cu „urna de vot” bine gestionată de prefecți în favoarea guvernului).

Deputații antebelici se remarcă prin oratorie aleasă, adesea formată pe băncile universităților occidentale. **Discursurile** din Parlament deveneau evenimente mondene, relatate pe larg în gazete. Un moment definitoriu, cu valoare de simbol național, l-a constituit declarația independenței la 9/21 mai 1877: în Adunarea Deputaților, Mihail Kogălniceanu – ministrul de Externe al vremii – a rostit cuvintele istorice „*suntem independenți, suntem națiune de sine stătătoare*”², proclamând ruptura totală de Imperiul Otoman. Sala a izbucnit în ovații entuziaste, iar a doua zi principele Carol a promulgat proclamația. Parlamentul României devenea astfel

locul nașterii statului independent român. Ironia sorții a făcut însă ca independența să fie câștigată pe câmpul de luptă alături de **Imperiul Rus** (aliatul de conjunctură), detaliu asupra căruia Kogălniceanu a trecut diplomatic cu vederea în discursul său, mai ales că rușii vor lua sudul Basarabiei (redobândit în 1856) în contrapartidă cu Dobrogea, care va fi revendicată de tânăra Românie (mai puțin sudul Dobrogei – *Cadrilaterul* – pe care tot rușii au insistat să rămână la bulgari, e adevărat doar până în 1913).

Atmosfera **vie** a dezbatelor parlamentare antebelice nu a scăpat de spiritul critic al contemporanilor. Marele dramaturg Ion Luca Caragiale, fin observator al moravurilor politice, a surprins în comediiile sale esența a ceea ce se petrecea uneori în culisele puterii. În celebra piesă *O scrisoare pierdută* (1884), inspirată de campaniile electorale ale vremii, personajul Farfuridi rostește o replică devenită proverbială, emblematică pentru **ipocrizia politicienilor** de atunci: „*Trădare să fie, dacă o cer interesele partidului, dar s-o știm și noi!*”³. Aluzia satirică la aranjamentele de culise și trădările mascate ale „oamenilor de bine” din Parlament era pe deplin înțeleasă de publicul vremii.

Parlamentul antebelic a avut parte și de **momente tensionate**, mai ales când marile probleme sociale băteau la ușă. Un episod dramatic a fost Răscoala țărănească din 1907, când țărani săraci, exploatați de arendași, s-au ridicat la luptă. Revolta, reprimată sângeros de armată, a zguduit

conștiințele epocii: peste zece mii de țărani au fost uciși, conform unor estimări ale istoricilor. În Parlament, opoziția a cerut socoteală guvernului conservator pentru această tragedie, iar regele Carol I – îngrijorat de proporțiile violențelor și de reacțiile internaționale – i-a *invitat ferm* pe conservatori să cedeze puterea liberalilor lui Dimitrie Sturdza pentru a reinstaura ordinea. Se spune că la deschiderea sesiunii legislative de după răsccoală, Carol I ar fi fost atât de marcat încât a cerut parlamentarilor „**să treacă la ordinea de zi**” fără să insiste asupra subiectului, semn al disconfortului monarhului față de discuțiile pe tema țărănimii. Fără îndoială, **liniștea aparentă** a Camerei nu putea ascunde fisurile tot mai mari dintre clasa politică și marea masă a populației majoritar rurală, lipsită de reprezentare.

În ansamblu, perioada antebelică ne înfățișează un **parlament elitist**, dominat de figuri cu cilindru și redingotă, care uneori erau **rupte de realitățile sociale** de la sate. Ședințele se desfășurau cu solemnitate, după ritualuri împrumutate de la Westminster: discursul Tronului la început de sesiune, dezbateri procedurale elevate, dueluri verbale între oratori de clasă. Dar sub această fațadă de politețe aristocratică mocneau *pasiuni partizane și interese de grup*, pe care pamfletele și caricaturile vremii le surprindeau cu umor. Primii 40 de ani de parlamentarism românesc modern s-au încheiat brusc odată cu izbucnirea Primului Război Mondial în 1914. Mulți parlamentari

au plecat pe front sau în refugiu la Iași (în 1916–1917, când Bucureștiul a fost ocupat de inamic), iar forul legislativ și-a întrerupt activitatea normală, pregătindu-se fără să știe pentru **marea schimbare** ce avea să vină: votul universal și *România Mare*⁴.

Parlamentarismul interbelic (1918-1938): între exuberanța democratică și umbrele extremismului

În toamna lui 1918, la capătul războiului mondial, România se înfățișa radical schimbată: **Marea Unire** adusese alături de Vechiul Regat provinciile istorice Basarabia, Bucovina și Transilvania, dublând teritoriul și populația țării. O societate nouă, mult mai complexă, își cerea dreptul la reprezentare. Clasa politică a răspuns provocării adoptând de urgență în 1918 o lege electorală care introducea **votul universal masculin**, renunțând la vechiul sistem censitar.

După Marea Unire din 1918, România a integrat noile provincii prin reforme semnificative. Primul Parlament al României Mari, ales pe baza votului universal masculin în 1919, a fost marcat de tensiuni politice între regiunile nou unite și de pluralismul politic intens. Primul Parlament al României Mari (1919)⁵ a reprezentat un pas semnificativ către democratizarea vieții politice, marcând transferul de la un sistem bazat pe vot censitar la votul universal (doar pentru bărbați). Acest mo-

ment a fost fundamental în consolidarea democrației reprezentative în România, cu un accent pe incluziunea socială și regională, dar și pe centralizarea puterii legislative”⁶.

Alegerile parlamentare din 1919 au deschis calea unor reforme semnificative în sfera politică, economică și administrativă, cum ar fi introducerea votului universal și reforma agrară, care au avut un impact considerabil asupra mentalității colective și au încurajat implicarea cetățenilor în viața politică. Pluralismul politic s-a intensificat considerabil. Între cele două războaie mondiale, această perioadă a fost caracterizată de evenimente de stabilitate politică, dar și de instabilitate. În această perioadă, au luat naștere și s-au afirmat noi doctrine politice, acoperind întregul spectru politic, de la stânga radicală la dreapta extremă, în timp ce anumite partide tradiționale au dispărut din scena politică⁷.

Parlamentul a fost scena unor conflicte ideologice între conservatori, liberali și socialiști, în timp ce reformele agrare și instabilitatea politică au definit această perioadă⁸. Dintr-odată, baza electorală a Parlamentului s-a lărgit enorm: dacă înainte de 1914 un deputat era ales de câteva sute de boieri și burghezi din colegiul său, după reformă un deputat ajungea să reprezinte zeci de mii de cetățean⁹. Țărănimea – țăranul de rând care alcătuia ~80% din populație – a devenit principalul corp electoral, mutând centrul de greutate al politicii din saloanele urbane către **mahalalele orașelor și cătunele de**

la sate. Candidații au început să curete țara în campanii electorale efervescente, organizând mitinguri prin târguri și oboare, improvizând tribune în fața mulțimilor pestrițe de țărani, meseriași, intelectuali și comercianți. În anii 1919-1937, România Mare a organizat nu mai puțin de **zece scrutinuri parlamentare** – un adevărat exercițiu democratic maraton, mai ales dacă ne gândim că în toată perioada antebelică fusese nevoie de mai puține alegeri.

Noile condiții au adus o **pulverizare** a vieții politice. Au apărut numeroase partide și facțiuni, de la **mari alianțe naționale** până la grupuscule regionale sau ideologice. Dacă în Vechiul Regat de dinainte de 1918 jocul era dominat de două formațiuni, după Unire scena s-a diversificat: Partidul Național-Liberal (PNL) condus de **familia Brătianu** a rămas o forță majoră, dar a pierdut temporar alegerile din 1919 în fața **Partidului Țărănesc** și a unei coaliții conduse de Alexandru Vaida-Voevod. În anii '20 s-au făcut și desăcut guverne pe bandă rulantă. Conservatorii vechi, rămași fără bazin electoral după reforma agrară radicală din 1921, practic au dispărut de pe scena politică – ultimul guvern conservator pur (Alexandru Marghioloman) pierzând puterea odată cu reintrarea României în război, iar la alegerile de după război abia au mai obținut câteva mandate. În schimb, a venit puternic din urmă **Partidul Țărănesc** (condus de Ion Mihalache, în Vechiul Regat) care s-a unit cu Partidul Național Român din

Transilvania (al lui Iuliu Maniu) formând **Partidul Național-Țărănesc (PNT)** în 1926¹⁰. PNT reprezenta milioanele de țărani mici proprietari și intelectuali ardeleni, având o bază socială mai largă decât liberalii. Alternanța la guvernare între PNL și PNT a marcat anii '20-'30: liberalii au guvernat ferm 1922-1928 sub Ion I.C. Brătianu, apoi țărăniștii au venit la putere în 1928 odată cu căderea dinastiei Brătianu și au promis „*era nouă*” – un vast program de reforme care însă a dezamăgit foarte repede. De altfel, nici un partid nu a reușit să se mențină la putere pe toată durata mandatului de 4 ani – succesiunea guvernelor era adesea dictată de intrigi de palat și de jocuri de culise, în ciuda votului popular¹¹.

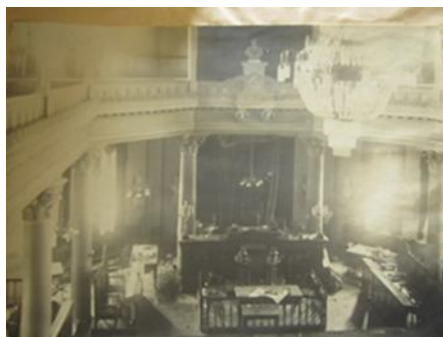
Atmosfera parlamentară interbelică era de o eferescență nemaivăzută în România. În noua **Adunare a Deputaților** din 1919 au intrat figuri diverse: profesori ardeleni, avocați basarabeni, preoți bucovineni, ba chiar și simpli țărani deveniți deputați (unii prezentându-se ostentativ în costum popular, ca simbol al noii ere democratice). Forfota din sala Parlamentului României (aflată în actualul Palat Patriarhal din București) reflecta frământările unei societăți în fierbere. Tribuna a fost martora unor discursuri strălucite – de pildă **Nicolae Iorga**, ales deputat de Iași, a electrizat națiunea în momente critice. Memorabil rămâne *discursul lui Iorga din decembrie 1916*, rostit la Iași în fața Parlamentului refugiat și a guvernului Brătianu, când țara era aproape îngenunchată de invazia

germană. Iorga, cu spiritul lui inegalabil, a chemat atunci la rezistență cu vorbe de foc, ridicând moralul unui popor aflat la pământ. Discursul a fost atât de puternic încât a fost imediat tipărit și trimis în tranșee soldaților, fiind considerat „un manifest extraordinar care îndemna la rezistență, luptă și iubire de țară... Cu greu se poate întâlni un discurs la fel de motivant”¹². România a rezistat, și peste doar doi ani parlamentarii aveau să legifereze România Mare.

Totuși, **umbra violenței** și a extremismului a planat și ea peste viața parlamentară interbelică. În entuziasmul democratizării, în legislativ au pătruns nu doar democrat-liberalii și țărăniștii moderați, ci și exponenți ai extremelor. La stânga, mica facțiune comunistă (transformată din vechiul Partid Socialist) a intrat în conflict direct cu statul – culminând cu **aten-tatul cu bombă din Senat din 8**

decembrie 1920. În acea zi fatidică, un grup terorist de extremă stângă condus de anarhistul Max Goldstein a plasat o bombă artizanală în plenul Senatului României, în încercarea de a declanșa haosul revoluționar. Explozia a zguduit clădirea și a ucis pe loc trei demnitari – ministrul Justiției, Dimitrie Greceanu, și doi senatori, episcopul Demetriu Radu și Spirea Gheorghiu – rănind grav alte câteva persoane¹³. A fost primul act terorist din istoria parlamentarismului românesc, un șoc care a îndoliat țara și a dus la interzicerea comuniștilor. *Sala Senatului după atentatul cu bombă din 8 decembrie 1920, primul act terorist din istoria Parlamentului României.*

*Banca prezidiului și scaunele demnitarilor au fost distruse de explozie, trei persoane pierzându-și viața în atac*¹⁴.



La extrema dreaptă, către sfârșitul perioadei interbelice, mișcarea Legionară (Garda de Fier) și alte grupări ultranaționaliste au reușit și ele să trimită câțiva reprezentanți în Parlament, transformând uneori ședințele

în **scene de confruntare ideologică** aprinsă. Deputații legionari, cunoscuți pentru disciplina lor paramilitară, asistau îmbrăcați în cămăși verzi la lucrări și întrerupeau cu invective xenofobe sau religioase discursurile

adversarilor. Celebru a rămas un schimb de replici din 1936, când profesorul **Nicolae Iorga** – pe atunci senator neafiliat, dar mare moralist al națiunii – a criticat dur extremismul legionar, iar Corneliu Zelea Codreanu (liderul Gărzii de Fier, deși el personal nu era deputat în acel moment) i-a replicat cu insulte în presă, escaladând conflictul. Atmosfera din Parlament devenise atât de tensionată încât unii parlamentari veneau **înarmați**. Se vehiculează că însuși premierul liberal Gheorghe Tătărașcu purta un pistol ascuns la ședințe, de teamă să nu fie ținta vreunui atentat legionar – semn al timpuri lor tulburi.

În pofida acestor turbulențe, perioada interbelică rămâne vârsta de aur a **democrației parlamentare românești**. Parlamentul de atunci a dat țării Constituția din 1923 și legi fundamentale (reforma agrară, legea învățământului, organizarea administrativă etc.), și a funcționat ca un forum real de dezbatere asupra marilor probleme ale națiunii¹⁵. Tribuna parlamentară era respectată, iar marii oameni de stat – **Ion I.C. Brătianu, Iuliu Maniu, Nicolae Iorga, Octavian Goga, Take Ionescu** și mulți alții – străluceau prin replici memorabile și inteligență politică. Presa liberă însoțea critic fiecare discurs și fiecare lege, semn că opinia publică devenise parte a jocului.

Sfârșitul acestei epoci efervescente a venit însă brusc în 1938, când regele Carol al II-lea, obosit de haosul partidelor și tentat de modelul autoritar european, a dizolvat Parlamentul și a instaurat propria dictatură

regală. Constituția carlistă din 1938 a suspendat partidele politice și a transformat Parlamentul într-un organ decorativ, cu **un singur partid admis** (Frontul Renașterii Naționale) și reprezentare corporatistă. Se stingea astfel, temporar, lumina democrației parlamentare, sub amenințarea cumplită a unui nou război mondial la orizont.

Parlamentul în regimul comunist (1947-1989): unanimitate, propagandă și tăcere asurzitoare

În mod paradoxal, cea mai grandioasă clădire ridicată vreodată în România pentru a găzdui un legislativ – actualul Palat al Parlamentului, colosul de marmură din Dealul Spirii – a fost construită în anii '80, când **Parlamentul devenise o simplă marionetă**. Regimul comunist instalat după Al Doilea Război Mondial a păstrat aparența de parlament (numit pompos **Marea Adunare Națională, MAN**), însă în fapt întreaga putere legislativă era subordonată Partidului Comunist.

Alegerile organizate la 28 martie 1948 pentru Marea Adunare Națională au fost primele din istoria României în care femeile au avut drept de vot și de a fi alese – o schimbare majoră față de epoca anterioară. În mod ironic, accesul femeilor pe băncile Parlamentului (inclusiv figuri marcante ca Ana Pauker) s-a făcut odată cu pierderea oricărei reali puteri a forului legislativ. Marea Adunare Națională era un parlament

doar cu numele, ales pe liste unice controlate de comuniști și validat cu scoruri absurde de 98-99% din voturi. Deputații nu reprezentau cu adevărat poporul, ci erau desemnați de partid dintre „oamenii muncii”: muncitori fruntași, țărani cooperatiști, activiști, alături de câțiva intelectuali obedienți regimului. Ședințele Marii Adunări Naționale aveau loc de câteva ori pe an, de regulă câteva zile, în care se votau *în unanimitate* legile propuse de guvernul partidului unic. **Dezbateri reale nu existau** – orice lege era aprobată aproape automat, de cele mai multe ori prin ridicarea mâinii la comandă.

Imaginea claselor din Parlamentul comunist contrasta puternic cu tumultul interbelic: *liniște*, docilitate și aprobări entuziaste ale politicilor trasate de conducerea superioară. Deputații se ridicau în picioare și aplaudau îndelung atunci când liderul suprem, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej sau mai târziu Nicolae Ceaușescu, ținea un discurs. În analele acelor vremuri nu s-a înregistrat **nicio opoziție** – nicio luare de cuvânt critică, nicio amendare substanțială a unui proiect de lege. E adevărat că din când în când mai apărea o vociferare, dar tot aprobatoare, fără efect real. Dacă un antebelic ca Take Ionescu spunea odinioară că „*parlamentul e forul națiunii, unde se ciocnesc idei*”, în comunism parlamentul devenise un fel de *teatru cu actori disciplinați*. Singurele manifestări mai aparte erau cele coregrafice: votări în picioare cu „*Mâinile sus!*”, urale dirijate – de exemplu, la alegerea lui Ceaușescu

ca președinte al Republicii în 1974, toți deputații MAN s-au ridicat aclamând frenetic, într-o atmosferă demnă de **teatrul absurd**.

Totuși, au existat și în această perioadă **momente simbolice** în Parlament, deși regizate. Spre exemplu, la 1965, Marea Adunare Națională a adoptat cu pompă noua Constituție a Republicii Socialiste România, marcând ascensiunea lui Ceaușescu. La tribună, Ceaușescu a proclamat suveranitatea deplină față de Moscova, înscriind în Constituție prevederi menite să sublinieze independența față de tutela sovietică. Deputații au ovaționat pasaje întregi din discurs, iar presa a titrat entuziast că „*întregul popor, prin reprezentanții săi, susține linia partidului*”. Un alt episod notabil a fost în august 1968, când Ceaușescu a convocat o ședință extraordinară a MAN în care a condamnat invazia Uniunii Sovietice în Cehoslovacia. De această dată, reacția a fost autentică: mulți deputați (creând un precedent, continuat și după 1989), luând pentru prima dată cuvântul liber, au elogiat curajul liderului de a se opune Moscovei, iar populația a primit mesajul cu un entuziasm real. Preț de câteva luni, Parlamentul părea să capete un rol **patriotic**, de afirmare națională, nu doar decorativ.

Dar astfel de momente au fost rare. În marea majoritate a timpului, Marea Adunare Națională a funcționat ca un **serviciu de protocol** al PCR. Legile – fie că era vorba de naționalizări, de bugete cincinale sau de schimbarea denumirii țării – erau

votate fără obiecții. În comisii, discuțiile se reduceau la citirea rapoartelor. Din când în când, câte un activist mai zelos ținea un scurt laudatio despre *realizările mărețe* în circumscripția lui, urmat invariabil de ropote de aplauze. **Anecdotele** epocii spun că unii deputați adormeau în bănci de plictiseală, trezindu-se doar când tovarășii de lângă îi împungeau să ridice mâna la vot (atitudini continuate și după 1990 cu cunoscuți parlamentari actuali). Ședințele erau atât de formale încât durau uneori doar câteva ore, timp în care se „dezbăteau” și se adoptau zeci de legi. O notă umoristică amară: stenogramele acelor ani consemnează uneori intervenții de tipul „*Vă rugăm, tovarăși, votați mai repede, să nu răcim sala!*”, semn că până și obedientul prezidiu voia să termine *sceneta democratică* cât mai iute.

Pe plan **ideologic și social**, profilul parlamentarului comunist contrasta total cu cel interbelic. În locul intelectualilor cu opinie proprie și al politicianilor versați, în bănci stăteau muncitori, țărani cooperatiști și cadre de partid. Media de educație scăzuse (mulți aleși aveau doar studii medii sau *școala de partid*), deși regimul se lăuda că în felul acesta „*oamenii simpli*” conduc țara. Femeile erau prezente în număr fără precedent – într-adevăr un progres față de epocile anterioare – însă ele nu depășeau rolul de **figuranți politici**, aliniați la disciplina impusă. Practic, Parlamentul devenise un *organ de transmisie* al deciziilor luate în altă parte (în Biroul Politic al PCR).

Această realitate era limpede pentru toată lumea, mai ales că la nivelul opiniei publice se considera că „deputații” din Marea Adunare Națională nu reprezentau nici o importanță la nivel politic decizional. O glumă din anii '80 spunea că dacă s-ar reuni toți deputații într-o ședință în care Ceaușescu ar citi Pagini Auri în loc de raportul de activitate, tot s-ar vota în unanimitate aprobarea raportului.

În decembrie 1989, regimul comunist s-a prăbușit. Ultima sesiune a Marii Adunări Naționale, din 1989, a avut loc cu doar câteva zile înainte ca soții Ceaușescu să fie răsturnați. Se spune că Nicolae Ceaușescu intenționa să mai convoace MAN în ianuarie 1990 pentru a-l felicita pentru „realegerea” sa în fruntea partidului; istoria a decis altfel.

Parlamentul post-decembrist (1990-2025): democrație originală, tranziție și spectacol politic

Revoluția din 1989 a redat României libertatea și, implicit, **un parlament veritabil**, cu pluralism politic și dezbateri libere. Anii '90 au fost un timp al **entuziasmului democratic**, dar și al haosului controlat, cu o „*democrație originală*” (cum o numea chiar președintele Ion Iliescu) ce purta încă multe reminiscențe ale vechiului regim. Primul for legislativ liber ales după căderea comunismului – cunoscut ca **CPUN** (Consiliul Provizoriu de Uniune Națională) și apoi Adunarea Constituantă din 1990-1991 – a reunit laolaltă figuri extrem

de eterogene: foști demnitari comuniști convertiți la noua orânduire (membri ai FSN), disidenți anticomuniști întorși din exil, intelectuali și profesori proveniti din celebra **Piață a Universității**, precum și reprezentanți ai minorităților. La început, discursurile erau pline de retorică despre *noile libertăți*. Curând însă, forul a devenit scena unor **bătălii politice crâncene** între majoritarii FSN și opoziția istorică renăscută (PNT-CD, PNL, PSDR etc.).

Departate de unanimitatea anostă a Marii Adunări Naționale, Parlamentul anilor '90 a cunoscut din nou **vibrația conflictului** și chiar derapaje de limbaj sau comportament. Memorabil este episodul din 1991, în timpul adoptării noii Constituții, când liderul opoziției, **Corneliu Coposu** (senator PNT-CD), a fost huiduit de majoritatea FSN în momentul în care a încercat să aducă un omagiu Regelui Mihai. În semn de protest față de atitudinea ostilă, opoziția a părăsit sala – redând astfel scena bine-cunoscută a *boicotului parlamentar*, practică și în interbelic. Ședințele erau transmise la televizor și milioane de cetățeni urmăreau fascinați spectacolul noii democrații, în care aleșii poporului își aruncau replici tăioase, uneori amuzante, alteori scandaloase. Președintele de ședință de atunci, **Dan Marțian** (FSN), a rămas în folclorul politic pentru replicile sale colorate către opoziție – adresându-se unui deputat agitat cu „*Bei niște apă, domnule, și calmează-te!*”, sau confundând termeni în mod comic (celebra scenă în care

nu a înțeles cuvântul „gâde” dintr-un citat, întrebând mirat: „*Cine-i găina?*”) ¹⁶. Astfel de momente, deopotrivă hilare și simptomatice, marcau **procesul dificil de readucere a democției și logicii în deliberările parlamentare** după decenii de monolog.

Anii 1992–2004 au însemnat consolidarea **bicameralismului** (Senat și Camera Deputaților) și alternanța la putere între stânga post-comunistă (PDSR / PSD) și coalițiile de centru-dreapta (Convenția Democratică și aliații). Parlamentul și-a recâștigat rolul central în arhitectura statului, legiferând reformele economiei de piață și ale statului de drept. Totodată, a devenit un spațiu al **pasiunilor politice intense** și uneori al exagerărilor. În 1994, de pildă, opoziția a inițiat prima moțiune de cenzură post-'89, prilej cu care retorica din plen a atins cote incendiare – într-un discurs, un parlamentar al puterii a comparat gestul opoziției cu „*o lovitură de stat lașă*”, stârnind rumoare. Parlamentarii români, deși redeveniseră *aleșii poporului*, nu se bucurau de o imagine prea bună în ochii publicului: **traseismul politic** (fenomenul aleșilor care schimbă partidul pentru avantaje) a apărut încă din legislaturile anilor '90, amintind într-un fel de *Farfuridi* al lui Caragiale.

Pe măsură ce democrația s-a maturizat, **scandalurile și momentele ironice** s-au ținut lanț. Parlamentul a fost scena unora dintre cele mai aprinse confruntări politice post-decembriste, multe transmise live la TV. Cine nu-și amintește de Corneliu Vadim Tudor, tribunul naționalist,

înșirând invective la adresa puterii de la tribuna Senatului la începutul anilor 2000, în timp ce colegii încercau să-l reducă la tăcere? Sau de momentul hazliu din 2001, când un deputat și-a scos **pantoful** și l-a trântit de pupitru în semn de protest (imitând gestul lui Hrușciiov de la ONU) – spre stupefacția asistenței? Un alt episod pitoresc: în 2015, în toiul dezbaterilor despre legea bugetului, un parlamentar al opoziției a venit la microfon cu o pâine uriașă pe care a înălțat-o teatral, acuzând puterea că „*lasă poporul fără pâine*”. Gestul, deși populist, a făcut deliciul presei.

După 2016, odată cu intrarea în Parlament a unor noi formațiuni antisistem (precum Uniunea Salvați România – USR, și mai târziu AUR), **spectacolul parlamentar** s-a amplificat. Noii veniți au adus un stil de protest inedit: ocuparea tribunei cu pancarte și lozinci. În 2017, deputații USR au blocat efectiv lucrările Camerei Deputaților afișând pe coli mari cuvântul „**HOTII**” în direcția coaliției de guvernare, în semn de protest față de modificările controversate la legile justiției. Puterea a reacționat prin sancționarea protestatarilor, dar imaginile cu tinerii parlamentari lipiți de tribuna Parlamentului, ținând pancarte și strigând „**Rușine să vă fie!**”, au făcut înconjurul internetului, spre deliciul publicului.

Unul dintre cele mai **tensionate episoade recente** rămâne cel din februarie 2022, când liderul AUR, partid radical, George Simion, a urcat

la tribună în timpul discursului ministrului Energiei, Virgil Popescu, și l-a apucat de guler strigându-i repetat în față „*Hoțule! Hoțule!*”. Incidentul a degenerat aproape într-o bătaie, fiind nevoie de intervenția chestorilor pentru a-i despărți pe cei doi, iar ședința a fost suspendată de urgență¹⁷. Asemenea scene – de neimaginat în alte parlamente europene – arată că, pe alocuri, politica dâmbovițeană nu duce lipsă de **temperament balcanico-central-est european**. Dacă în 1900 deputații își trimiteau **cartonașe elegante** pentru duel, în 2022 s-au trimis direct pumni (fie și virtuali) în transmisiune live.

În anii 2020–2025, Parlamentul României reflectă o societate pluralistă, cu plusurile și minusurile sale. Avem mai multe femei deputat și senator ca niciodată (totuși încă sub 20% din total), avem tineri tehnocrați formați în Occident care se ciocnesc cu veterani *școliți la școala vieții* în vechiul sistem, avem voci progresiste și voci conservatoare, moderate sau extremiste, care se confruntă liber. **Polarizarea politică** este adesea la cote înalte, iar compromisul – esența parlamentarismului – se lasă greu atins. Cu toate acestea, Parlamentul post-decembrist a reușit performanțe notabile: a legiferat integrarea în NATO și UE, a modernizat cadrul legislativ economic și penal (uneori forțat de stradă sau de partenerii externi, e drept) și a menținut, cu hopuri, dar robust, principiul **separației puterilor**.

Pe de altă parte, **încrederea publicului** în această instituție a rămas

scăzută. Dacă în 2012 doar 15% dintre români declarau că știu cum funcționează¹⁸, în 2022 sondajele arătau că abia *1 din 10 români mai are încredere* în Parlament, partide sau Guvern. Absenteismul la vot a atins recorduri negative – la alegerile din decembrie 2020 prezența a fost de doar 33%¹⁹, ceea ce ridică semne de întrebare despre gradul de reprezentativitate al actualilor aleși. Problema **corupției** a afectat serios prestigiul forului legislativ: de-a lungul anilor, numeroși parlamentari au fost anchetati sau condamnați pentru luare de mită, trafic de influență sau alte infracțiuni, alimentând percepția publicului că „**aleșii își văd de ale lor, nu de ale noastre**”.

Și totuși, în momente cruciale, Parlamentul post-decembrist a dat dovadă că poate acționa unitar și matur. De pildă, în martie 2020, la debutul crizei COVID-19, toate partidele au votat aproape în unanimitate starea de urgență națională, punând siguranța publică mai presus de disputele politice. Iar în februarie 2022, imediat după invazia rusă în Ucraina, Parlamentul României – cu un trecut istoric atât de sensibil la vecinul de la Răsărit – a adoptat declarații ferme de condamnare a agresiunii și de susținere a refugiaților ucraineni, arătând lumii o voce românească **unită** în fața amenințării. Astfel de momente demonstrează că, dincolo de gâlceavă, în clipe de răscruce, parlamentarismul românesc poate încerca să fie un **factor de coeziune națională**.

Profilul parlamentarului român: de la boierul orator la politicianul digital

O privire atentă asupra celor patru etape ne dezvăluie cum s-a transformat **profilul ideologic și social** al parlamentarului român de-a lungul generațiilor și ce partide dominante au marcat fiecare epocă:

- **Antebelic (1877-1914):** Parlamentarul tipic era un **aristocrat luminat sau burghez educat**, adesea mare proprietar sau intelectual (avocat, profesor). Ideologic, axa era conservatori vs. liberali. Conservatorii (figuri ca Lascăr Catargiu, P.P. Carp) susțineau tradiția, proprietatea funciară și o apropiere de Germania; liberalii (I.C. Brătianu, C.A. Rosetti) promovau modernizarea economică, protecționismul național și alianța cu Franța. Ambii însă formau o **oligarhie** subțire, unită prin interese de clasă. Discursul era elegant, presărat cu citate din latină sau franceză; *onorabilitatea* conta mult – un parlament arăta ca un club select. Parlamentarii se recrutau dintr-un cerc îngust de familie; nepotismul era la el acasă (frați, fii, cumnați ai marilor lideri ocupau fotolii în ambele Camere). Publicul larg îi privea cu un amestec de admirație și suspiciune – îi vedea drept „**boieri de la București**”, deconectați de necazurile țaranilor.
- **Interbelic (1918-1938):** După 1918, profilul devine mult mai **divers**. În Parlament apar **țăranul**

politic (Ion Mihalache, învățător de țară ajuns ministru), **intelectualul ardelean** (Iuliu Maniu, modest ca stil de viață, dar ferm ca principii), **industriașul modernizat** (industriașii liberali, gen Vintilă Brătianu) și chiar reprezentanți ai **minorităților etnice** (evrei, sași, maghiari aveau deputați în grupurile lor). Partidele dominante au fost PNL (doctrină liberală clasică, *prin noi înșine* – dezvoltare autohtonă²⁰) și PNT (doctrină țărănistă, creștin-democrată avant la lettre, cu ideea „*porților deschise*” economic dar și cu un ușor oportunism ideologic²¹). Lor li s-au adăugat în anii '30 partide populiste: **Partidul Poporului** al generalului Averescu (care a sedus pentru scurt timp masele după Primul Război Mondial), **Legiunea Arhanghelului Mihail** (Garda de Fier) pe extrema dreaptă și un mic **Partid Comunist** proscris pe extrema stângă. Parlamentarul interbelic tipic purta costum simplu, adesea melon, și vorbea mult în circumscripție ca să-și mențină legătura cu electoratul – „*domnul deputat*” devenise o figură cunoscută la nivel local. Ideologic, era perioada marilor **încercări doctrinare**: se discutau în Parlament idei de protecție socială (munca de 8 ore, asigurări sociale), se confruntau viziuni economice (liberalii naționaliști vs. țărăniști internaționaliști). În linii mari însă, clasa politică interbelică împărțea un atașament față de **valorile**

democratice occidentale, până când aceste valori au fost erodate de crize.

- **Comunismul (1947-1989)**: Aici profilul se inversează radical. Deputatul nu mai este un **ales**, ci un „*nominalizat*” de partid. Originea socială devine criteriu principal: se preferau muncitori „cu origine sănătoasă” (strungari, mineri eroi ai muncii) sau țărani colectivști fruntași, evidențiați la întrecerea socialistă. **Intelectualii autentici** erau aproape absenți sau prezenți doar ca figuranți obedienți (ex: un scriitor proletcultist, un actor cu rol propagandistic). Ideologic, toți deputații trebuiau să adere la **marxism-leninism** și la programul partidului unic. Nu exista pluralism real – doar organizații satelit (sindicate comuniste, organizații de tineret, de femei etc.) care trimiteau și ele membri în MAN, dar toți făceau parte din frontul unic al PCR. Parlamentarul comunist tipic era îmbrăcat în costum cenușiu sau rochie modestă, primea indicații înainte de ședințe despre ce și cum să voteze. **Disciplina de partid** era absolută – orice abatere ar fi însemnat excluderea și poate chiar închisoarea. Un caz rar, Constantin Pîrvulescu, veteran comunist, a criticat public cultul personalității al lui Ceaușescu la un congres PCR din 1979 – evident, nu într-o ședință a MAN, acolo a fost imposibil. Consecința: a fost imediat eliminat din structuri. Așadar, profilul ideolo-

gie era monocolor, iar cel social era unul al **oamenilor simpli controlați de activiști**, total opus epocii de dinainte.

- **Post-decembrist (1990-2025):** În prezent, diversitatea e cuvântul-cheie. Parlamentarul român poate fi **fost revoluționar** sau fost nomenclurist, poate fi un tânăr absolvent de Harvard sau un lider local de partid fără studii solide, poate fi un om de afaceri prosper sau un ONG-ist idealist. Social, avem atât „**baroni locali**” ajunși senatori (cu averi considerabile și influență în teritoriu), cât și **activiști de mediu ori jurnaliști deveniți deputați** pentru a combate vechea clasă politică. Partidele dominante au alternat: în prima decadă, FSN și succesorii (FDSN/PDSR – stânga social-democrată cu origini comuniste) au dominat, contrabalansați de partidele istorice renăscute (PNL, PNL-CD – dreapta liberal-conservatoare, creștin-democrată). Din 2000 încoace, scena a fost marcată de **PSD** (moștenitorul stângii feseniste) vs. **alianțe de centru-dreapta** (inițial Alianța DA (PNL+PD/PDL), USL(PNL-PC-PSD), ACL (PNL-PDL) și altele). În ultimii ani, au apărut și **forțe noi**: USR (centru reformist, pro-european) și AUR (naționalist, eurosceptic) – semn al reconfigurării peisajului ideologic, cu o polarizare mai accentuată pe teme identitare. Parlamentarul actual folosește adesea Facebook-ul și televiziunile ca să-și transmită mesaje,

lucru inimaginabil în trecut. Unii sunt extrem de vocali și prezenți mediatic (exemple: lideri AUR sau USR care transmit live din plen pe rețele sociale), alții continuă stilul **old-school**, negociind discret în culise și vorbind rar la tribună.

Din punct de vedere al **valorilor politice**, se remarcă o schimbare generațională: noile generații de parlamentari pun accent pe transparență, pe digitalizare, pe drepturile omului, în timp ce vechea gardă era focalizată pe tranziția economică și pe integrări euro-atlantice. În ambele tabere există, din păcate, și elementul **populist oportunist** – acel *Cațavencu* etern care poate fi regăsit fie că poartă sacou și cravată, fie că are tricou cu mesaj naționalist. Iar zicala lui Caragiale „*iubesc trădarea, dar urăsc pe trădători*” rămâne actuală sub altă formă: alianțe contra-naturii se fac și desfac în Parlamentul de azi aproape la fel de ușor ca acum un secol, iar traseiștii – noii trădători de partid – sunt priviți cu cinism de colegi și electorat.

Concluzii

Se poate spune că istoria parlamentarismului românesc este o poveste captivantă în sine – cu salturi de la lumina libertății la întunericul dictaturii și înapoi. Parlamentul, ca instituție, a supraviețuit monarhiei, războaielor mondiale, comunismului și multiplelor crize. A fost martorul în tăcere al unor decizii înfumurate luate în numele poporului fără acor-

dul său, dar și tribuna unde națiunea și-a strigat speranțele și durerile. Parlamentarii români – de la boierii junimiști la noii *influenceri* politici – au întrupat aspirațiile și contradicțiile fiecărei epoci. Astăzi, când privim înapoi, putem zâmbi văzând reflecția atâtor caractere caragialești printre aleșii noștri, dar și reflecta serios asupra drumului parcurs. **Democrația** în România a fost și rămâne un proces anevoios, uneori autoironic, alteori dramatic, însă per ansamblu progresul este incontestabil. Dacă Farfuridi, Cațavencu și Trahanache ar privi acum din lojă ședințele Parlamentului din 2025, ar avea destule motive să ridice din sprâncene – dar poate la final ar admite și ei, cu umor, că „*apele s-au mai limpezit*”. Parlamentul nostru nu e perfect, dar continuă să fie scena unde, cu bune și rele, se decide viitorul țării. Iar aceasta, vorba lui Kogălniceanu din 1877,

este însăși definiția **națiunii de sine stătătoare**.

Și cum istoria are obiceiul să se repete în forme noi, rămâne de văzut ce *acte* se vor mai juca pe scena parlamentară românească. Pentru moment, e limpede că Parlamentul României și parlamentarii săi sunt un **barometru al societății**: cu cât vom reuși ca societate să ne însănătoșim valorile, cu atât și forul legislativ își va ridica prestigiul. Până atunci, nu strică să privim critic dar și cu o urmă de ironie drumul sinuos al **democrației noastre originale**, având nădejdea că *vom fi iarăși ce-am fost și mai mult decât atât!* (ca să-i parafrăzăm pe Nicolae Iorga și pe străbunii săi)²² sau poate în cele din urmă vom asista la o resetare a întregii societăți, o schimbare radicală a tot ce știam noi până acum. Vom vedea în cursul anilor 2026-2027 cum va evolua parlamentarismul românesc și clasa politică actuală.

Note

- ¹ Dacian Vasincu, „Evoluție sau involuție parlamentară: O analiză comparativă între Parlamentul României de după Marea Unire și cel contemporan”, *Polis. Revistă de Științe Politice*, 7, nr. 3 (25), serie nouă (iunie-august 2019), pp. 25-35, <https://revistapolis.ro/evolutie-sau-involutie-parlamentara-analiza-comparativa-a-parlamentului-romaniei-dupa-marea-unire-si-a-celui-actual/>, (accesat 30.10.2025).
- ² „Declarația de Independență a României, (9-10 mai 1877)”, <https://historia.ro/sectiune/general/de-claratia-de-independenta-a-romaniei->

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- ³ Ștefan Borcea, „De unde vine faimoasa expresie „îmi place trădarea, dar urăsc pe trădători”. Contextul istoric în care a fost folosită”, *adevărul.ro*, <https://adevarul.ro/stiri-locale/focsani/de-unde-vine-faimoasa-expresie-imi-place-182504-2.html#:~:text=Replica%20spune%20a%C>

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²⁰ Ioan Scurtu, *Democrația românească în perioada interbelică (1918–1938)*, op. cit.

²¹ T. Oniga, „Scurt istoric al parlamentarismului românesc”, *Revista Fiat Justitia*, nr. 2, Universitatea

Dimitrie Cantemir, București, 2013, p. 74.

²² D. Vasincu, „Evoluție sau involuție decizională 2016-aprilie 2020 – Analiză diagnostic a profilului societății parlamentare românești și a mentalului socio-politic din ultima perioadă”, *Punctul critic*, nr. 1-2 (31-32), 2020, pp. 177-188.

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Ficțiunea woke și alte ficțiuni radicale contemporane

[Woke and other radical contemporary fictions]

Dragoș DRAGOMAN

Abstract: *The woke ideology has spilled over the walls of the American academic institutions, universities and their campuses in the 1990s, and infused the entire Western educated society. Moving towards the secondary and primary education, its ideals of abstract equality are now common facts, since the rank-and-file adepts have reached high positions in international corporations, mass-media, high-tech and the movie industry. Therefore, their racial, sexual and other cultural prejudices have become the norm. Despite the initial good intentions of fighting inequities, the woke adepts left behind real existing inequalities and found a refuge in fighting a large array of immaterial and subtle inequalities. Fueled by the literary studies programmes and the behavioral social sciences, the woke religion makes an effort towards subordinating nature to culture. The outcome is an irrational move to cancel culture, re-write history, deny science and the Illuminist ideals, and, by this, to endanger Western cultural heritage.*

Keywords: *woke, Western culture, irrationality, pseudo-religion, totalitarianism.*

Introducere

Privind la stânga contemporană, cel puțin la cea mai radicală, ceea ce este extrem de surprinzător este cât de ușor a renunțat aceasta la atingerea unor obiective palpabile, concrete, realiste, pentru a se refugia în ficțiuni atotcuprinzătoare. În loc să depună eforturi calculate și constante pentru a îmbunătăți viața celor mai nevoiași și nefericiți, pentru a reduce treptat și măsurabil din inegalitățile flagrante ale capitalismului dominant, covârșitor, stânga s-a iluzionat tot mai mult

prin căutarea unor egalități intangibile, idealizate și abstracte. Aceasta este critica pe care Amartya Sen o aducea mai demult chiar discuțiilor despre teoria dreptății¹, pe care o critica pentru gradul său ridicat de abstractizare și lipsă de realism practic². Cu atât mai mult acum, când stânga pare să fi abandonat definitiv lupta de zi cu zi pentru reducerea inegalităților socio-economice, căutând victorii de consolare în efortul fără sfârșit al egalizării condițiilor culturale, etnice și religioase. Aceasta este ceea ce se numește, azi, ficțiunea

„woke”³, anume un refugiu comod, pentru că efortul e perpetuu și succesul imposibil, de a transforma natura și cultura. În fața unei astfel de sarcini herculeene, orice eșec parțial este ușor justificabil. Orice eșec parțial este un apel la mai multe resurse și la mai multă putere, într-o spirală ce va conduce, spune iluzia woke, la o lume indistinctă, complet egalitară cultural. Această supremă egalitate sexuală, lingvistică, etnică, rasială va fi suficientă pentru a trece cu vederea persistența de oțel a masivelor inegalități socio-economice.

Deloc întâmplător, entuziasmul noii ficțiuni woke a cuprins întâi Statele Unite ale Americii. Pe terenul intelectual american al idealizării unei egalități ce lipsește cronic din lumea practică, reală, de zi cu zi, ficțiunea woke nu putea decât să înflorească. Pentru că la fel s-a întâmplat și cu marxismul teoretic idealizat. Așa cum remarcă Schumpeter, în nici o țară occidentală modelul bolșevic de renaștere a marxismului (deci speranța regăsită a egalității ideale) n-a înregistrat un an avans așa de puternic precum în Statele Unite⁴. Asta deși în perioada anterioară, înainte de 1921, teoria marxistă nu juca un rol semnificativ în organizarea mișcării muncitorești americane și nici în gândirea intelectualilor americani. Nici măcar în Germania, unde tradiția marxistă era cea mai puternică, cu excepția unei secte ortodoxe ce a rămas activă în marea mișcare socialistă de după 1918, gânditorii socialiști influenți nu manifestau nici un zel deosebit de a se reîntoarce la

dogmele dinainte și gândeau chestiunile economice la fel cum le gândeau ceilalți economiști (nemarxiști)⁵.

Cu excepția Rusiei bolșevice, scria Schumpeter în 1942, fenomenul american este unic. La fel pare să fie și acum, când tot solul intelectual fertil al Americii hrănește ficțiunile radicale ale unei lumi ideale, complet egalitare, ce se va naște pe ruinele vechii lumi. Aceasta este o nouă profetie, la fel cum marxismul reînviat de succesul bolșevic a fost noua religie a intelectualilor americani de după războiul civil rus. Nu pare, deci, exagerat ca noua ficțiune woke să fie etichetată drept o religie⁶. Nu este nici surprinzător, ținând cont că marxismul revitalizat intelectual pe tărâm american, începând cu anii 1920, a funcționat ca o profetie. Woke funcționează ca o religie pentru că se bazează pe caracterul absurd al postulatelor sale. Acestea trimit la adevăruri mai profunde, extra-raționale, ce depășesc o abordare pur rațională⁷. Afirmații de bază precum „bărbații pot rămâne însărcinați”, „femeile au penis”, „femeile trans sunt tot femei”, „toți albi sunt rasiști”, „toți negrii sunt victime”, „dacă spui că nu ești rasist, atunci sigur ești”, „matematica este rasistă”⁸, nici nu pot fi înțelese decât dacă sunt scoase din contextul lor rațional. Abia acum, când rațiunea este depășită, ele pot fi înțelese ca doctrină de credință⁹.

Pe ele se bazează atât radicalismul și intoleranța adepților, cât și „miracolele” pe care se fundamentează noua credință. Radicalismul îi entuziasmează pe adepții din mediul aca-

demic și pe studenții lor, la fel cum o făcea comunismul bolșevic înainte, cu sentimentul că au descoperit un adevăr superior, inaccesibil omului de rând, cu sentimentul de-a face parte dintr-un grup de „aleși”¹⁰. Iar primul miracol pe care noua religie îl predică este, conform „teoriei genului”, relația corp-conștiință. Astfel, oricine poate fi orice, dacă are conștiința aceluia „ceva”. Un bărbat poate fi o femeie, un bărbat poate fi un câine, o femeie poate fi o vulpe, o pisică sau un alt animal, „conștiința” (deși ar fi mai adecvat scris „inconștiința”) lor fiind liberă de orice constrângere biologică, mentală, naturală. Eliberarea de corp prin „teoria genului” (*gender theory*) nu este un accesoriu, ea este chiar esența, este mesajul central al religiei woke¹¹. Ea este cea care deschide calea de atac asupra științei, asupra adevărului, asupra realității.

Completată cu „teoria critică a rasei” (*critical race theory*), noua credință din universitățile americane s-a revărsat asupra învățământului primar american, pe care foștii militanți de stânga deveniți profesori o folosesc acum pentru a modela o nouă umanitate: genul este o chestiune de pură alegere și elevii albi sunt neapărat rasiști, mai ales atunci când neagă că ar fi¹². Iar „intersecționalitatea” este metoda dezvoltată cu scopul de a dezvălui identitățile multiple și a scoate la iveală tipuri de discriminare multiplă și procesul de dezavantajare ce apare ca urmare a combinației de identități și a intersecției sexului și genului cu alte motive (de discrimi-

nare). Mai mult, plecată din învățământul universitar american, apoi extinsă în cel primar și secundar, religia woke a modelat capitalismul marilor întreprinderi, corporatismul american însușindu-și elementele tari de credință ce se reflectă în „crezul DEI” (diversitate, echitate, incluziune), în fapt o discriminare pozitivă pură ce contravine oricăror principii ale meritocrației¹³. În cele din urmă, Big Tech, Netflix, Hollywood și social media americane promovează asiduu corectitudinea politică, sancționând orice abatere de la principiile sacrosancte ale religiei woke.

Woke și întărirea barierelor identitare

În ciuda aparentei lor lupte împotriva discriminării, gânditorii woke sunt ultra-identitari. Deși pretind că luptă în numele comunităților oprite (persoane transsexuale, homosexuale, persoane de culoare etc.), scopul lor este chiar de a consolida aceste categorii, de a exacerba aceste identități și a le amplifica prin „teoriile intersecționale”¹⁴. Deși ei se identifică drept „războinici ai justiției sociale” (*Social Justice Warriors*), orientarea lor primară este spre aspectele imateriale, simbolice, ale inegalității, nu spre inegalitățile reale, cuantificabile, ce provin din statusurile economice și sociale diferite. Poate de aceea lor li se pot corela mai repede conceptele de „corectitudine politică” (*political correctness*) și „cultura anulării” (*cancel culture*), pentru tendința lor de a-i forța pe toți

ceilalți să urmeze o conduită „morală” prestabilită și a-și „anula” adversarii, care este, într-adevăr, una dintre cel mai caracteristice și detestabile aspecte ale mișcării¹⁵. Pe de-o parte, tendința de a impune restricții de exprimare liberă despre subiecte pe care ei le consideră „sensibile” sau chiar tabu (nu ai voie să te exprimi „așa” despre cineva din aceste „comunități oprimare”), pe de altă parte dorința de a-și elimina, de a-și neutraliza adversarii, ce aduce aminte de felul în care erau eliminați în comunism „dușmanii poporului” din fotografiile sovietice¹⁶. În fapt, acesta este un control total al spațiului public (și privat), prin care adepții religiei woke își impun idiosincraziile, își etichetează, desconsideră și elimină adversarii, ce nu merita nici măcar o privire, cu atât mai puțin o strângere de mână sau o dezbatere de idei.

Caracterul profund intolerant al membrilor mișcării și cel totalitar al noii religii, în ansamblu, poate fi explicat prin originea și componentele mișcării. Pe de-o parte, woke se inspiră direct din mișcările de re-deșteptare, de „trezire” religioasă (*awakenings*) specifice bisericilor neoprotestante americane din ultimul secol și jumătate, mai ales din trezirea religioasă a „shakerilor” („scuturători”, „agitatori”) americani¹⁷. Această sectă milenaristă face parte din ce-a dea doua „Mare Trezire”, sau revelație, cea din secolul al XIX-lea, din perioada 1790-1840. A doua Trezire nu făcea decât să continue efectele sociale și religioase ale pri-

mei „Mari Treziri”, cea din 1730-1740, când mase imense de noi adepți se pocăiau și se convergeau sub cerul liber, în cadrul evanghelizărilor conduse de predicatori, cei care-i „trezeau” pe cei care încă nu erau convertiți¹⁸. Făcând apel la emoția damnării perpetue, predicatorii împingeau masele la pocăință pentru revelarea interioară a harului divin, în continuarea doctrinei calviniste a predestinării¹⁹. Secta milenaristă a „shakerilor” respingea Sfintele Taine și pretindeau că primesc mesaje de la Dumnezeu prin intermediul unor „instrumente” alese, anume femeile din grup, preferate acum pentru menținerea comunicării de un Dumnezeu ce putea fi considerat concomitent masculin și feminin. „Mama” sectei, Ann Lee, reprezenta manifestarea feminină a lui Dumnezeu și a doua venire a lui Hristos²⁰.

Pe de altă parte, intoleranța totalitară le este consolidată membrilor „treziți” (woke) ai noii religii de componenta și de originea universitară nord-americană a noii mișcări. Faptul că ea s-a născut pe băncile marilor universități americane o împregnează cu o aură de invincibilitate, de autoritare covârșitoare, de dogmă sacrosanctă, tocmai pentru că este pretins derivată „științific”. În fapt, fapt fără precedent de la crearea universităților medievale (ce au predat religia, dar nu au determinat decisiv doctrina sau ritualul)²¹, trecând prin modelul modernității promovat de Humboldt, acum universitatea își creează propria religie²². Tocmai de aceea noua mișcare, ce se bazează

acum pe „studii” pretins științifice (teoria genului, teoria rasei, intersecționalitatea), în fapt poziții partizane, își permite să respingă pluralitatea punctelor de vedere și argumentația rațională, impunând ca regulă unanimitatea²³. De aceea religia woke poate să afirme nonșalant că „s-a demonstrat științifică că...” biologia nu este o știință și că sexul este „atribuit în mod arbitrar” la naștere, că rasismul este sistematic, că decolonizarea nu a avut loc niciodată²⁴.

Consecința directă este că o critică „din interior”, din chiar rândurile lumii universitare, științifice și academice devine foarte dificilă. Nu doar că adepții mișcări sunt imuni la argumente de factură rațională, științifică, îmbibați fiind de misiunea lor mistică, dar universitățile occidentale au devenit locuri în care nu mai sunt posibile dezvoltarea și transmiterea cunoștințelor²⁵. Ele se ocupă acum de confecționarea consensului pe chestiuni care nu au nici un suport științific, ci sunt simple „concepte” ideologice precum „exprimarea de gen”, „rușinea legată de obezitate”, „cultural violului”, „hegemonia albă” sau „masculinitatea toxică”. Ele nu se bazează pe explicații și nu acceptă demonstrații, fiind pure afirmații ce pot fi reduse la faptul destul de banal că există „relații de putere”²⁶. Ele au apărut în universitățile americane cu decenii în urmă, după care au migrat în cultura de masă și au acaparat spațiul public, beneficiind de legitimitatea dată de un (fost) caracter științific al universităților²⁷.

Ceea ce este surprinzător este cât de repede mediul universitar occidental a renunțat la cerința științifică de obiectivitate. Ceea ce a fost timp de secole semnul distinctiv al intelectualilor ce se delimitau de idealurile credinței religioase, cultivând rațiunea în speranța explicării lumii²⁸, pare să se fi evaporat în mai puțin de o generație. În subsidiar, vechile modele de gândire derivate pe filieră religioasă protestantă par să fi revenit în actualitate. De aceea woke seamănă cu mișcările protestante de trezire, dar cu diferențe semnificative: o „trezire” fără de Dumnezeu și fără de iertare²⁹. Dușmanul veșnic, implacabil, urât și pe veci invocat este „omul alb”. Astfel, „privilegiul rasei albe” sau „privilegiul alb” (*white privilege*) nu funcționează diferit de un păcat original. Spre deosebire de păcatul creștin, însă, el nu s-a produs din și prin liber arbitru, dar nici nu poate fi nici răscumpărat. El este un produs mecanic al unui determinism implacabil: strămoșii albilor de azi s-au făcut vinovați de asuprirea negrilor, ceea ce transferă mecanic responsabilitatea pe umerii albilor actuali, considerați responsabili pentru tot răul actual de pe pământ³⁰. Incapabili să se descătușeze de determinismul biologic ce-i face să fie albi, albilor nu li se oferă nici speranță, nici alinare. Nici un Mântuitor nu poate lua asupra lui acest păcat de moarte (socială), nici o pocăință nu le poate șterge amprenta biologică, faptul biologic de care nu vei putea niciodată să scapi. Ei pot doar să se „confeseze” public, să-și

„admită greșelile” și „privilegiile” (*watch your privilege*), căutând condițiile pentru tot mai mare diversitate, echitate, incluziune (DEI), noul Crez al religiei seculare americane universitare de azi.

Altfel spus, ceea ce woke promite în domeniul „afirmării de gen” nu permite în cel al „vinovăției rasiale”. Genul poate fi „îndreptat”, culoarea pielii nu. „Masculinitatea toxică”, concept înrudit privilegiilor rasiale, poate fi îndreptat spre neutralitate sexuală și efeminare, iar din ce în ce mai mult prin tranziție de sex. Renunțarea la organele sexuale proprii (presupus „atribuite discreționar” la naștere) și „construcția” de noi organe, adecvate genului, pot pune capăt suferinței de a fi fost „prizonier(ă)” într-un corp nedorit, un corp de bărbat/femeie. Schimbarea de stare civilă sau operația ar trebui să poată rezolva problema, punând capăt „masculinității toxice”³¹. Dar nimic de acest fel nu se poate întâmpla în domeniul „privilegiului alb”. Sub nici o formă nu este îngăduit să spui, de exemplu, că ești o persoană de culoare „încătușată” într-un corp alb³².

Acceptarea acestei afirmații ar spulbera tot eșafodajul de presupuneri ale religiei universitare americane: statutul de victimă eternă al individului de culoare, victimă prin excelență, moștenitor al unei istorii tragice; posibilitatea de evadare, scăparea pe care ar folosi-o descendenții opresorilor albi. Ei nu trebuie să aibă nici o scăpare. Ei nu pot să se sus-tragă condiției lor reprobabile de albi, pot doar să se căiască³³. Prin aceasta,

devine evident că religia woke nu se preocupă de iertare, ci este mai mult obsedată de înfierarea păcatului, într-o continuă diferențiere între „neprihăniți” și „impuri”³⁴. În dinamica diferențierii, excomunicarea și denunțarea ereziilor sunt cele ce se află în centrul noii religii. De aceea, religia woke nu vorbește despre un viitor mai bun, ea nu oferă promisiunea unei vieți de apoi, izbăvită de răul de aici. Ea este o religie a unui „aici și acum” eterne, o luptă pentru izbăvirea acestei lumi de răuvoitori și pentru eliberarea grupurilor discriminate³⁵, ce cresc în număr prin chiar succesul „intersecționalității”.

Radicalism și intoleranță în numele toleranței

În maniheismul pur și dur al religiei woke, dușmanii trebuie demascați și degradați public, expuși pe rețelele de socializare. De aceea, prin *cancel culture*, adepții woke evită orice dialog cu damnații. Anularea existenței dușmanilor este cheia renașterii sociale, „privilegiații” fiind umiliți pentru că ei reprezintă tot răul din societate³⁶. Regulile de conduită ultra-morale îți permit și îți cer să-ți semnalezi virtutea, neprihănirea (*virtue signaling*), dar și să-i denunți pe cei răi, pe rasiști și pe cei care „urăsc”, pe toți cei rapid etichetați drept homofobi, transfobi, grasofobi, lesbofobi și așa mai departe³⁷. Acest maniheism puritan le interzice adepților să poarte orice formă de dialog cu cei considerați impuri. Singurul tratament plauzibil este „cultura

anulării” (*cancel culture*), notele de protest, adunările publice, împiedicarea discuțiilor, a conferințelor, a declarațiilor celor „vinovați”. De aceea, religia woke nu le permite să participe la discuții sau la actul de predare celor care sunt împotriva doctrinelor lor³⁸. Că este vorba de Andrei Șerban sau de Jordan Peterson, de orice mare profesionist sau profesor emerit, faptul că ei rup consensul campusurilor și al sălilor de curs supuse noii religii, soarta lor este pecetluită. Ei devin „reacționari”, „homofobi” și „rasiști”, deci incompatibili cu actul de predare și de cercetare (orice ar însemna „cercetare” pentru adepții woke). Ultimii profesori recalcitranți rămași sunt concediați, acolo unde este posibil, mai ales în lumea academică anglo-saxonă³⁹. Dacă nu, sunt încurajați să se retragă, sunt agresati și timorați, uneori izolați social, ceea ce-i împinge în final să demisioneze (așa cum au făcut Peter Boghossian, Kathleen Stock sau Jordan Peterson). Ulterior, atacuri similare se îndreaptă și asupra celor din afara universității, precum J. K. Rowling, care se bucură de la fel de puțină susținere colegială, publică sau chiar deloc.

Dar curățarea răului din societate nu se poate face fără întoarcerea la origini, fără a smulge buruienile cu tot cu rădăcină. Rescrierea istoriei, ca element component al „culturii anulării” (*cancel culture*) reia, de fapt, practici religioase mai vechi, specifice altor secte înaintea lor, precum iconoclasmul sau sfărâmarea statuiilor⁴⁰. Din dorința de a epura trecutul, de a-l face conform cu idealurile pro-

pagandei woke ce răsună în campusurile americane, statuile generalilor americani sudiști, statuia negustorului de sclavi Colston din Bristol, cea a lui Cecil Rhodes din Cape Town au dispărut, eliberând memoria de traumele trecutului. Dar odată cu ei au dispărut și statuile lui Churchill și Washington, considerați „rasiști”, în timp ce statuia lui Jefferson din fața primăriei din New York a fost ascunsă vederii publicului, adică „pusă la păstrare”⁴¹. Ajunsă în Franța, *cancel culture* a lovit în statuia lui Napoleon din Rouen și amenință statuile lui Colbert sau Victor Hugo⁴². Nici un merit personal, nici o mare realizare intelectuală, artistică, filantropică sau economică nu sunt de ajuns pentru a șterge orice mică suspiciune de „rasism”, „colonialism”, „sexism”, „privilegiu alb” și alte obsesii woke. De fapt, tot trecutul universitar și științific occidental trebuie atent selectat și epurat de operele din „vremurile întunecate”. De aceea, noua cultură woke, ce promite eliberarea de orice opresiune, trebuie să se debaraseze rapid de toate disciplinele universitare albe și masculine, deci de toată moștenirea culturii occidentale, începând cu științele umaniste grecești și romane, muzica și dansurile clasice, literatura și pictura bărbaților albi, filozofia clasică premodernă și modernă. De fapt, religia woke actuală nu face decât să ducă la împlinire opera de anulare ce a început mai demult în Occidentul modern și post-modern⁴³. Ea nu face decât să perfecționeze căderea în banal și derizoriu, din moment ce elimină fără

regret reperatele frumuseții și ale adevărului.

Iar tocmai acesta este unul dintre aspectele cele mai deconcertante ale religiei woke, faptul că nu are nici o dimensiune temporală, că nu oferă nici o promisiune pentru lumea ce va să vină, că nu are nici o escatologie. Doctrinile milenariste din Evul Mediu, dar și utopiile socialiste de secol XIX, măcar urmăreau o viață transformată, o cetate ideală pe pământ⁴⁴. Religia woke nu urmărește un viitor luminos. Lupta adepților săi este una pentru o echitate imaginată aici și acum⁴⁵, chiar dacă sacrificiile sunt colosale. Perspectiva lor este una sumbră, de luptă neîncetată împotriva rasismului, ce nu va dispărea niciodată, sau împotriva patriarhatului etern. De aici provine atât urgența, cât și radicalismul luptei lor. Prin radicalismul transformării unei prezent etern, ei se înrudesc cu adepții totalitarismului ce predică tragerea la rindea, fasonarea naturii umane, la fel cum dulgherul trage la rindea lemnul strâmb al omenirii⁴⁶. Prin viziunea lor pesimistă, ei nu fac decât să aștepte apocalipsa climatică, produsă prin exploatarea naturii. Această apocalipsă este iminentă, deși termenele limită au fost succesiv prelungite de-a lungul ultimelor decenii, „urmând să se petreacă” în cel mult câțiva ani, de unde și apariția unei boli psihice, numită eco-anxietate⁴⁷.

Revenind la eludarea problemei sociale clasice, la ocolirea reflecției asupra mijloacelor adecvate pentru a reduce în mod real disparitățile și inechitățile socio-economice, com-

pensate prin egalitarismul simbolic și abstract al noii religii, nu putem să nu remarcăm, alături de Jean-François Braunstein, contradicțiile științifice și logice, de bun-simț, pe care noua religie dominantă în Occident le conține. Astfel, teoria genului, partea cea mai originală, șochează prin lipsa sa de jenă și atrage aproape irezistibil prin misterul său cvasi-teologic⁴⁸. Ea le oferă adepților promisiunea unei egalități perfecte, provenite dintr-o eliberare ce nu părea nicicând posibilă. Trecute sunt vremurile luptei muncitorești, cu speranța unui viitor luminos oferit de noua orânduire, ce excludea din rândurile ei exploatarea omului de către om⁴⁹. O astfel de eliberare de opresiune este desuetă azi, când noua religie woke promite nici mai mult, nici mai puțin decât eliberarea finală, cea față de constrângerea cea mai apăsătoare, cea față de corpul fizic. Universalismul ei ține de ambiția sa de a se impune în toate societățile umane, fără excepție, în măsura în care acestea recunosc existența unei diferențe între sexe, diferență pe care teoria încearcă să o elimine⁵⁰.

Pentru asta, teoria genului duce la extrem teoriile woke, făcând tot ce este necesar pentru a nega cele mai elementare fapte obiective, dar și de a ataca brutal știința (în special biologia), pentru a nega, în final, chiar existența realității⁵¹. Pentru această teorie, tot ceea ce contează este genul, un soi de conștiință de sine, anume de a fi bărbat sau femeie sau orice între ele. Iar dacă ai îndrăzneala de a sublinia existența unui corp (fi-

zic, dat, natural), vei fi stigmatizat ca „transfob”⁵². Negând realitatea fizică, biologică, ipoteze contradictorii precum „bărbații pot rămâne însărcinați” și „femeile au penisuri” devin norma, teoria transgender-ismului aducând cu sine o promisiune de eliberare fără precedent, anume posibilitatea de a-ți schimba sexul sau genul după bunul-plac⁵³. Utopia „fluidității de gen” devine, astfel, idealul emancipării universale de tirania corpului, făcând din persoanele transsexuale „eroii timpurilor noastre”⁵⁴. Ei sunt apostolii noii religii fondate de vechii adepți ai behaviorismului, ce făceau distincția, odată cu J.B. Watson, între „natură” și „cultură”, susținând că cea din urmă este mai puternică decât natura⁵⁵. Conform părintelui cultului behaviorist, J.B. Watson, copiii pot fi modelați în funcție de cum sunt educați. Behaviorismul le oferă adeptilor săi aceleași promisiuni de emancipare precum idealul *self-made man*, mitul american al omului ce poate deveni orice, ce se poate transforma la voință⁵⁶.

Controlul realității prin limbaj

Problema pe care Braunstein o ridică aici se referă la capacitatea celorlalți de a rămâne autonomi, de a păstra o priză asupra realității. Faptul că cineva „se identifică” pe sine cu alt gen, fie că își schimbă sexul sau nu, că își păstrează corpul intact și procedează la o transformare strict interioară, acest fapt nu trebuie să acționeze asupra celorlalți în mod constrângător. De ce să renunțe o

vastă majoritate de oameni la mărturia simțurilor, la experiența directă, în favoarea unei ficțiuni, care derivă din conștiința intimă a interlocutorului? Totuși, prin forța sancțiunilor sociale și tot mai des legale, „ni se impune să părăsim lumea reală pentru lumea iluzorie a interlocutorului nostru, deși știm că este doar o lume a iluziei”⁵⁷. Folosirea unor altor pronume decât cele evidente, interdicția de a numi o femeie „femeie” pentru că ea se consideră bărbat și invers, de a numi „bărbat” un bărbat care se consideră pe sine femeie poate funcționa într-o lume a bunăvoinței ideale, ca într-un joc în care adulți consensuali fac eforturi serioase pentru a lua în seamă „experiența privată” a cuiva. Dar a-i forța pe copii să nege realitatea și să refuze mărturia simțurilor, făcând obligatorie acestor pronume (opuse evidenței sau neutre, specific obiectelor – „they”/„it”) înseamnă o constrângere insuportabilă⁵⁸. Devine un act distructiv al cunoașterii corecte a realității să-i obligăm pe copii să vadă un lucru (un bărbat) și să spună altceva (femeie sau „nonbinar”)⁵⁹. Pentru mărturia simțurilor, acesta este un act catastrofal, pentru că întărește ideea că realitatea nu există, că ceea ce există este conștiința detașată de orice ancorare corporală⁶⁰. Dar este și o constrângere de sorginte totalitară, pentru că adevărul obiectiv ar trebui supus convingerilor subiective ale unei mici minorități, pentru că, pentru a satisface unele persoane, ar fi potrivit ca toată lumea să se deplaseze în sensul lumii lor

imaginare și să rupă orice legătură cu realitatea”⁶¹.

Nu poate fi subliniat îndeajuns caracterul totalitar, anume legătura dintre limbaj și realitate. În siajul behaviorismului și al puterii culturii asupra naturii, controlul limbajului este esențial pentru instituirea controlului totalitar. Nu doar că trebuie acum să renunțăm la experiența noastră senzorială și la cunoașterea științifică, dar și să respingem un limbaj care se străduiește să ne ofere o mai bună înțelegere a lumii⁶². Ni se cere, sub amenințarea sancțiunii, să acceptăm epurarea limbajului, eliminarea oricăror referințe la diferențele sexuale⁶³, să acceptăm iluzia celor cu putere. „Orice femeie trans este o femeie” și „orice bărbat trans este un bărbat” echivalează cu a renunța la orice conținut al celor doi termeni, bărbat și femeie. Automat, bărbații au ciclu menstrual și femeile ai penis. Astfel de afirmații obligatorii nu sunt departe de controlul totalitar al realității prin egalitatea dintre termenii contrari. Nu întâmplător, sloganul oficial al statului totalitar imaginat de Orwell conținea afirmațiile: „războiul este pace”, „ignoranța este putere” și „libertatea este sclavie”⁶⁴. Nou-vorbierea (*newspeak*) este la Orwell chiar mecanismul prin care birocrăția statului totalitar definește realitatea, controlându-i pe cei supuși. Cei care dețin puterea, cei capabili să definească ce este un „bărbat” și ce este o „femeie”, sunt cei care le vor spune supușilor ce este adevărat și ce este fals, ce este bine și ce este rău, ce este acceptabil și ce este interzis.

Plecând pe calea behaviorismului, adepții religiei woke cred că prin epurarea, prin corectarea limbajului, vor reuși să transforme realitatea⁶⁵. Într-un fel, ei intuiesc puterea statului totalitar, capabil să modifice realitatea prin limbaj. Ei cred că dacă limbajul nu va mai diferenția între bărbați și femei, atunci nu va mai exista nici o diferență între bărbați și femei⁶⁶. De aici vine și interdicția de a folosi termenul „femeie”, o respingere a realității corpului, considerat fiind că termenul „femeie” care ar putea circula în limbajul cotidian ar fi discriminatoriu⁶⁷. De aici și impunerea socială a unor „realități” precum „corpuri cu vagin” sau chiar „organisme cu vagin”, propagate mai ales prin lucrări publicate de reviste medicale și edituri cu pretenții științifice, precum *Lancet* (numărul din 25 septembrie 2021)⁶⁸. Campaniile britanice de vaccinare împotriva cancerului de col uterin se adresează acum „persoanelor cu uter”, nu femeilor. Pentru că și „bărbații pot rămâne însărcinați”, spitalele britanice și americane se adresează acum „persoanelor însărcinate” și nu mai fac referire la „mamă” ci la „părintele care naște”, nu la „lapte matern”, ci la „lapte uman”, nu la „sân” ci la „corpul” care alăptează⁶⁹. Acesta este un solipsism radical, care crede nu doar că există numai conștiințe, independente de corp, ci și că aceste conștiințe sunt cele care creează lumea⁷⁰, de fapt, un război împotriva realității și un război pentru controlul realității.

Lupta împotriva rațiunii

Dar poate cea mai ilustrativă dovadă a acestei campanii bine organizate de luptă împotriva realității este teoria critică a rasei. Parte esențială a noii religii woke, ea dorește transformarea trecutului în acord cu cerințele prezentului, ea dorește „repararea” unor nedreptăți istorice nu prin cunoașterea trecutului, ci prin ștergere lui (*cancel culture*). Făcând asta, adepții noii religii luptă nu doar cu trecutul, ci și cu spiritul universal al rațiunii. Încercând să „repare” ceva trecut, ei distorsionează prezentul. Deși par să fie conștienți de neajunsurile politice, sociale și economice pe care rasismul (științific și politic) le-a adus în viețile generațiilor anterioare, ei nu fac acum decât să reînvie spectrul rasismului. Și o fac, culmea ironiei, tot în manieră pretins științifică. Deși se etichetează pe ei înșiși drept „antirasiști”, teoria pe care o răspândesc în universități, școli, grădinițe și în afara spațiului educațional este că a omite, a trece cu vederea „diferențele de culoare” este cel mai abominabil rasism. Teoria rasei pe care o promovează reafirmă în mod constant necesitatea de a percepe relațiile sociale și întreaga viață umană în termeni de rasă⁷¹. Doar că, de data aceasta, rasismul este inversat. Tot sistemul DEI (diversitate, echitate, incluziune), ce a fost diseminat dincolo de mediul academic, în fapt o discriminare pozitivă inversată ce a degenerat în discriminare pur și simplu, se bazează pe preceptele că: 1) rasismul (albilor) este unul siste-

mic, deci cultural înrădăcinat și profund instituționalizat; 2) există și azi un „privilegiu al rasei albe”⁷².

Ambele axiome lovesc în libertatea și răspunderea indivizilor, precum și în universalitatea drepturilor oamenilor. Cum vom vedea, ele lovesc și în ideea unei rațiuni universale, împărtășite de toți oamenii, care se pot înțelege și care pot coopera pe baza acestei rațiuni împărtășite. Pe de-o parte, rasismul considerat „sistemic” afirmă că toți albi care trăiesc în prezent sunt automat rasiști (iar cei care neagă tocmai s-au „demască” ca fiind rasiști), că ei beneficiază de avantajele rasiale chiar și fără a fi conștienți de asta. Această afirmație nu doar că le răpește albilor orice libertate, privindu-i de opțiuni și de responsabilități individuale. Paradoxal, un tânăr alb care s-ar alătura unei mișcări autentice pentru promovarea egalității rasiale ar continua să fie urmărit de acest păcat originar al sclavagismului practicat de coloniștii albi în secolele XVII-XIX. Mai mult, păcatul fiind originar, nici o „spovedanie” nu îl poate șterge. În ciuda gesturilor simbolice ale polițiștilor americani de a îngenunchea în fața celor de culoare sau ale preoților americani de a le spăla picioarele, aceste „spovedanii” ce întăresc sentimentul de vinovăție sunt fără rezultat. Fiind un „privilegiu” din naștere, unul la care nici un alb nu renunță de bunăvoie, a fi alb rămâne un stigmat de neșters. De aceea noua religie woke poate fi comparată cu o teologie a vinovăției fără ieșire, pentru că nu există nici un Mântuitor

care să-ți șteargă păcat original și care să te scoată din starea de cădere. În cazul protestanților originari, la Luther cel puțin, credința sinceră era o ieșire (și singura) din starea anterioară.

Pe de altă parte, axiomele atacă chiar fundamentul stării universale de umanitate. Atribuind (în mod vinovat) anumite caracteristici „rasei albe”, așa cum face Muzeul Național de Istorie și Cultură Afro-Americană din Washington D.C. (individualism feroce, familie nucleară, accent pus pe metoda științifică, primatul culturii greco-romane și tradiția iudeo-creștină, etica protestantă a muncii, respectul pentru autonomie și proprietate, respectarea strictă a programelor de muncă, spiritul de competiție etc.)⁷³, asta înseamnă că non-albii nu dețin aceste valori sau că nu sunt capabile de ele. Asta denotă că aceste elemente ale „culturii albe dominante” nu au nimic de-a face cu persoanele non-albe și, mai mult, că odată ce acestea se vor elibera de cultura dominantă albă, ele vor fi lipsite de aceste valori (pe le-au internalizat involuntar) și care nu le sunt specifice⁷⁴.

Paradoxul acesta anti-universalist și profund rasist (ce le atribuie doar albilor valori precum punctualitatea, munca asiduă, gândirea rațională, respectul față de autoritate, politețea)⁷⁵, așa cum este el propagat de adepții religiei woke, este bine exemplificat de manualul de matematică finanțat și promovat de Fundația Bill și Melinda Gates⁷⁶. Scopul deschis al acestuia este de a „elimina rasismul

din lecțiile de matematică”. Încercând să demonstreze că „matematica este rasistă”, manualul finanțat de Gates, parte din programul de „matematici echitabile” al fundației, ajunge și el la un paradox. Anume, că matematica nu este universală. Căutarea unui răspuns „corect” nu este, conform manualului, decât dovada supremației albe. Orele de matematică nu ar trebui să perpetueze ideea că există un răspuns corect, ci să se axeze pe înțelegerea conceptelor și raționamentelor. Ideea răspunsului corect alimentează obiectivitatea (sic) și teama de conflict (sic)⁷⁷. Scopul lecțiilor de matematică ar fi acela de a angrena orientarea sociopolitică în toate aspectele educației, inclusiv în matematică, prin orchestrarea unor discuții matematice „productive”, care să stimuleze răspunsurile spontane din partea elevilor⁷⁸. În mod evident, paradoxul rasist la care ajunge manualul Fundației Gates este că este imoral să li se ceară unor elevi de culoare exactitate în calcule, rigoare în logica matematică, efort în rezolvarea unor probleme. Că este suficient, în cazul lor, să fie încurajați să discute despre matematică când ajung acasă, să aproximeze răspunsurile și să fie vigilenți la lecțiile de matematică „rasiste”, ce pot fi periculoase⁷⁹.

Așa cum remarcă Braunstein, nu doar că această abordare va avea consecințe practice dezastruoase pentru cei de culoare, care merg la școli ce nu fac nici un efort pentru a-i ajuta să stăpânească matematica sau să vorbească corect engleza⁸⁰. Dar îi

va afecta pe toți cei care merg la școlile unde se predă religia woke. Pentru că scopul noii educații woke este de a produce un om nou, pe deplin conformist, îmbibat de dogmele noii religii. Iar omul nou este cel pe deplin supus, cel care și-a negat individualitate și care-și urăște libertatea. Pentru că a fi alb înseamnă vină perpetuă, dar și apartenență perpetuă la grup. Noua religie înseamnă renunțarea completă la ideea de individ, de răspundere personală, de merit și excelență. Ideea de autonomie individuală este, de fapt, dușmanul de moarte al religiei woke, Satana ce trebuie distrusă. Omul nu este nimic în afara grupului, că e vorba de culoarea pielii sau de sex⁸¹, și orice dorință de a evada din grup este satanică. De aici și dorința de a distruge primatul rațiunii individuale, de aici dorința de a distruge solul culturii moștenite (*cancel culture*).

Dar obligația de a coborî sub minte, interdicția de a folosi rațiunea cu care oamenii au fost cu toții înzestrați, se manifestă plenar în decretarea biologiei ca fiind o pseudoștiință, o știință falsă a dominației de tip patriarhal, o disciplină eminemmente politică, colonialistă, ce impune ideea „bolnavă” a heterosexismului și a androcentrismului⁸². De aceea, distrugerea moștenirii biologiei ca știință, denunțarea ei ca mecanism de putere, îi va elibera automat pe cei „oprimați”, anume pe femei, pe homosexuali. O anti-biologie trebuie pusă în practică, astfel, în universitățile occidentale, care să fie neapărat ginocentrică, matriarhală și

homosexistă⁸³. Ca atare, riscuri nebănuite (izolarea academică, imposibilitatea de a obține un post prin concurs în domeniu) apar prin simplul curaj de a afirma că există diferențe biologice între bărbați și femei⁸⁴.

Acesta nu este un aspect oarecare al ideologiei woke. El stă la baza noii religii ca mărturisire a credinței. El este încununarea efortului de a subjugă natura culturii. El este capătul drumului behaviorist, credința în realitatea culturală, construită, arbitrară, a orice se poate cunoaște, deci și a ceea ce există deja. Incapacitatea sau lipsa de voință de a face distincție între legile universului și fanteziile culturale ale unei minorități militante vor face ca noi și noi discipline științifice să fie sacrificate pe altarul woke. Nu întâmplător, scrie Braunstein, primii profesori și oameni de știință din universitățile și laboratoarele de cercetare occidentale care au reacționat la ofensiva ideologică ce amintește de Marea Revoluție Culturală maoistă sunt de origine est-europeană. Atacând matematica, știința a universului, putem constata că niciodată ura față de rațiune nu a mers atât de departe⁸⁵. Marele matematician de origine română, Sergiu Klainerman, fugit din România ceaușistă, recunoaște un regres chiar față de situația din cadrul regimului comunist din România, unde matematica era în mare măsură imună la presiunile ideologice⁸⁶. De aceea, el insistă să afirme, cu toate riscurile asociate (defăimare, desfacerea contractului de muncă etc.), că nu există nimic în istoria și practica actuală a

matematicii care să justifice ideea că matematica ar fi diferită sau dependentă de rasă sau de grupul etnic care o practică⁸⁷. Nu există o matematică albă, la fel cum nu există o fizică mecanică newtoniană britanică, o compoziție franceză a aerului sau o teorie a relativității restrânse evreiești. Reluarea cu nonșalanță a celor mai josnice stereotipuri naziste nu poate decât să șocheze.

Mulțor chimiști, fizicieni și biologi occidentali proveniți din fosta Uniune Sovietică și țările Europei de Est le răsună încă în minte propaganda pe motive ideologice. De aceea, ei recunosc mai ușor tiparele ideologice, organizatorice și de acțiune ale ultimei mari încercări utopice⁸⁸. Cu nuanțele de rigoare, noul sistem ideologic occidental diferă de cel sovietic, remarcă profesorul Klainerman, prin faptul că nu-și elimină fizic adversarii și nu-i trimite în colonii penitenciare. Noul totalitarism woke este mai blând, el acționând prin oprobiu social, sancțiuni colective, vinovăție prin asociere și discursuri impuse⁸⁹. Desigur, nu ar trebui minimalizat riscul de „moarte socială”, mai ales în cazul profesiilor universitare. Mai mult, lupta cu o putere care se prezintă pe ea însăși ca fiind blândă și binevoitoare este mai complicată decât cu una fătîș brutală⁹⁰. Cel puțin în cazul comuniștilor sovietici, ei erau materialişti și pe deplin convinși că există o realitate obiectivă, o lume reală. În sens filozofic, ei erau realiști. De aceea nu a existat o critică radicală a științei ca atare, în ciuda denaturărilor din mo-

tive doctrinare, ci un respect deosebit față de matematică, derivat din credința că oamenii sunt capabili să descopere adevăruri universale⁹¹. Nu întâmplător, sfinții și apostolii noii religii woke, dar și primii dintre adepți se recrutează din facultățile de științe umaniste, cu precădere din acele sectoare ale studiilor literare care se preocupă de idei, de imaginație, de reverie și care speră ca utopiile la care vizează să primească puterea birocrăției statului totalitar modern.

Concluzii

Acum, marile universități americane și adepții woke din afara lor, dar răspândiți în corpul social și deținând poziții de decizie, atacă neobosit moștenirea Iluminismului⁹². Aceștia refuză universalismul, pe care-l cataloghează drept o simplă ficțiune⁹³. Pentru ei nu există indivizi, ci doar grupuri pe care anumiți oameni le exemplifică. Oamenii sunt albi sau negri, heterosexuali, homosexuali sau femei și așa mai departe. Ei sunt categorii, ca atare nu ar trebui tratați în mod egal, ci „echitabil”, adică prin discriminarea negativă sau pozitivă, capabilă să corecteze inegalitățile de facto⁹⁴. Ca atare, pentru adepții woke nu există un individ autonom, capabil să se distanțeze de grup, să nu adere la o normă unică impusă de acesta, de care aparține prin naștere sau afiliere⁹⁵. Individul nu poate să schimbe sau să renunțe la o identitate, pentru că ar rupe legăturile cu grupul, lucru de neacceptat pentru religia woke. Tot ce poate face individul este să

acumuleze o identitate suplimentară, prin intersecționalitate, dar ea va fi întotdeauna o identitate fixă și neapărat una de victimă⁹⁶. Ideea unui destin mutabil, pe care să-l confecționezi singur, prin merit și efort, este complet eretică în noua religie americană woke. Asta ar însemna să-ți trădezi comunitatea, iar oamenii există doar în limitele unei categorii impuse și imuabile, fie de victimă, fie de inovat⁹⁷. Nici o salvare autentică nu este posibilă din acest determinism pur și dur. Singură liberă este conștiința de a fi ceva, liberă să aleagă între un corp și altul, între un sex și altul. Dar această aparentă salvare nu este posibilă decât prin sacrificarea rațiunii, a Iluminismului, a științei, a legii, a liberalismului politic și constituțional⁹⁸.

Dacă acest gnosticism, cu accente de transumanism, ar fi rămas în băncile și bibliotecile marilor universități americane, am fi asistat la simplă excentricitate academică. Evadând din campusurile universităților americane, religia woke devine însă un episod de delir colectiv. Intrând în lista de discipline, bibliografiile și codurile de conduită ale universităților europene, coborând la nivelurile de bază ale învățământului, el trece în studiourile de film, în grilele de programe ale televiziunilor naționale, în mediul de afaceri corporatist și în politicile publice europene. Prin DEI, ea infuzează normele de conviețuire acceptate și încearcă să transforme percepția tuturor asupra realității. Ca sistem de putere, el se impune în mediul academic și publicistic. Este suficient să compari marile edituri consacrate ce-i publică pe autorii

woke (Gallimard, Seuil, Plon, Grasset, Stock, Routledge, Wiley, Oxford University Press etc.) și editurile de nișă care acceptă să-i publice pe contestatari. Deși există excepții, aceasta este regula.

În accepțiunea lui Popper⁹⁹, acest tabu, aceste idiosincrazii, aceste prejudecăți particulare unui mic grup militant, încearcă să devină normă, să sufoce societatea deschisă. Rămasă în imaginarul unor indivizi, ar fi fost o halucinație de mai scurtă sau de mai lungă durată. Transpusă în coduri, regulamente, legi naționale și europene, ea devine o ideologie totalitară. Vocile dizidente din universități sunt tot mai rare, iar amenințarea cu excluderea sau cu „moartea socială” este tot mai descurajantă. De aceea, facultățile de științe umaniste dau impresia că nu mai pot fi reformate din interior, iar universitățile că nu-și mai îndeplinesc rolul, acela de a păstra și transmite mai departe patrimoniul cultural, de a contribui la progresul cunoașterii, la formarea unor minți libere și cultivate¹⁰⁰. Ele sunt acum hotărâte să ne distrugă patrimoniul (*cancel culture*), să tragă înapoi știința (teoria de gen, colonialismul, intersecționalitatea, teoria critică a rasei), să formeze activiști needucați și dogmatici¹⁰¹.

Prin îndochinarea tinerilor și instigarea lor împotriva tradițiilor de civilizație, prin milițiile vigilente ce-i pedepsesc pe cei care nu se supun ei, religia woke pare mai aproape de marele delir al Revoluției Culturale declanșată de Mao decât de idealurile universității promovate de Humboldt. Această ideologie inhibă orice critică

și limitează capacitatea de a promova alternative, ucigând din fașă orice contravine ortodoxiei militante. Acest cadru există pentru că, subliniază Fitoussi, validarea cenzurii antrenează autocenzura, mai ales când lumea culturală aderă la ideologia ce impune constrângerile¹⁰². Virtuoși, continuă el, ne supunem la ceea ce ne dictează morala mediului cultural și, astfel, respectăm noile interdicții¹⁰³, de foarte multe ori chiar cu entuziasm. Facem asta din convingerea că,

prin asta, modelăm o lume mai bună, că luptăm împotriva rasismului, sexismului, homofobiei, în avantajul minorităților¹⁰⁴. În fapt, această nouă paradigmă culturală amenință civilizația occidentală. Ea ne târăște în linie dreaptă spre un regres artistic, intelectual și antropologic¹⁰⁵, înspre o nouă epocă de obscurantism și amorțire, din care vom ieși cu greu, reluând experiențele somnambulilor dinaintea noastră¹⁰⁶.

Note

¹ John Rawls, *Théorie de la justice*, traducere de Catherine Audard, Seuil, Paris, 1997.

² Amartya Sen, *L'idée de justice*, traducere de Paul Chemla, Flammarion, Paris, 2010.

³ Samuel Fitoussi, *Ficțiunea woke. Cum ne schimbă ideologia filmele și seriile*, traducere de Anca-Maria Pănoiu, Editura Curtea Veche, București, 2025.

⁴ Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalisme, socialisme et démocratie*, traducere de Gaël Fain, Payot, Paris, 1963, p. 20.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶ Jean-François Braunstein, *Religia woke. Cum a căzut pradă Occidentul unei mișcări iraționale*, traducere de Emanuela Jalbă Șoimaru, Editura Humanitas, București, 2024.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 23.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 11.

⁹ Mircea Eliade a înțeles că moartea religiei, mult clamată în Occident, nu poate lăsa loc liber decât unei alte forme religioase, o religie degradată, desfigurată, transformată, dar care continuă să răspundă setei omului de absolut, de realitate, de transcendență

și de nemurire. Pentru formele noi ale religiozității occidentale, ce transpar în forme actuale de inițiere, societăți secrete și în alte practici culturale, vezi Mircea Eliade, *Initiations, rites, sociétés secrètes. Naissances mystiques*, Gallimard, Paris, 1959; idem, *La nostalgie des origines*, Gallimard, Paris, 1971; Idem, *Ocultism, vrăjitorie și mode culturale. Eseuri de religie comparată*, traducere de Elena Boartă, Editura Trei, București, 2022.

¹⁰ Jean-François Braunstein, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 12.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 13.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 20.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 36.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 34.

¹⁹ Pentru importanța decisivă a doctrinei predestinării la protestanții americani de factură calvinistă, vezi Max Weber, *L'éthique protestante et l'esprit du capitalisme*, précédé de *Remarque préliminaire au recueil d'études de sociologie des religions I* et suivi de *Les sectes protestantes et*

- l'esprit du capitalisme*, traducere de Isabelle Kalinowski, Flammarion, Paris, 2017.
- ²⁰ Jean-François Braunstein, *op. cit.*, p. 37.
- ²¹ Pentru o imagine a intelectualilor medievali, vezi Jacques Le Goff, *Les intellectuels au Moyen Age*, Seuil, Paris, 2000.
- ²² Jean-François Braunstein, *op. cit.*, p. 43.
- ²³ *Ibidem*.
- ²⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 46.
- ²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 47.
- ²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 48.
- ²⁷ *Ibidem*.
- ²⁸ Arthur Koestler, *Les somnambules. Essai sur l'histoire des conceptions de l'Univers*, traducere de Georges Fradier, Calmann-Lévy, Paris, 1960.
- ²⁹ Jean-François Braunstein, *op. cit.*, p. 54.
- ³⁰ *Ibidem*.
- ³¹ *Ibidem*, p. 56.
- ³² *Ibidem*.
- ³³ *Ibidem*, p. 57.
- ³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 58.
- ³⁵ *Ibidem*.
- ³⁶ *Ibidem*.
- ³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 59.
- ³⁸ *Ibidem*.
- ³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 60.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 65.
- ⁴¹ *Ibidem*.
- ⁴² *Ibidem*.
- ⁴³ C. S. Lewis, *Desființarea omului sau Cugetări asupra educației, cu referire îndeosebi la predarea englezei în clasele mari*, traducere de Petruța-Oana Năiduț, Editura Humanitas, București, 2023.
- ⁴⁴ Jean-François Braunstein, *op. cit.*, p. 67.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibidem*.
- ⁴⁶ Isaiah Berlin, *Lemnul strâmb al omenirii. Capitole din istoria ideilor*, traducere de Andrei Costea, Editura Humanitas, București, 2021.
- ⁴⁷ Jean-François Braunstein, *op. cit.*, p. 70.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 84.
- ⁴⁹ Pentru caracterul universal și mistic al comunismului revoluționar, vezi Alain Besançon, *Originile intelectuale ale leninismului*, traducere de Lucreția Văcar, Editura Humanitas, București, 2007.
- ⁵⁰ Jean-François Braunstein, *op. cit.*, p. 84.
- ⁵¹ *Ibidem*.
- ⁵² *Ibidem*.
- ⁵³ *Ibidem*.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 85.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibidem*.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibidem*.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 104.
- ⁵⁸ *Ibidem*.
- ⁵⁹ *Ibidem*.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibidem*.
- ⁶¹ *Ibidem*.
- ⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 105.
- ⁶³ *Ibidem*.
- ⁶⁴ George Orwell, *O mie nouă sute optzeci și patru*, traducere de Dana Crăciun, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2019.
- ⁶⁵ Jean-François Braunstein, *op. cit.*, p. 112.
- ⁶⁶ *Ibidem*.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibidem*.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 110.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 109.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 121.
- ⁷¹ *Ibidem*, p. 128.
- ⁷² *Ibidem*, p. 130.
- ⁷³ *Ibidem*, p. 150.
- ⁷⁴ *Ibidem*.
- ⁷⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 151.
- ⁷⁶ *Ibidem*.
- ⁷⁷ *Ibidem*.
- ⁷⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 152.
- ⁷⁹ *Ibidem*.
- ⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 154.
- ⁸¹ *Ibidem*, p. 140.
- ⁸² *Ibidem*, p. 169.
- ⁸³ *Ibidem*, p. 170.

- 84 *Ibidem*, p. 171.
 85 *Ibidem*.
 86 *Ibidem*, p. 173.
 87 *Ibidem*, p. 172.
 88 Pentru eșecul utopiei socialiste, vezi excelentul eseu al lui François Furet, *Le passé d'une illusion. Essai sur l'idée communiste au XXe siècle*, Robert Laffont, Paris, 1995.
 89 Jean-François Braunstein, *op. cit.*, p. 175.
 90 *Ibidem*.
 91 *Ibidem*, p. 176.
 92 *Ibidem*, p. 200.
 93 *Ibidem*.
 94 *Ibidem*.
 95 *Ibidem*, p. 201.
 96 *Ibidem*.
 97 *Ibidem*.
 98 *Ibidem*, p. 202.
 99 Pentru definiția societății deschise, vezi Karl Popper, *Societatea deschisă și dușmanii ei*, traducere de D. Stoianovici, Editura Humanitas, București, 2005.
 100 Jean-François Braunstein, *Religia woke*, p. 206.
 101 *Ibidem*, p. 207.
 102 Samuel Fitoussi, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
 103 *Ibidem*.
 104 *Ibidem*, p. 12.
 105 *Ibidem*, p. 17.
 106 Arthur Koestler, *op. cit.*

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Romanian political discourse: from arguments to algorithmic legitimacy

Valeriu ANTONOVICI

Abstract: *This study investigates the profound metamorphosis of political discourse in Romania, tracing its shift from traditional institutional oratory to a communicative model governed by platform logics and algorithmic visibility. Using a mixed-method design, the research bridges the gap between citizens' expectations and actual digital political performance. Data was gathered via an exploratory diagnostic survey (N=446), a longitudinal content analysis of 100 political speeches (2014–2025), and 15 years of engaged participant observation within state institutions. Findings reveal a stark discrepancy: while citizens prioritize honesty, clarity, and evidence-based argumentation, current political practices privilege emotional appeals and populist framing optimized for virality. This tension reached a systemic crisis in 2024, when Romania became the first nation to witness the annulment of a presidential election due to coordinated TikTok manipulation. The study concludes that the transition toward “algorithmic legitimacy” - where authority is derived from engagement metrics rather than substantive deliberation - presents a fundamental challenge to democratic resilience in post-communist contexts.*

Keywords: *Political discourse, Algorithmic legitimacy, Social media, Romania, Affective publics, 2024 election crisis.*

Introduction

The digital restructuring of the public sphere has fundamentally altered the relationship between political representatives and the electorate, redefining the very nature of democratic communication¹. In Romania, a post-communist democracy characterized by high internet penetration but declining institutional trust, this transformation has accelerated the transition toward a “regime of visibility.” In this new paradigm, politi-

cal power is derived from the capacity to be seen and recognized within perceptual fields organized by platform algorithms².

The 2024–2025 Romanian political cycle offered a global precedent for these dynamics. The unexpected rise of candidate Călin Georgescu - from marginal polling numbers to a first-round victory via a coordinated TikTok campaign - led to the first-ever annulment of a presidential election by a Constitutional Court due to cyber warfare and algorithmic

manipulation³. This event underscored the vulnerability of democratic deliberation to “algorithmic legitimacy,” where visibility metrics replace procedural credibility.

This research addresses three core gaps identified in current scholarship: the specific interactional expectations of Romanian citizens, the impact of platform affordances on discursive structure, and the longitudinal shift from rational institutional appeals (2014) to affective-populist registers (2025). We hypothesize that a significant dissonance exists between the rational, honest discourse desired by the public and the simplified, emotional content delivered by politicians to ensure algorithmic survival.

The profound transformations of the public sphere in the digital age have radically reshaped political discourse, redefining the relationship between the political class and the electorate. A more complex forms of decentralized activism, movements that function without centralized leadership, is made possible by such emerging technologies⁴. The emergence of social media has not only democratized political communication, but also led to an unprecedented acceleration of emotional polarization and ideological fragmentation. In this context, the research concerning the political discourse of Romanian politicians in the digital environment using qualitative and quantitative methods, including comparative analysis of the tone, coherence, and subjects of the messages, as well as the analysis of exploratory survey

involving 446 respondents that clarifies the population's perceptions on the evolution of this discourse and their expectations of politicians becomes not only timely but also imperative. This is a new “regime of visibility”⁵, in which image, emotional reaction, and online performance often replace the rational content of the political message. The systematic study of this phenomenon can provide valuable data for understanding new forms of political legitimacy, but also for recalibrating democratic communication strategies in an environment subjected to hyperacceleration and algorithmic manipulation.

Politicians receive real-time feedback from people and can shape their discourse based on the number of comments and likes. It should not be overlooked that many politicians pay to promote their appearances on social media so that their message reaches the “right” social bubbles/echo chambers and then show (in internal party struggles or in comparison with political opponents and the media) that they are a popular/influential and appreciated politician. Due to manipulation on social media, the Constitutional Court canceled the 2024 presidential elections, a world first, and they were repeated in 2025 after a major political and social crisis. Romania was forced to acknowledge the defeat of democracy by social media. A presidential candidate who appeared in opinion polls with a 6% voting intention managed to come first in the 2024

presidential elections with 22.94% of the votes. His campaign on TikTok went under the radar of any polls. The Superior Council for National Defense declassified a secret report by the Romanian Intelligence Service showing that the online promotion of candidate Călin Georgescu was coordinated by a *state actor*, using approximately 25,000 TikTok accounts, including some created as early as 2016 and activated two weeks before the elections, indicating a deliberate and well-organized digital campaign. These actions were not declared as required by the electoral legislation in force. At the same time, the SRI found extensive cyber attacks - including DDoS and attempts to exfiltrate data from the electoral infrastructure - operated in a manner characteristic of an actor with state resources, endangering the integrity of the Romanian electoral process⁶.

In a society where trust in institutions is declining⁷ and public discourse is fragmented into information bubbles, the longitudinal and cross-platform analysis of politicians' communication offers an innovative tool for democratic diagnosis. This research proposes not only a new methodological framework based on affective and semantic analysis and people's expectations of politicians' discourse on social media, but also a model that can be replicated in other socio-political contexts. In this context I intend to answer the following research question: (I) How do Romanian citizens relate to online political discourse in relation to their expecta-

tions of honesty, clarity, and data-based arguments? (II) To what extent do social media algorithms influence the form and content of political discourse, favoring emotion and polarization over rational argumentation? (III) How did Romanian political discourse evolve between 2014 and 2025 in terms of tone, structure, and legitimacy as perceived by the public? I start my research from two central assumptions: (I) There is a significant discrepancy between citizens' expectations (clear, honest, data-based discourse) and the current practices of politicians on social media (emotional, simplified, algorithmically optimized messages) and (II) Politicians' presence and activity on social media directly influence public perception of their legitimacy, but this legitimacy is often built on visibility and emotion, not on consistent argumentation. The research is multidisciplinary, drawing on studies of democracy, political communication, sociology, and new media.

The scientific relevance lies in identifying patterns of interaction and narrative that could anticipate populist deviations, discursive radicalization, or phenomena of institutional delegitimization. In addition, the contribution of such research is crucial for the development of public policies regulating online communication, as well as for digital civic education. In the era of post-truth and digital populism, scientific understanding of the dynamics of political discourse on social networks is becoming a matter of global interest.

Theoretical Framework: From Deliberation to Affective Publics

The theoretical evolution of digital communication power must be understood through the lens of “connective action”⁸. This concept marks a fundamental shift from organized institutional participation toward personalized digital networks. This transition is inextricably linked to the formation of “affective publics”-communities organized around shared emotional intensities rather than formal ideological debate⁹. In these digital spaces, feeling often precedes reasoning. Consequently, the “emotionalization” of communication becomes a strategic necessity for political actors seeking to acquire, maintain, or reclaim power¹⁰.

Central to this analysis is the concept of “algorithmic legitimacy”. Traditional legitimacy relies on legal-procedural frameworks or charismatic authority. However, in the digital arena, authority is increasingly perceived through the lens of engagement metrics, such as likes, shares, and views. This labor of becoming “algorithmically recognizable”¹¹ forces politicians to adapt to platform logics. These systems reward visual immediacy and controversy over argumentative depth or ideological consistency.

As Tufekci¹² warns, the pressure for virality inherently distorts the moral priorities of leaders. This leads to oversimplification and strategic polarization. Politicians are subse-

quently transformed from traditional orators into digital influencers. They seek to “break the bubble” through short, emotionally charged messages. This shift is driven by the desire for real-time feedback and the simulation of emotional proximity with the electorate¹³.

Political discourse has migrated from the deliberative sphere to the affective realm¹⁴. Previously, discourse was mediated through formal channels, such as press releases or televised interviews. Today, politicians communicate directly via platforms like Facebook, TikTok, and Instagram. These platforms constitute the stage where politics is performed and contested.

The expansion of social media has redefined the relationship between representatives and citizens. Communication is no longer unidirectional; it is interactive and often reactive. Algorithms exert an invisible pressure on discourse. They select content based on the emotional response of the audience rather than its quality or truthfulness. Thus, political discourse is increasingly produced for algorithms rather than for citizens.

This research identifies a persistent gap between citizen expectations and political practices. Empirical data indicates that the public values honesty, clarity, and evidence-based arguments. However, the dominant online style privileges emotional appeals and populist frames.

Politicians adopt the role of influencers to ensure visibility within in-

formation-saturated environments. This strategy aims for narrative control through rapid reactions¹⁵. However, this practice undermines representative democracy by eroding ideological substance. Ultimately, the study demonstrates that legitimacy in the digital age is often constructed through visibility and emotion rather than consistent argumentation.

The transition from collective to connective action has fundamentally personalized political participation, fostering the emergence of affective publics that prioritize emotional intensity over rational deliberation. This shift is further amplified by platform algorithms that systematically reward polarization and virality at the expense of substantive policy debate. Consequently, the Romanian case serves as a critical laboratory for understanding how these digital dynamics expose democratic vulnerabilities to large scale manipulation.

Materials and Methods

The Survey as an Exploratory Diagnostic Instrument

To capture the cognitive and affective filters of the electorate, we conducted an online survey with 446 respondents (May–June 2025). The survey¹⁶ was distributed online via social media platforms and through direct contact lists, reaching over 7000 individuals. Addressing reviewer concerns regarding representativeness, we explicitly define this sample not as a national proxy, but as a **diagnostic instrument** designed to

identify trends and tendencies within the “digitally active” population. This approach is methodologically valid for exploratory research on emerging digital phenomena where non-probability sampling allows for mapping relationships and preferences in specific, high-influence sub-groups. The sample was heterogeneous but educated (N=211 higher education, N=200 postgraduate), reflecting the demographic most likely to serve as information gatekeepers in digital networks.

Engaged Participant Observation (Native Ethnography)

This research leverages over 15 years of immersion within the Romanian Parliament and Government. This “engaged participant observation” (or native ethnography) provides emic insights into the day-to-day production of political messaging¹⁷. By witnessing the shift from formal institutional moderation to the current pressure for digital virality from the inside, the researcher acts as a primary instrument of data collection. This longitudinal perspective is validated by previous peer-reviewed works¹⁸ and ensures that theoretical claims are grounded in practical institutional reality.

Longitudinal Content Analysis

We analyzed 100 political artifacts (speeches, press releases, and social media posts) from two periods: 2014 (the maturation of Facebook) and 2025 (the TikTok crisis era). Using a coding scheme inspired by

LIWC¹⁹, artifacts were evaluated on three dimensions:

1. **Dominant Themes:** (Public policy/budgeting vs. Identity/populism).
2. **Tone:** (Procedural/neutral vs. Aggressive/polarizing).
3. **Rhetorical Appeal:** (Rational/logos vs. Emotional/pathos).

The selection of the 100 speeches was conducted through a rigorous multi-stage systematic sampling process to ensure representativeness and eliminate selection bias. First, a systematic sampling frame was applied to the parliamentary members of each political party, selecting every fourth individual from an alphabetical list. This method ensured an even distribution across the entire legislative spectrum and prevented the overrepresentation of high-profile leadership figures. For each selected legislator, a diverse corpus of digital and traditional outputs was analyzed, including formal political declarations, legislative interventions, press releases, and social media posts.

To capture the temporal evolution of this discourse, the years of analysis were chosen through a defined random statistical step. This randomization was implemented to account for both electoral and non-electoral cycles, thereby mitigating the risk of data distortion caused by temporary campaign-related surges. By using a randomized interval for year selection, the study captures a longitudinal perspective that reflects consistent communication patterns rather than isolated political events.

This methodical approach provides a robust empirical foundation, linking individual legislative performance with the broader digital shift toward algorithmic legitimacy.

Romanians' trust in social media and institutions vs. politicians

The rise of social media as the main channel for political communication represents one of the most significant transformations of the public sphere in the last two decades. In this context, the speed of information dissemination is more important than relevance, and politicians have had to adapt quickly to the new rules imposed by platforms such as Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram and TikTok. These platforms, originally designed as spaces for reconnecting with former colleagues or close friends, have gradually transformed into central arenas of public debate, where the struggle for visibility, influence and legitimacy takes place in real time with an impact that is difficult to control.

In view to contextualize and explain the situation in Romania, the article will highlight: (1) where Romania stands in terms of its presence on social networks²⁰ and (2) the results of the main statistical studies on Romanians' trust in institutions and politicians.

(1) Social media in Romania

At the beginning of 2025, a report by DataReportal²¹ showed that 13 million Romanians were on social

media, equivalent to 68.6% of Romania's total population. There were also 11.6 million users over the age of 18 using social media, representing 75.5% of the total adult population. 73% of the total internet user base in Romania (regardless of age) used at least one social media platform. It is important to note that social media users may not represent unique individuals and that a single person may have multiple accounts.

In January 2025, there were 17.8 million internet users in Romania. This means that the internet penetration rate in Romania was 94% of the total population at the beginning of the year.

Facebook users: approximately 9.9 million users. Meta only allows people aged 13 and over to use Facebook, so it is worth noting that 60.3% of the “eligible” audience in Romania uses Meta in 2025.

YouTube users: 13.0 million users.

Instagram users: 5.45 million users.

TikTok users: 8.51 million users aged 18 and over in Romania at the beginning of 2025.

LinkedIn users: 4.9 million users in Romania at the beginning of 2024.

The report also analyses the number of users of other social media platforms. Thus, at the beginning of the year, there were 2.65 million Snapchat users, 1.63 million X (Twitter) users and 2.83 million Pinterest users in Romania.

(2) How Romanians rank in terms of trust

The latest INSCOP²² survey was conducted on 1,150 people using the

CATI method (telephone interviews). The data obtained between June 20 and 26, 2025, with a confidence level of 95% shows that 63% of respondents trust the Army, which is also the entity in which Romanians have the highest level of trust. The Army is followed by the Church (57.7%) and the Romanian Academy (46.8%). The City Hall is trusted by 38.9% of those interviewed, and the Presidency by 34.8% respondents. 26.9% of Romanians said they had confidence in the press, and the Government and Parliament are at the bottom of the ranking with 20.4% and 14.5% respectively. This is roughly the order of institutions in most of the statistics available in recent years. The explanation is that people have greater trust in institutions/people who are closer to them, to their community. The government and parliament are “more distant” institutions, and the unknown brings with it a degree of mistrust and fear²³.

Perceptions, behaviors and expectations of the digital audience

50% of survey respondents conducted for this study mentioned that they had followed the politicians' activity on social media daily, 22.2% several times a week, 6.1% once a week, 16.4% rarely, and 5.4% said they did not follow politicians on social media at all. Basically, only one in five is very little or not at all interested in politics and the activities of politicians, while the rest believe

that they can find out what parliamentarians or local elected officials have been doing directly from social media, where they can also interact with them.

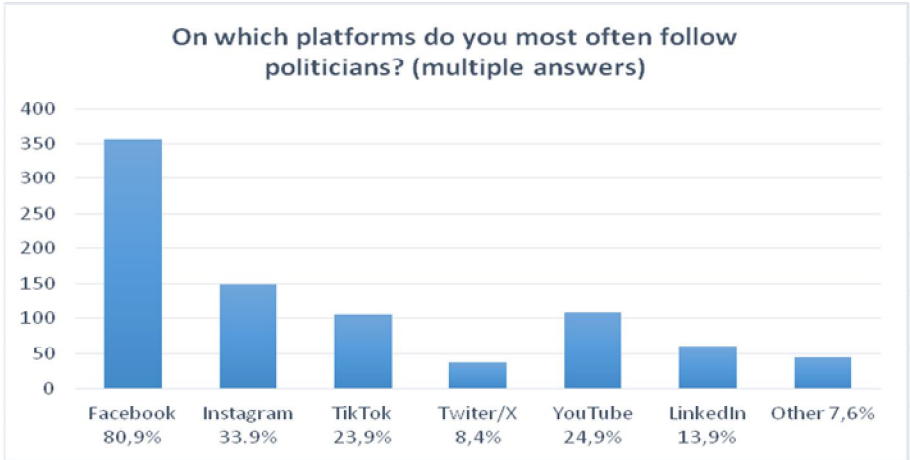


Figure 1: Social media follower trends for political actors
Source: Author’s own work

It is relevant that 71% of those who follow politicians on social media do so with the intention of learning about their activities, 32.6% do so out of curiosity and 10% for entertainment. Politicians also attract followers because they make jokes, insult others, parody others, or become the subject of amusement themselves, or because their posts only receive ironic or malicious comments, or even because they provoke internet users to mock other politicians. In many cases, the written messages are accompanied by entertaining pictures or videos (in view to capture attention). However, some politicians also make mistakes by altering pictures of other politicians and laughing at certain characteristics. It should be noted that when a politician crosses this line and posts

such altered photos that suggest that another politician has a moustache like Hitler or Stalin, or looks like someone with Down syndrome, they are sanctioned in the public sphere and forced to delete the image. Herewith, the press becomes a true “watchdog of democracy.” Often, even though the image is deleted from social media, it continues to circulate on other private messaging apps.

One in five respondents is involuntarily exposed to politicians' posts, either because they have interacted with a politician's post in the past or because they are part of the target audience for promotional campaigns. Only 11.4% of respondents say they follow certain politicians because they like their personality and are inspired by their posts. Obviously,

political issues polarize and create camps, which is why over 64.9% of people seek to see how a politician has reacted to one topic or another.

However, there is also a filter for verifying the information posted by politicians on social media. Over 92.3% respondents also get info about politicians' activities from other sources. Only 7.7% of respondents regard the information presented on politicians' pages as true. Traditional media, TV, radio, and print media have lost ground in recent years, and this is obvious. All studies on the media market in Romania show that online media has surpassed or is on par with TV. What is interesting in this study is that almost one in four respondents verify information from "friends." In other words, if a friend shares something or says that this is true, they tend to believe that it is genuine and it has been verified by that friend. Let's not forget that our sample consisted mainly of people with higher education, which makes this even more worrying. Eurostat figures (2024) show that only 17.4% of adults aged 25 to 74 had higher education in 2022, just over 60% had secondary education, and almost 22% did not even have high school education.

Verifying information from the primary source such as from the websites of public institutions, has not yet become common practice among consumers of news and information about politics. Very few people who see an alarmist news story about a bill search the Parlia-

ment or Government website in view to check that piece of legislation and compare the extent to which the information in the news story is correct or not. This is also the basis for fake news campaigns or exaggerations in political messages, as people find it difficult to verify and tend to believe alarmist messages.

Public discourse between people's expectations and the way it is "delivered"

As mentioned above, politicians' public communication has changed radically in recent years. They no longer just send press releases to media outlets, which make them known to the public; now they have started to communicate directly with citizens through social media, being a cheaper and a more trustworthy connection. This has led them to adapt their communication style: to place more emphasis on emotion, easy-to-understand arguments, shorter texts and videos (the short video revolution²⁴), to throw in strong words in the first few sentences to be promoted by algorithms, etc. They no longer have speeches with arguments, logical questions and answers, demonstrations with figures, facts, comparisons of articles of law, or other classic rhetoric²⁵.

Through participation and direct observation in the Romanian Parliament, we have noticed the following important aspect: at present, a speech or public statement is no longer prepared by three advisors over several

days, most of the time, they are drafted in a few minutes and posted on social media. There is also a race against time: who will be the first to take a position on a particular issue. In a way, we can say that today's politicians synthesise and decipher the “old communiqués” instead of journalists and political analysts, who until a few years ago were the intermediaries between politicians and the people.

In the questionnaire used for this study, we asked respondents in the

sample how they usually interact with politicians' posts on social media. We started from the hypothesis, which proved to be true, that many are “passive observers”, without interacting much with politicians, having certain fears of exposing themselves in the public space, of receiving negative reactions from other users, or even of avoiding the risk of polarizing their friends and family members. The results are as follows:

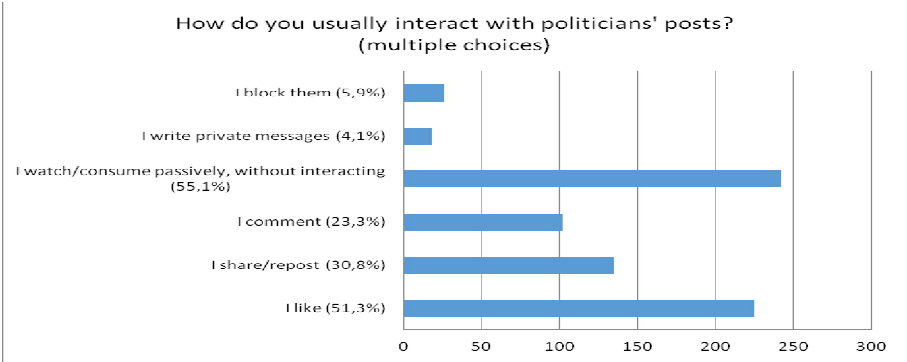


Figure 2: Trends in respondent engagement with politicians' social media posts
Source: Author’s own work

Therefore, 55.1% of respondents are “passive consumers”, and 10% are even more “discreet,” blocking their posts so they no longer see what they post or writing to them privately when they have something to say. Basically, they do not expose themselves publicly, do not comment, and do not interact with them openly. However, more than half often just give a simple “Like” to posts. The motivations are diverse, as shown by

the qualitative analysis of the open-ended questions: some give a like because they like the photo, without reading the message, others because they like the politician or as a sign that they are familiar with the subject and appreciate the message. Likes do not automatically mean a commitment to vote for them or to get involved in politics for one ideology or another.

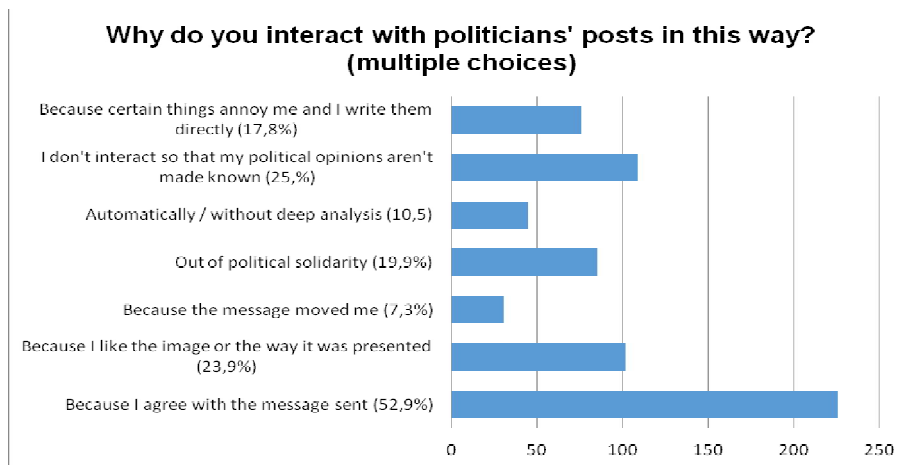


Figure 3: Respondent engagement trends regarding political digital discourse

Source: Author's own work

The data collected reveals an essential aspect of digital-political behavior: interaction with politicians' posts is no longer exclusively rational or based on deliberation, but is increasingly mediated by emotional affinities, aesthetic reactions and algorithmic automatisms. The fact that 52.9% of respondents say they react "because they agree with the message" still suggests a certain ideological component, but this is significantly complemented by secondary factors such as visual appeal (23.9%) and the emotion generated by the message (7.3%). This diversification of reasons for interaction confirms the observations of Chadwick and Dennis²⁶ regarding the transition to a "hybrid media system" model in which political content is consumed and redistributed not only for what it says, but for how it feels and how it looks.

Also, the fact that 25% of participants say they intentionally avoid

interaction so as not to expose their beliefs indicates the existence of a form of digital self-censorship, a phenomenon widely documented in the literature²⁷. This behavior can be understood through the lens of the digital "spiral of silence"²⁸, which suggests that the perception of a dominant opinion or the risk of social sanction leads to withdrawal from public expression. At the same time, 10.5% of respondents say they react "automatically, without hesitation", confirming the dominance of passive and algorithmic content consumption, in line with Klinger and Russmann's hypotheses regarding the pressure of platform-mediated visibility²⁹.

Another significant aspect is the reaction out of frustration: 17.8% of respondents say they interact only to convey their dissatisfaction directly to politicians. This type of interaction can be associated with the phenomenon of "rage participation"³⁰, in

which platform users no longer seek deliberation, but only the channeling of negative emotional energy.

In this context, digital political communication is fragmented between identity confirmation, emotional reactivity and strategic non-interaction, which leads to a latent polarization of the digital space. Politicians are thus forced to construct messages that not only convince, but are also felt and visible a radical transformation from the tradition of rational argumentative discourse.

Discursive preferences and information processing mechanisms

Respondents' preferences indicate a clear equation between conciseness, argumentation, and visual impact. The high percentage for short and clear messages (60.3%) and argumentative, data-based messages (81.3%) reflects the appeal to the central route of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM). It assumes that an audience considered motivated and capable of cognitive elaboration prefers relevant, well-structured, and evidence-laden information. How-

ever, the significant preference for visual messages (14.4%), even if numerically smaller, highlights the relevance of peripheral routes, where powerful images and videos can act as "cognitive heuristics", quickly synthesizing information and increasing the visibility of the message in crowded feeds (ELM adapted to social media). The electorate has begun to prefer messages that come directly with the "verdict or conclusion", to the detriment of speeches that require effort to follow, analyze, and think on the part of those who listen or read them.

At the same time, the call for civic mobilization (30%) and humor or self-irony (17.2%) reflect the integration of digital political marketing strategies. Recent studies suggest that political leaders are no longer just sources of information, but "civic influencers", capable of generating action through emotional framing and personal tone. Calls to action prove effective in increasing engagement and electoral mobilization, and humor serves as an accessible form of proximity, reducing the perceived distance between politician and voter³¹.

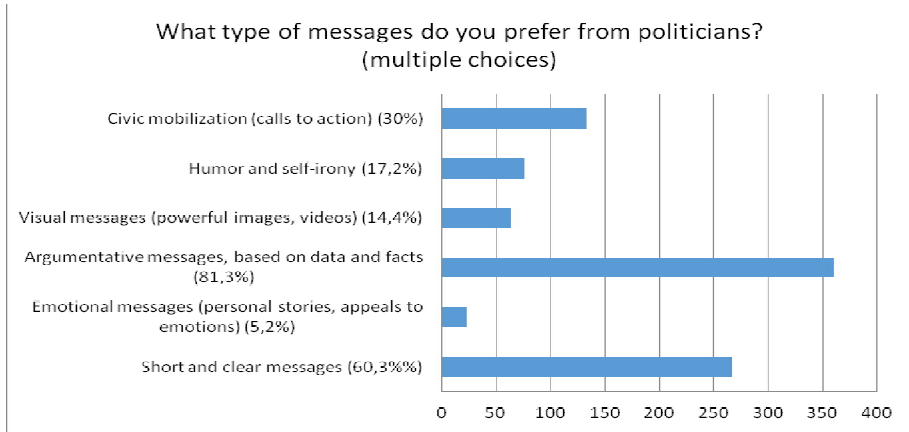


Figure 4: Survey results regarding respondent engagement patterns with politicians' online posts

Source: Author's own work

The importance of the visual component cannot be underestimated. Research in the field of visual political communication emphasizes that images and videos can generate immediate emotional reactions and increase the perception of credibility and authenticity, even when the explanatory text is minimal. A strong visual impact can amplify the message and facilitate virality³².

From the perspective of Media Richness Theory (MRT), visual and multimodal formats (video, images accompanied by short text) offer a higher level of clarity and reduce the ambiguity of political discourse. Visually rich messages allow for rapid transfer of meaning, especially in contexts where attention span is limited. And right now, all economic, social and political actors are fighting for a single limited resource the attention of potential customers. Thus, the combination of clear, well-argued

text and powerful visual support increases the ability to capture and attract the target audience.

This emergence of the new digital political discourse requires a synergy between cognitive relevance (solid argumentation), immediate accessibility (concise message) and visual force (images/video), complemented by persuasive applications (mobilization, humor). Successful online politicians are those who combine these elements within an integrated form, adapted to the algorithmic logic of platforms and the fragmented attention of the contemporary audience.

When respondents are faced with a single choice regarding the evaluation of a political post, 92.1% of them indicate "message content" as the dominant criterion. This choice reflects a declarative preference for clarity, rationality and argumentative information. According to the Elabo-

ration Likelihood Model³³, this behavior suggests an activation of the “central route” of information processing individuals evaluate the message based on the logical content and coherence of the arguments. Such situations are common in political contexts where the public feels personally involved or informed and, as such, engages cognitively in the evaluation of messages³⁴.

However, the importance of emotion and aesthetics should not be underestimated. The low percentages for “emotion conveyed” (4.3%), “aesthetics of the post” (2.7%) and “popularity of the post” (0.9%) can be explained by the social pressure to appear rational in public elections³⁵. In a single response, most subjects feel the need to validate behaviors considered “rational” in a political

context. This dissonance between actual and stated behavior is known in planned behavior theory as “social desirability bias”³⁶. In real-life contexts of social media use, as recent research shows, users often react emotionally, visually, or impulsively, even if they declaratively emphasize content³⁷.

The data from our study (analyzed above) show that 81.3% respondents prefer “argumentative, data-based messages,” and 60.3% choose “short and clear messages.” This overlap indicates a clear trend toward concise but rationally constructed messages, in line with the “hybridized logic media” model proposed by Chadwick³⁸, which emphasizes how effective political messages must combine digital clarity with factual substance.

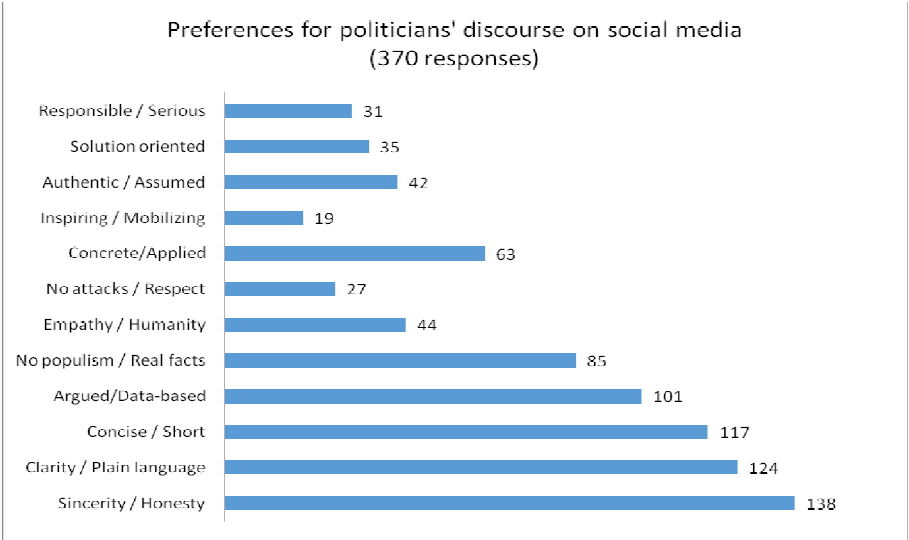


Figure 5: Public perception of essential attributes in political discourse: A priority analysis
Source: Author’s own work

The next question in the questionnaire was an open-ended one, for which we summarized, analyzed and grouped the 370 responses into 12 main categories, based on the frequency of similar ideas.

When respondents were asked openly what trait they considered most important in politicians' discourse on social media, 138 mentions of sincerity/honesty dominated, followed by clarity (124), conciseness (117), and data-based arguments (101). This stated priority reflects the public's demand for credibility and authenticity. According to theories of source credibility (ethos), the perception of honesty, transparency, and integrity is central to public trust in political actors³⁹. Recent research shows that politicians perceived as authentic and consistent are evaluated more favorably even in the absence of sophisticated messages⁴⁰ a finding that is also valid in the Romanian context, where political scandals have greatly eroded institutional trust, as shown above.

Preferences for clear/simple language (124), concise messages (117), and data-based arguments (101) signal a public orientation toward rational and accessible discourse. These preferences correspond to the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM): the cognitively engaged Romanian public prefers well-structured, reasoned and concise messages that allow for critical evaluation⁴¹. In a national context where the average literacy level is low⁴², clarity and conciseness become essential in view

to avoid misinterpretations and ensure effective reception of the political message.

We also note the rejection of populism (85 mentions) and the desire for concrete/applied discourse (63), responsible and serious (31). This confirms the theory of ethical political marketing, in which the public seeks discourse focused on solutions and real facts, not slogans or emotional manipulation⁴³. In Romania, where populist rhetoric has had an impact, respondents demand articulate policies, not facile commitments or populist promises a trend visible in polls on political trust.

The rest of the preferences reflect the need for empathy (44), assumed authenticity (42), and discourse without attacks (27). These aspects highlight the emotional and narrative dimension, but in a context where meaningful messaging takes precedence. According to studies on political authenticity, perceptions of proximity and personal transparency strengthen civic engagement and reduce political cynicism⁴⁴. In Romania, leaders perceived as authentic often active on social media gain additional credibility⁴⁵.

Results drawn from the integrated analysis of quantitative and qualitative data highlight the emergence of a model of digital political communication that privileges honesty, clarity, conciseness, and factual basis, to the detriment of populism, attacks, or rhetorical excesses. Social networks are not just channels for disseminating messages, but media with their

own logic algorithmic, affective, reactive that transforms both the form and content of political discourse⁴⁶. In the Romanian context, these transformations intersect with a high degree of institutional mistrust, but also with an acute social need for authenticity and responsibility.

The model of effective discourse outlined by respondents suggests an ideal digital politician who combines the ethos of honesty with argumentative logos and controlled pathos empathy without melodrama, emotion without manipulation. The online presence of such a leader must offer transparency, concrete solutions and clear, easy-to-process language, without excluding the aesthetic dimension or the ability to mobilize. Often, these political leaders also take the initiative to post materials (video or text) in order to educate the public in one area or another. Thus, they slightly exceed their role by wanting to become social media influencers. However, the public reacts this behavior by ignoring the messages or by commenting and mocking them. In other words, an effective digital leader is neither a cold technocrat nor a charismatic influencer devoid of content, but a hybrid figure who performs authenticity, explains data, avoids slogans, and maintains a continuous, interactive relationship with citizens⁴⁷.

Politicians who attain government positions often abandon this model of digital communication once they become prime minister, president, or minister. Within their new job, they

enter the “classic” communication format: press conferences, press releases, TV appearances, or live broadcasts of government meetings or other public events. Public institutions are still reluctant to embrace such a communication model for bureaucratic, legal, or personnel reasons, as showed in an older study⁴⁸.

These findings allow us to outline an equation manager for communication efficiency in the digital age: Perceived credibility (honesty + consistency) + Communication clarity (language + conciseness) + Factual basis (arguments + data) + Appropriate visual content (images + video) + Narrative mobilization (tone, emotion, calls to action) = Political discourse relevant to the logic of social networks. This formula can serve as a theoretical framework applicable not only in the analysis of Romanian political communication, but also in the design of ethical and effective public communication strategies in similar contexts.

The presence of politicians on social networks and the impact of social media on political discourse

Theorists such as Habermas warned that the digital public sphere could become a field of deliberative fragmentation, dominated by the logic of show and popularity at the expense of critical rationality⁴⁹. However, numerous empirical studies have shown that social media

shapes perceptions, voting behavior and even political polarization⁵⁰.

Almost 94% of respondents (68.9% + 24.8%) believe that the active presence of politicians on social media influences public opinion,

with varying degrees of intensity. This massive percentage validates the central hypothesis of contemporary political communication: social networks are perceived as an active vector for shaping citizens' beliefs.

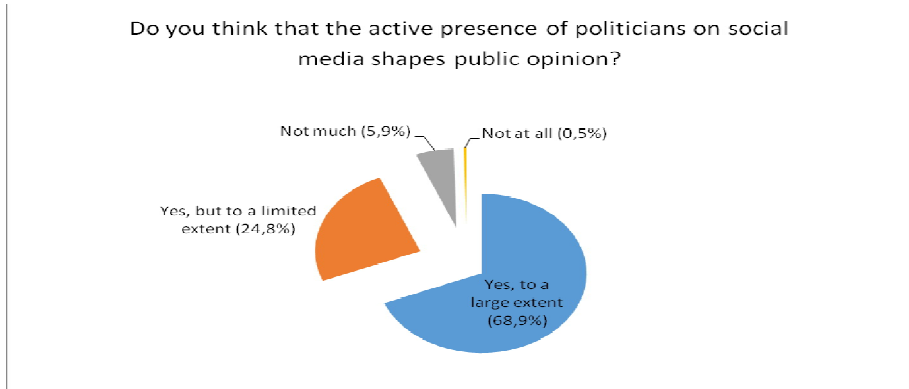


Figure 6: Comparative analysis of citizen expectations versus perceived reality in political discourse
Source: Author's own work

The above data support theories of “digital agenda-setting”⁵¹, according to which politicians who communicate effectively online can set the dominant themes of public conversation, especially in the context of a fragmented audience.

In the context of direct communication through social media, the public perceives a greater “proximity” to political leaders, which increases the level of engagement and may favorably influence the perception of their authenticity⁵². This perception is reflected by 68.9% respondents who consider the influence of social media to be “significant.”

On the other hand, 24.8% respondents do not deny the influence,

but temper it, indicating a critical or more selective category, possibly more digitally educated, which filters political messages and is aware of the manipulative dimension of platforms. This segment could correspond to “reflective users”⁵³.

Only 6.4% of the total (5.9% + 0.5%) believe that social media does not play a significant role in shaping public opinion. This marginal group could be made up of people who are not active on social media, have low trust in the digital environment, or rely predominantly on alternative sources of information (print media, traditional TV, small groups).

Thus, politicians who are not active or do not communicate coher-

ently on social media risk losing ground in the symbolic competition for visibility. Multi-platform strategies, supported by professional communication teams are needed.

Those figures confirm the urgency of media education and the development of critical thinking among the public in order to understand the difference between honest political communication and digital propaganda. At the same time, the entire social media field must comply with a set of clear rules on the transparency of sponsored messages, combating disinformation, and responsibility in expression. This is becoming a critical area for democratic regulation⁵⁴.

As the above figures show, we can conclude that the active presence of politicians on social media is perceived as a major factor influencing public opinion, which reconfirms the centrality of these platforms in the communication space. Theoretical correlations and practical implications converge to the need to professionalize digital political communication and civic education adapted to the algorithmic era.

It is very curious that among those who participated in the study and provided the above answers, 52.4% say that after interacting with politicians online, they have changed their opinion about that politician, and 47.6% say they did not change their opinion.

In the classical tradition, the political leader was a distant figure, representing an authority built

through institutional rituals and formal legitimacy. In the digital age, this authority is “humanized,” becoming a performative actor in an open and unstable symbolic space⁵⁵.

The online presence of political leaders implies a continuity of performance⁵⁶, but in a more volatile setting, where the boundaries between “role” and “person” are blurred. This interaction with citizens through comments, responses, or even symbolic gestures such as shares or “likes” contributes to the reconfiguration of the political imaginary, and the change in opinion is a symptom of this identity reconstruction. Moreover, this volatility of perception can be framed within what Clifford Geertz called the “symbolic dramaturgy of power”⁵⁷, where leaders must constantly regenerate their authority in front of a participatory, not passive audience. Digital platforms thus become liminal spaces⁵⁸, where political status is (re)negotiated through repetitive symbolic gestures that have a profound impact on the collective imagination.

The analysis of the open-ended responses to the question “How would you describe the overall impact of social media on political discourse?” offers a rich and nuanced qualitative perspective, complementing the previous quantitative data and confirming a predominantly critical public perception, but one that is aware of the irreversible and fundamental nature of the influence of digital platforms. From the 322 responses summarised, seven clear

thematic categories emerge, reflecting a complex understanding of the phenomenon, as follows:

1. Major/Overwhelming Impact (with predominantly negative or mixed undertones): Approximately 50-55% respondents described the impact as “immense”, “very large”, “strong”, “decisive”, “major”, “essential”, “overwhelming” or “radical”. Many of those responses were supplemented by details indicating either a negative perception or the complex nature of this influence.

2. Manipulation, Disinformation and Fake News: This is by far the most prominent negative theme, accounting for about 30-35% of all critical responses. Frequently used terms include “manipulative”, “fake news”, “misinformation”, “propaganda”, “deceptive”, “distort discourse”, and “false realities”. Respondents emphasize the vulnerability of the uneducated and undiscerning masses to such practices.

3. Superficialization and Emotionalization of Discourse: Approximately 15-20% responses criticize the erosion of the quality of political discourse, noting that it has become “short, dry and unfounded”, “losing depth”, tending to be “consumerist”, relying on “shouting”, “clickbait” or turning into an “attention spectacle”. The emphasis is shifting from arguments to emotion and the “tyranny of the like”.

4. Polarization, Aggression and Hatred: A significant proportion, approximately 10-15% responses highlight the contribution of social

media to “polarization”, “widespread hatred”, “aggression”, “personal attacks” and the creation of “information bubbles” and “echo chambers”.

5. Accessibility and Direct Communication (positive aspects/benefits): Approximately 10-12% responses mention positive aspects, such as the fact that social media “opens up politics to ordinary people”, allows for “direct communication”, “faster transmission of messages”, “humanizes” politicians or provides “feedback” for calibrating discourse.

6. Mixed/Nuanced Impact: About 10-15% respondents offer a balanced view, acknowledging both the benefits (e.g., information, access) and disadvantages (e.g., misinformation, polarization), suggesting that the impact depends on usage or context.

7. Specific Observations/Criticism Addressed to Politicians: Some responses, although integrated into the above themes, offer direct criticism or examples, such as politicians who “lose their morality” in the race for likes, adapt “cleverly” to online language or, in contrast, the example of Călin Georgescu (the former candidate in the 2024 presidential elections who entered the second round using TikTok and was supported by “dark forces” through non-transparent campaign financing) as evidence of the decisive impact of social media on political visibility⁵⁹.

These categories of qualitative responses validate and deepen the theoretical frameworks presented in the

introduction and discussion section of this study, providing empirical confirmation of the transformations within the political discourse.

The overwhelming perception of a major impact confirms the transition to a “regime of visibility”⁶⁰ where online presence is indispensable. Respondents intuit that social media is no longer just a channel, but the main arena of political discourse itself, aligning with the idea that “social networks are political discourse itself” (a direct observation from one response). This dependence is amplified by the speed of dissemination and the unique accessibility of the platforms.

The themes of manipulation, misinformation and superficiality are fully consistent with the warnings issued by Papacharissi about the “degradation of political language”⁶¹ and by Tufekci⁶² about the “pressure for virality that distorts the moral priorities of leaders”. The public directly feels the impact of algorithmic logic⁶³, which privileges emotional and controversial content over reasoned content, contributing to an environment of “post-truth” and “digital populism”. The observation about the “uneducated masses” highlights a critical deficiency in media literacy and a vulnerability to peripheral persuasion tactics⁶⁴. Responses regarding awareness of polarization and aggression are also very important and echo the concept of affective polarization⁶⁵. Social networks, by creating “information bubbles” and “echo chambers” exacerbate ideological and affective divisions, limiting exposure to different perspectives. Expressions such as “generalized hatred” or “people’s court” reflect manifestations of “rage participation”⁶⁶, where interaction is motivated by negative emotions rather than rational deliberation.

The positive aspects highlighted by respondents are in line with Castells⁶⁷ vision of a more “interactive, decentralized, and emotionally sensitive” political space. The potential for democratization of political communication, as demonstrated by campaigns such as Obama’s⁶⁸ is recognized, even if it is often overshadowed by negative effects. The ability to provide feedback to politicians suggests an attempt to restore a model of two-way communication, even if this may, in turn, be influenced by confirmation biases or social desirability.

Respondents clearly note that politicians “had to adapt”. This adaptation, while effective in gaining visibility⁶⁹, is also perceived as a cause of superficiality and loss of authenticity⁷⁰, transforming discourse into an “Instagrammable” or “consumerist” product, guided by “vote hunters (like hunters)”. The dynamics signals a tension between communicative effectiveness and discursive integrity.

The qualitative findings of this study carry significant practical implications for several categories of actors. In terms of political communication, politicians and their advisors must recognize that digital mes-

sages short, visual, and emotionally charged are essential for achieving visibility. However, audiences are capable of detecting superficiality and manipulative intentions. Effective and ethical strategies should integrate digital accessibility with substantive argumentation, navigating the complexities of what Chadwick describes as “hybridized logic media”⁷¹. Emphasizing discourse grounded in facts, actionable solutions, and accountability, even when adapted for digital formats, may contribute to restoring eroded public trust.

Regarding civic education and media literacy, respondents frequently highlighted concerns about the manipulative and disinformative potential of social media. These observations underscore the urgency of investing in media education programs, particularly for younger populations. Such programs should equip citizens to critically evaluate online information, identify misinformation, understand platform algorithms, and manage their own information environments. Comments on functional illiteracy and the tendency to rely on friends for verification further reinforce the necessity of developing these competencies.

In the realm of digital platform development and regulation, respondents’ reflections on algorithmic influence, polarization, and examples of electoral manipulation indicate that social media platforms should assume greater responsibility for moderating political content and promoting algorithmic transparency. Measures

such as establishing clear rules and restrictions for political content could contribute to a healthier public discourse.

Finally, the role of traditional media and civil society remains crucial. Many respondents continue to depend on alternative sources for verification, highlighting the enduring function of traditional media as a gatekeeper. Civil society organizations and NGOs are increasingly important in fostering informed public discourse and countering misinformation, particularly in contexts where parts of the press are financially dependent on political actors. In Romania, civil society has assumed some of the traditional press’s responsibilities, acting as a watchdog for democratic accountability.

In conclusion, qualitative responses confirm that the impact of social media on political discourse is perceived as overwhelming and complex, with a balance tilted toward negative consequences such as manipulation, superficiality and polarization. However, there is recognition of the positive potential for accessibility and direct communication. This public awareness is a crucial starting point for efforts to recalibrate democratic communication in the digital age.

Comparison with the past

People are tempted to compare and relate to situations and things they have experienced or are familiar with. For this reason, we asked them what sources they have used in order

to obtain information ten years ago. Many of them did not have such interests a decade ago, given their age, but social networks were already a source of information for 31.3% of them. 83.7% got their information from TV, 35.4% from radio and 55% from print media. Almost 25% obtained information from the official websites of public institutions. If we compare this with the above figures, today, almost twice as many people, 44.6% of respondents, get their information from official websites. This proves that with the rise of mistrust and the acceleration of disinformation and fake news campaigns, people tend to verify information and be more cautious.

Question 15 in the questionnaire was: “What was different then compared to now in the structure and content of messages?” It was an open-ended question to which we received 318 fairly extensive and well-argued answers, with concrete examples. The analysis of the responses indicates a substantial shift in the way politics is produced and consumed. Respondents identify a transition from more formal and controlled communication to digital, fast-paced, and often superficial communication.

Summarizing the qualitative data, three major pillars of differentiation can be distinguished, which converge towards a common understanding of the phenomenon, supported by concrete examples from those who answered the question:

Change in content and tone: from substance to emotion and polarization

A significant majority of respondents (over 50%) highlight a fundamental change in content and tone. Political messages from ten years ago are perceived as being more serious, elaborate, and focused on program content. One respondent noted that “the messages were more elaborate, more consistent, and less emotional,” while another stated that “there were ideas / today there are not.” In contrast, contemporary discourse is described as superficial and emotion-based. A considerable number of respondents (an estimated 20-25%) criticize this superficiality. A relevant example is the observation that “now there is an avalanche of messages, the vast majority of which are stupid” and that “political discourse tends to become ‘consumerist’, losing its depth”. The tone is considered more aggressive, hateful, and populist, a trend illustrated by the comment that “they are now much more aggressive. Decency and respect are lacking”. Other respondent stated: “if before the message was well-argued, based on facts and experiences, now it is short, dry and unfounded.”

Structural and formal adaptation: from oratory to fragmented communication

A notable proportion (over 30%) of respondents notes structural changes. In the past, speeches were longer and more formal. Now, messages are shorter, concise and per-

sonalized, adapted to the visual and short-form formats of social media. This is highlighted by comments such as “now the speed at which information is transmitted is essential” and that “now elections are won with TikTok.” One respondent described the evolution as moving from “pragmatic messages” to “electoral marketing messages” and “personalized, relational with followers”.

The role of technology: the disappearance of filters and the amplification of risks

This is the third major trend, highlighted by a significant proportion of respondents (approximately 25-30%). Respondents ten years ago noted the presence of journalistic filters. In contrast, the disappearance of filters has led to an increase in fake news and the risks of manipulation. One response perfectly summed up this difference: “Filters have disappeared from social media. TV, radio, and print media used to act as filters. Now everyone posts whatever comes to mind or whatever suits their own interests”. Another respondent pointed out that “now post-truth is being distributed” and that “perhaps it brought people closer together, not the interests of parties masked as national interests”. Another respondent described the situation with the phrase: “...now we have even more things said openly to sound good on social media, so even more lies or untruths, whatever you want to call them”.

In conclusion, qualitative analysis of the responses shows that the pub-

lic perceives a deterioration in the quality of political discourse, marked by a shift from a form of communication that mimicked rational deliberation to a model centered on performance, emotional reaction and adaptation to the logic of digital media. This observation is in line with studies documenting the rise of a new type of political communication, in which image and online interaction often replace the rational content of the public message.

Social networks have become the main medium for expressing and shaping political discourse in Romania. Despite all the democratic benefits, the perception prevails that these platforms amplify manipulation, superficiality and radicalization. Politicians react rather than lead, and the public is often a prisoner of emotions rather than reason.

Analysis of classical vs. digital discourse (2014 and 2025)

This study explores the evolution of public political discourse in Romania, conducting a comparative analysis of two sets of press releases, transcripts from parliamentary sessions and speeches by the President of Romania from 2014 and 2025. We used an adapted methodology of computer-assisted content analysis (similar to that offered by LIWC software), focusing on thematic, tonal, rhetorical and formal variations. The results demonstrate a significant transition from a predominantly institutional, procedural and process-oriented discourse, specific to 2014,

to a fragmented, populist, emotional and immediate impact-oriented discourse, characteristic of 2025. This change reflects an adaptation of political agents to a media ecosystem dominated by social networks, where communication efficiency takes precedence over complexity and nuance.

The methodological approach applied in this study combines qualitative analysis with a comparative structure inspired by quantitative metrics. Thus, we investigated categories such as dominant themes, tone (emotional versus rational), rhetorical appeal, as well as differences in form and length, in order to map the trajectory of Romanian public discourse over a decade⁷².

2014: Institutional discourse

The speeches from 2014, represented by parliamentary interventions, press releases, and political statements selected from all parliamentary parties and presidential speeches, are distinguished by their predominantly institutional and formal character. The central themes are anchored in legislative, economic, and governance processes:

Legislation and social rights: A speech by a member of parliament focuses on specific legislative changes (“Law No. 53/2003 – Labor Code”), using precise legal language (e.g., “Art. 59, lit. a)”, “paras. (5) – (8)”) to define concepts such as discrimination and harassment. The appeal is rational, centred on the need to “fill the gaps” and ensure “the dignity of employees”.

European governance and finance: Another significant category concerns the state budget and the absorption of European funds. The discourse is marked by partisan confrontation, but it takes place in a formal setting, with references to procedures (“vote of confidence”, “challenged in the Constitutional Court”) and the presentation of data and figures (e.g., “35% absorption rate”, “3 billion euros”). The tone is critical, but the argument is based on economic data and government responsibility.

Identity and security: Discourses on the “First Romanian School” and NATO membership are longer and adopt a festive, solemn tone. They use rhetoric of tradition and patriotism (“source of Romanianism,” “forress of Romanian culture”), with a strong historical and strategic dimension.

Key features (2014):

Form: Mainly formal oral speeches, press releases, or extended press statements.

Length: Texts of considerable length, with complex sentences and detailed narrative structures.

Tone: Formal, procedural, sometimes solemn or polemical, but always within the limits of an academic-institutional register.

Appeal: Predominantly rational, based on figures, facts, legal articles, and procedures. Emotional appeal is present, but is reserved for issues of identity and nationality.

2025: Populist discourse

Although the discourses of 2025 address similar topics (governance, justice, social issues), they do so in a fundamentally different manner. Here, we observe a radical adaptation to the logic of digital communication, characterized by speed, personalization, and emotionality.

The relationship between authority and citizens: The discourse is rapidly becoming polarized, contrasting “work” and “actions” from “authority” and “accountability” versus “selfies”, “hysterical responses on TikTok,” and “cheap propaganda”. This rhetoric excludes neutrality and imposes an explicit moral dichotomy between concrete action and “political spectacle”.

Justice and morality: Legal issues are approached from the perspective of “injustice” and “cynicism”. Unlike in 2014, when legislative changes were discussed, the discourse in 2025 focuses on emotion and moral opposition (“totally absurd”, “lack of predictability”, “incompetence and fraud”). The opposition is demonized with terms such as “smart guys” or “private companies based in Cyprus”.

Crises and solidarity: Responses to crises, such as floods, are communicated through short messages containing lists of concrete measures, but also direct and strongly emotional criticism of the opposition. The speeches of populists in opposition, for example, are structured around a call for solidarity and denunciation of government actions (“The Romanian

government values the life of a Romanian at only €3,000”).

Symbols and identity: There is a presence of national identity themes, but these are compressed and integrated into short visual or narrative formats. The example “7 reasons to be proud of Romania in Sarajevo!” shows a capitalization of cultural success through a list format, optimized for distribution on social networks.

Visuals and hashtags: while speeches in 2014 were accompanied by at most one official photo, today's messages are accompanied by videos or at least postcards edited according to the campaign model, with a strong phrase and party symbols. Most texts have hashtags (#) and tag other people, places, or pages of political parties in view to increase reach and attract as many followers as possible.

Key characteristics (2025):

Form: Short, fragmented texts, with frequent use of lists, bold headlines, hashtags and short quotes taken from online sources.

Length: Predominantly concise messages, optimized for rapid content consumption on mobile platforms.

Tone: Direct, polemical, often aggressive and accusatory. The tone is emotionally and morally charged, with a high personal stake (“I believe in X” “We will not remain silent”).

Appeal: Predominantly emotional and personal. Messages are based on the contrast between good and evil, justice and injustice, competence and incompetence, rather than arguments based on detailed documents or figures.

Comparative analysis and conclusions

The transition from the 2014 discourse to that of 2025 reflects a structural change in Romanian political communication, which is aligning itself with global trends (Castells, 2008). The change is not one of depth of themes, but of manner and form.

From formal discourse to fragmented discourse: The speeches of 2014 were designed for a formal platform, such as Parliament, while the texts of 2025 are optimized for the constant flow of social media. This change requires a reduction in nuance and a simplification of the message. In 2014, those who used social media often posted the entire text taken from the official website of the institution (Parliament, Government, or an interview given to an online publication) and provided a link. Today, social media features highly condensed versions optimized for algorithms.

From procedural rhetoric to populist rhetoric: While in 2014 the discourse was legitimized by references to laws, budgets and procedures, in 2025 legitimacy is sought through direct, emotional connection with the public. The “us vs. them” logic becomes more explicit and virulent.

From rational to emotional appeal: The use of terms with strong emotional impact (“tragedy”, “waste”, “injustice”, “humiliation”) and the personalization of conflict (“I do not shy away from responsibility,” “I have great respect”) dominate in

2025. In 2014, although accusations were made, they were generally mediated by a more formal tone and data-based argumentation.

In conclusion, the analysis of the two sets of speeches from 2014 and 2025 reveals a metamorphosis in the Romanian political discourse. Under pressure from the digital landscape, the discourse is becoming detached from institutional logic, becoming an instrument of rapid mobilization and emotional polarization. This evolution has profound implications for the nature of public debate, the role of traditional media and citizens' perception of the democratic process. The phenomenon is not specific to Romania, but it represents a local manifestation of a global trend toward the “social-mediatization” of politics.

Conclusions

This research has mapped a profound shift in the landscape of Romanian political communication, a transition from institutional rhetoric to digital discourse, shaped by algorithms and the demands of immediacy. A comparative analysis of the discourses of 2014 and 2025, corroborated with the public perceptions, reveals a fundamental reconfiguration of the role of political actors and citizens' expectations. While in 2014 the discourse was predominantly formal, procedural and anchored in complex legislative processes, in 2025 we are witnessing fragmented, populist, and emotional rhetoric, op-

timized for visibility and immediate impact on social media platforms. This evolution confirms the theorists who warned about the “emotionalization” of political communication⁷³ and the algorithmic pressure that distorts the moral priorities of leaders⁷⁴.

The central paradox of this transformation lies in the glaring discrepancy between public expectations and the current practices of politicians. Although respondents want a discourse that is “clear, honest, reasoned, and free of populism”, focused on “real solutions, responsibility, and empathy”, the reality of digital political communication is often one of superficiality, polarization, and manipulation. Politicians, under pressure to “break the digital bubble” and generate virality, adopt a style that sacrifices nuance and complexity, turning the political act into a performative spectacle⁷⁵. This tension inevitably contributes to the continued erosion of trust in democratic institutions, a phenomenon already visible in opinion polls.

Faced with this increasingly complex and often toxic communication landscape, the essential question arises: has the public developed “antibodies” to what the future holds in terms of political discourse and social media? The data from this study offers a nuanced perspective. On the one hand, a significant proportion of respondents (over 92%) say they check information from multiple sources, a behavior that suggests an awareness of the risks of misinfor-

mation, but on the other hand, they do not choose their sources of information carefully. At the same time, vulnerability persists: reliance on “friends” as a source of verification (almost a quarter of respondents) can, paradoxically, reinforce “information bubbles” and amplify polarization rather than counteract it. Thus, the public’s “antibodies” are still developing, and their resistance is constantly being tested by sophisticated manipulation tactics, as demonstrated by the 2024 presidential election, which was canceled amid online disinformation campaigns.

Implications and recommendations:

In view to effectively navigate the current digital political landscape, it is essential for politicians to rebuild their credibility not only through short, visual messages, but through an authentic combination of solid arguments, clarity and ethical calls to action, recognizing that the public punishes the lack of substance and manipulation. At the same time, it is vital to invest strategically in digital civic education, preparing citizens to identify disinformation and understand how emotions can be exploited, especially since their defense mechanisms are still imperfect. In addition to these efforts, digital platforms and regulators have a crucial responsibility to ensure a level playing field for debate, through clear rules on the transparency of political content and proactive measures to combat ma-

nipulation, in order to protect the health of democracy.

Forecasts and Future Directions:

Political discourse will continue to evolve in a hybrid direction⁷⁶, where traditional elements will intersect with digital ones. In the short term, the pressure for virality and personalization will persist, likely generating new forms of polarization and misinformation. However, on long term, it is plausible that a portion of the public, tired of digital “noise” and superficiality, will develop an increasingly strong demand for authentic discourse based on facts and solutions. This demand could lead to a recalibration of political strategies, forcing actors to invest not

only in visibility, but also in rebuilding trust through consistency and accountability. The future of political discourse will ultimately depend on society's ability to critically navigate digital complexity and demand from its leaders not just spectacle, but authentic substance. Just as traditional parties have lost politically in the last two election cycles because they were unable to change their discourse and strategies in time, the same could happen to current parties in the future if they fail to consider the changes explained above. Democracy will suffer as a result of the weakening of public institutions and a further decline in people's trust in political institutions and democracy.

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Instituții regionale și globale în ordinea globală a mega-orașelor. Studiu asupra evoluției urbane în cea de a doua jumătate a secolului al XXI-lea și din prima jumătate a secolului al XXII-lea

**[Regional and global institutions in a global order of megacities.
A study on the second half of XXI st century – first half
of XXII century Word]**

Mădălina Virginia ANTONESCU

Abstract: *Metropolises and megalopolises are representing, at the beginning of XXIst century, the main points of a world network based on intensified and trans-national exchanges, on infra-local connections; metropolises are truly new political actors, in full process of separating themselves from the state umbrella (juridically, politically, economically). The paper explores some futuristic trends in developments of such actors, and new geopolitical spaces created as effect of the new urban order, that will depict rather as “Urbanocene” the XXII century (the era of the urban global order). We introduce here new concepts regarding developments of such order, as the GGUN, the VAEs, the MFAE etc., illustrating, in our opinion, the profile of such new global order founded on non-state actors, the competences, their basic normative acts, their specific institutions and bodies.*

Keywords: *Global Order of Megacities, Urbanocene, metropolitan institutions, infra-actors, VAEs (Vertical Architectonic Ensembles), The Belt-cities, the Great Global Urban Network.*

Introducere

Orașele au reprezentat mereu, de-a lungul istoriei umane, o putere politică, militară, culturală, economică prin ele însele¹. Uneori, ele s-au statalizat, devenind orașe-stat (organizate în cele mai diverse forme de guvernare, de la republică la teocrații, monarhii absolutiste sau plutocrații).

În sec. III după Hr., în Imperiul Roman s-au acordat drepturi civile și

de a sta în justiție actorilor infra-statali (grupări politice teritoriale precum municipiile, coloniile și cetățile) și au fost recunoscute, ca entități independente diferite grupuri de persoane (corporațiile, colegiile) care intrau sub reglementarea dreptului public². O trăsătură importantă era recunoașterea faptului că toate corporațiile din Imperiul Român îndeplineau și sarcini religioase, administrative, politice și că aveau, ca și muni-

ciپی، bunuri comune، fiind reprezentate de un actor sau sindicus³.

În prezent، se apreciază că aproape 70% din toată energia produsă global este consumată de orașe. Potrivit estimărilor، aproximativ 66% din populația lumii va locui în arii urbane، până în anul 2050⁴. După cum observă specialiștii în trendurile civilizaționale ale societății umane، încă din 1964، orașul este o frontieră؛ trebuie să remarcăm și o disciplină specifică ce va lua amploare în sec. XXI-XXII، anume *ekistica*، studiul transdisciplinar al așezărilor umane (cuprinzând abordarea istorică، arhitectura، viitorologia urbană، planificarea și funcțiunile orașelor، instituțiile urbane și competențele lor، studiul comunicațiilor și al infrastructurilor urbane precum și al relațiilor orașelor cu periferiile sau cu împrejurimile lor، economia، sociologia، psihologia، medicina، biologia)⁵. Ekistica este o disciplină multidimensională privind habitatele umane de tip urban⁶.

Metropolele au devenit، în sec. al XXI-lea، o adevărată sursă de informații și creatoare de comunicație، fiind capete de rețele în materie de politică، economie، cultură، creând și întreținând fluxuri de bunuri، de persoane، de capitaluri și informație și astfel، formând o rețea urbană mondială⁷. Conform lui Paul Claval/1981، internaționalizarea progresivă a schimburilor și a tuturor interdependențelor transpore printr-o cristalizare progresivă a unui nivel superior al armăturii urbane، anume rețeaua de mari metropole، un nivel superior

regiunilor și națiunilor، un nivel de organizare teritorială a marilor ansambluri urbane⁸. Claval desprinde orașul de legătura cu lumea rurală، considerând că el este o entitate autonomă și că „orașul nu mai trebuie، ca funcție predominantă، să mai deservească un mediu rural، el lucrează pentru el însuși sau pentru alte spații urbane»⁹.

Specifice marilor metropole، în opinia lui Bonnet، sunt echipamentele lor și zonele lor de influență، maximizarea capacității lor de a participa la rețelele de schimburi mondiale، dar și „o poziție geografică de deschidere către lume”， conform lui P. Soldatos/1991¹⁰.

Și în acest context، putem spune că secolul al XXI-lea este deja un secol urban și că، urmărind această direcție de dezvoltare، trebuie să luăm în calcul și ipoteza politizării orașelor și a transformării lor în cvasi-state sau chiar în state، emancipate total de sub tutela actualelor forme de stat-națiune. Desigur، trebuie să ținem seama și de tendința de extindere și de consolidare a urbanismului، a concepției de „habitat urban”， cât și de multiplele funcții cu care orașele viitorului vor fi dotate، la nivel global.

Putem spune că، luând în calcul această tendință de consolidare și de extindere a rolului mega-orașelor، secolul al XXI-lea nu va fi doar un secol asiatic، ci și un secol asiatic urban (având în vedere că majoritatea mega-orașelor din sec. al XXI-lea sunt localizate pe continentul asiatic).

Evoluții ale habitatelor urbane

De la orașele statice la orașele dinamice

Așa cum remarcă unii autori, una din cele mai interesante schimbări geopolitice și istorice în privința tipului de civilizație urbană a avut loc odată cu trecerea de la orașele sedentarizate (axate pe agricultură) care au stat la baza marilor imperii hidraulice (imperiile orașelor-stat sumeriene, de exemplu)¹¹, la orașele în mișcare (orașele mecanizate)¹². În opinia doctrinei, majoritatea orașelor constituite în primii 5 000 de ani ai istoriei habitatelor urbane erau orașe statice¹³.

Din 1969, odată cu apariția orașelor mecanizate, conceptul de „habitat urban” devine unul dinamic și se extinde, transformând orașul într-o metropolă (de exemplu, în 1969, un tip de megalopolis era considerat a fi conurbăția întinzându-se de la Boston, prin New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, până la Washington DC)¹⁴.

De la megalopolisurile regionale la Ecumenopolis (orașul unic mondial sau lumea-oraș)

Un al doilea fenomen observat de specialiștii în trendurile de dezvoltare a habitatelor urbane este tendința de contopire a megalopolisurilor (fiind dat drept exemplu megalopolisul de pe țărmul nord-estic al SUA, cu megalopolisul din regiunea Marilor Lacuri), și care este parte a unui fenomen de extindere prin contopire a megalopolisurilor la nivel mondial¹⁵.

Așa cum remarcă doctrina, dacă această tendință va continua, într-un

viitor nu prea îndepărtat este posibil ca, de la contopirile regionale de megalopolisuri să se formeze, într-o ultimă etapă de apogeu al mega-urbanizării, un singur oraș, Ecumenopolis¹⁶. Acest aspect, în opinia noastră, va marca totodată, trecerea de la epoca simplă a Antropocenului, la Urbanocen (lumea complet urbanizată a secolelor viitoare).

Această tendință este atât de evidentă, consideră specialiștii, încât problema nu este când și dacă orașul unic se va crea ci dacă oamenii vor fi capabili să controleze acest fenomen¹⁷ și să facă din Ecumenopolis un mega-habitat locuibil pentru ființe umane dar și respectuos și prietenos cu „mediul integrat” (trecându-se de la conceptul de „mediu înconjurător” – care definește ecosistemele naturale în special, în contrast cu habitatul uman, la conceptul revoluționar de „mediu integrat” – adică, ecosisteme care fac acum parte, ca elemente specifice, dintr-o formă nouă de mega-oraș, Ecumenopolis). Am putea vorbi atunci, de savanele africane sau de ghețurile arctice ca de părți specifice, ale unui singur „mediu integrat” în cadrul orașului mondial unic, Ecumenopolis.

Aceasta este o variantă de viitor care trebuie analizată cu mare atenție, inclusiv din punct de vedere al securității energetice, al infrastructurii, al centrelor comerciale, al capacității globale a rețelelor comerciale, informaționale, de transport, de furnizare de servicii, de a asigura la nivel global, în cadrul unui singur oraș, satisfacerea nevoilor întregii comunități umane. Ecumenopolis trebuie privit

ca un concept multi-funcțional dar și unitar, funcționând pe baza mai multor componente principale (megapolisurile regionale, care își pot păstra funcțiuni de bază, pentru administrarea și guvernarea regiunilor mari ale globului, prin administratori sau guvernanți regionali).

Astfel, putem vorbi, în cazul Ecumenopolis, al orașului unic (dacă ne vom referi la componentele democratice orășenești), de instituții specifice infra-urbane, precum:

- Consiliul Suprem Urban al Ecumenopolis (care ar avea putere legislativă la nivel global asupra organizării și funcționării generale a întregului Ecumenopolis), formată dintr-o oligarhie (indiferent că vorbim de aristocrația Ecumenopolis sau de plutocrația sa).
- Primarul General al Ecumenopolis (cu atribuții sporite, ca un fel de guvernator al orașului mondial sau doge/dogessă).
- Consiliul de pază și de siguranță al Ecumenopolis (însărcinat cu gestionarea la nivel global a tuturor fenomenelor de migrații inter-orășenești, de conflicte inter-urbane sau infra-urbane la nivel global, și cu competențele de a da directive obligatorii pentru nivelele orășenești inferioare de guvernare și administrare).
- Tribunalul Suprem al Ecumenopolis (cu competențe legate de relațiile juridice dintre megalopolisurile regionale, precum și relațiile între Ecumenopolis și megalopolisurile regionale).
- tribunalele metropolitane regionale (cu competențe legate de relațiile juridice dintre orașele-nucleu din cadrul megalopolisurilor regionale, precum și dintre aceste megalopolisuri și orașele-nucleu).
- Consiliile regionale ale megalopolisurilor (de ex., Consilul Euro-Atlantic al Megalopolisurilor din civilizația occidentală; Consiliul Panamerican al Megalopolisurilor; Consiliul Eurasiatic al Megalopolisurilor etc.).
- Primarii generali ai megalopolisurilor regionale (care sunt parțial subordonați, în privința atribuțiilor de formare, bugetare și de securitate, nivelului urban superior)
- Consiliile de pază și siguranță ale megalopolisurilor regionale.
- Consiliile restrânse orășenești (care implementează directivele date de Consiliile regionale ale megalopolisurilor, în fiecare oraș-nucleu din cadrul orașului unic).

Marea Rețea Urbană Globală (MRUG-ul). Orașele-centuri

Acest tip de orașe se dezvoltă plecând de la un concept de urbanism total diferit de cele de mai sus. Este vorba de orașe nomade (în mișcare), schimbătoare, axate pe traseele schimbătoare, flexibile (adică având trasee alternative), ale mega-proiectelor economice și investiționale ce vor străbate lumea începând cu a doua jumătate a sec. XXI (și care acum sunt în curs de implementare). Avem în vedere orașele situate pe traseele unor mega-proiecte precum OBOR (care este, la momentul actu-

al, cel mai avansat mega-proiect din lume, cu tipuri de globalități distincte „o globalitate terestră, o globalitate maritimă și una orbital-spațială).

Ele pot fi orașe vechi (antice) sau recent construite însă semnificativ este faptul că, datorită complexității traseului, acesta prezintă mereu mini-variante de înaintare, pe segmente determinate de teritoriu, astfel încât unele din aceste orașe pot fi lăsate în stare de abandon temporar de către Marea Rețea Globală Urbană/MRUG (OBOR-ul, să luăm drept un simplu exemplu) în favoarea altor orașe ale mini-traseelor mega-rețelei urbane globale. Complexitatea acestei rețele poate duce la activarea unor infra-rețele specializate, care să aibă una, două sau chiar toate cele trei dimensiuni activate (terestră, maritimă, orbitalo-spațială).

Spre deosebire de stadiul actual, în care rețele globale sunt construite de un singur stat sau de un grup de state (cum este OBOR), în cadrul lumii-oraș (Ecumenopolis), aceste mega-rețele vor fi integrate în Marea Rețea Urbană Globală (MRUG) și nu vor mai aparține anumitor state (deoarece vorbim de o lume post-statală) ci unui grup de megalopolisuri regionale reprezentate, în relațiile cu Ecumenopolisul, de un Consiliu al Înălților Reprezentanți.

Orașele-centuri

Secolul al XXII-lea va fi, în opinia noastră, unul concentrat pe formarea și pe extinderea unor tipuri de concepte de habitat urban care astăzi par fantezii; urbanizarea, în secolele următoare, va fi una nu doar trans-

continentală ci și una sub-acvatică, maritimă, supra-terană (la nivelul straturilor superioare ale atmosferei sau pe centura orbitală, în imediata vecinătate a planetei) sau sub-terană; de asemenea, se va introduce conceptul de orașe hibrid, de orașe semi-modulare, cu componente fixe și cu componente dinamice, cu componente detașabile și cu componente de intermediere între două spații de folosință temporară. De exemplu, pornind de la structura arhitectonică urbană „Gardens by the Bay”, din Singapore, apreciem că aceasta poate deveni un Prototip de oraș așezat pe piloni (pe CAV-uri), în secolul al XXII-lea, unit prin centuri și infrastructuri suspendate, la care se atașează componente modulare, pentru unele perioade de timp, ale unor orașe suspendate/platforme plutitoare constituind un nivel superior și temporar.

De asemenea, în privința conceptelor ekisto-futuristice precum orașe-centuri orbitale și orașe-centuri maritime, putem da ca un exemplu deja realizat, orașele construite pe insule artificiale, care pot deveni un prototip, în opinia noastră, al viitoarelor orașe-centură maritime. Un astfel de oraș plutitor este Palm Island Dubai (Jumeirah Palm Island), una din cele trei insule numite Insulele-Palmier/the Palm Islands (Palm Jumeirah, Palm Jebel Ali and Palm Deira) care se extind în Golful Persic.

Alte concepte futuristice asupra urbanismului secolului al XXII-lea se referă, în concepția noastră, la așa-numitele „orașe-străjer” (un concept de habitat urban specializat pe furni-

zarea de securitate - alimentară, cu energie, deținător al unor rezerve de apă-, fiind dotate toate cu o importanță dimensiune militară de protecție, pentru a răspunde provocărilor specifice ale unei lumi urbane globale, cât și fenomenelor de criminalitate transfrontalieră, marilor migrații haotice etc.).

Între megalopolisurile regionale nu este exclusă apariția de rivalități geopolitice (fiecare tinzând să aibă un rol mai important decât celălalt în relația cu Ecumenopolisul și să câștige mai multă influență și putere). Deci, megalopolisurile regionale se vor dota cu armate private foarte costisitoare și bine întreținute, spre a își impune sau extinde dominația sau pentru a se apăra de dominația altor rivale și a câștiga o relație privilegiată (poziția de megalopolis favorit) cu Ecumenopolisul (aici, înțeles ca nucleul decizional suprem al mega-orașului-lume).

Orașele-străjer sunt orașe specializate în deținerea, în producerea unor resurse-cheie, necesare funcționării strategice a Ecumenopolisului și care trebuie protejate militar și tehnologic (atât resursele, cât și orașele din jurul lor), de atacurile hoardelor migratoare și ale rețelelor clandestine (imperiiile underground)¹⁸. Ele constituie primele centuri de protecție în jurul megalopolisurilor regionale, atât spre a le furniza optim resursele necesare, dar și ca o primă barieră de protecție împotriva hoardelor migratoare sau a armatelor altor megalopolisuri, interesate să își extindă influența. Templul egiptean de la Luxor poate re-

prezenta pentru futuro-ekistică, un exemplu de prototip de oraș-străjer de arie plană/ câmpie (referitor la tipul mini-orașului suspendat, cu bază fortificată, cu piloni masivi de susținere, cu rol militar și de pază).

Civilizația urbană transformatoare (Al Treilea Val Urban)

După primele două Valuri Urbane (orașele statice care au creat imperii hidraulice sau, în general, orașele pre-mecanizate) și Civilizația Urbană a Celui de-al Doilea Val (orașele dinamice, mecanizate, orașele industriale) care durează și în prezent, omenirea va experimenta, în opinia noastră, Civilizația Urbană a Celui de-al Treilea Val. Această a treia civilizație urbană este caracterizată prin necesitatea de a diversifica și de a extinde urgent resursele de apă ale planetei, datorită exploziei demografice la nivel global, înălțării standardelor de viață (habitatele urbane consumând cantități de apă potabilă și de uz casnic în mai mare măsură decât populațiile orașelor din antichitate sau din civilizația modernă), datorită industriilor globale și agriculturii extinse pe largi porțiuni de teritorii, inclusiv la nivel maritim (agricultură acvatică, prin ferme pe apă – vorbim de lacuri amenajate special).

Trăsătura specifică a Civilizației Urbane a Celui de-al Treilea Val este capacitatea de inovare în domeniul transformării apelor sărate (disponibile nelimitat), pe scară largă (industrială), în apă potabilă. Ecumenopolisul va fi concentrat, ca tip de megapolitică, pe gestionarea și pe decizia

în domeniul industriilor transformatoare și reciclatoare privind resursele de apă.

Decizia privind resursele de apă va fi considerată, la toate nivelurile administrative, a fi un tip de decizie de importanță prioritară, de siguranță vitală, a orașelor. Megalopolisurile se vor concentra pe identificarea, pe susținerea și pe extinderea industriilor de extragere și transformare a apelor sărate (lacuri sărate, Marea Moartă, Marea Neagră, oceane etc.) în surse de apă potabilă¹⁹.

Industriile de extragere a apelor sărate și de transformare a lor în apă potabilă vor fi considerate a fi mega-industriile viitorului, implicând platforme de extragere, spații speciale de depozitare, conducte, spații de transformare a apelor sărate în ape potabile, care vor beneficia de regimuri juridice speciale, în comparație cu alte tipuri de industrii. Industriile de transport a apei potabile prin megacconducte, în zonele urbane deficitare în resurse de apă potabilă, vor fi și ele unele prioritare situate în cadrul megatrendului industrial privind apa și deșeurile, din orașele viitorului.

A treia mega-industrie a viitorului, din Civilizația Urbană a Celui deal Treilea Val (numită și civilizație transformatoare), după mega-industria reciclării și a transformării plasticului în petrol, va continua să fie industria reciclării apelor reziduale și a curățării apelor de metale grele, deșeuri de plastic și de substanțe nocive pentru mediu și pentru calitatea vieții, astfel încât să se asigure o deversare sigură, curată în oceane și

în mări, a apelor reziduale dar și o întrebuințare a acestora în continuare, în condiții de maximă siguranță pentru sănătatea umană și pentru cea a ecosistemelor primitoare.

Organizarea politică pe verticală a lumii post-statale: Lumile de Sus și Lumile de Jos. CAV-urile (Complexele Arhitectonice Verticale sau Orașele Suspendate)

În dreptul administrativ (român, de exemplu) contemporan, orașul, comuna, județul reprezintă persoane juridice de drept public, persoane juridice politico-teritoriale însă care nu dețin (precum statul) suveranitate, putere de comandă proprie asupra locuitorilor și teritoriului lor, deoarece nu au atribuțiile specifice și strict recunoscute statului. Orașele, comunele, județele pot fi înființate în prezent doar prin lege iar instituțiile locale pot fi înființate prin acte ale consiliilor locale sau județene cu respectarea condițiilor stabilite de legea statului respectiv²⁰.

În prezent, orașele sunt considerate de legislațiile statelor de care aparțin, drept unități administrativ-teritoriale (colectivități locale și circumscripții administrativ-teritoriale)²¹.

Din simple unități administrativ-teritoriale ale statelor, în opinia noastră, începând cu sec. al XXII-lea, metropolele se vor emancipa și vor ajunge adevărați actori politici (orașe statalizate, orașe-republici, orașe-regat), în cadrul unui proces istoric pe care statele decadente nu vor mai fi în stare să îl gestioneze și să îl oprească sub impactul TNC-urilor și

actorilor non-statali ce vor extinde haosul la nivel global spre a împărți lumea în piețe globale în afara oricărei autorități statale. Putem vorbi de ordinea metropolitană a sec. al XXII-lea (ca tip de lume post-statală) ca fiind un tip de ordine globală construită de metropole ca efect al conștientizării pericolului expansiunii haosului generat de actori non-statali rivali și de incapacitatea statelor decadente de a mai păstra vechea ordine (westphaliană).

În a doua jumătate a sec. al XXI-lea, prin ridicarea metropolelor ca actori dominanți ai lumii politice globale post-statale, pentru stăvilirea ascensiunii necontrolate a actorilor non-statali (TNC-uri, rețele clandestine, paramilitare, underground), metropolele își vor înființa propriile corpuri legislative (prin consolidarea poziției politice și juridice a autorităților lor, precum Primarul General și Consiliul municipal general) cu valoarea juridică a unor veritabile constituții metropolitane. Dacă în prezent, comunele, orașele, municipiile, județele sunt doar unități administrativ-teritoriale care aparțin de un stat, supuse legii statului respectiv, în cadrul cărora administrația publică de stat se realizează prin servicii deconcentrate, aflate sub conducerea prefectului, aceste entități sunt persoane juridice de drept public, cu personalitate juridică distinctă de cea a statului²², conform constituției statului respectiv. Din acest statut special se va naște o veritabilă independență față de statele decadente, care va duce la apariția unei forme noi de glo-

balism (cel metropolitan), ca singura variantă valabilă de a stăvilii lupta pentru putere pentru piețele globale dintre TNC-uri și actorii underground, din lumea post-statală a celei de-a doua jumătăți a sec. al XXI-lea.

Mega-orașele își vor consolida competențele de gestionare a patrimoniului public și exercitarea autorității lor politice și exclusive asupra teritoriului lor și asupra locuitorilor din metropolă și din zonele anexe acestora (până la formarea unor ade-vărate imperii, în care nucleul metropolitan central- metropola-mamă va exercita exclusiv jurisdicția imperială asupra întregii confederații/federații de metropole sau asupra Arcurilor de Metropole transcontinentale și trans-oceanice ale noii lumi).

Mega-orașele vor avea atât personalitate de drept privat cât și personalitate de drept public, în cadrul dreptului metropolitan, aplicabil acestora. În afară de dreptul metropolitan (echivalent al unui drept constituțional actual), se va dezvolta dreptul global metropolitan, care va reglementa relațiile inter-metropolitane, pe baza unor seturi de principii juridice cu valoare universal recunoscută de către toate metropolele părți la Carta Globală a Metropolelor.

Deasupra orașelor vechi, specifice sec. al XXI-lea, ca ansambluri complexe, eclectice de construcții, înglobând unități și zone arhitecturale provenind din epoca antică, medievală sau din alte perioade istorice anterioare secolului nostru, se pot ridica progresiv, pe măsura evoluției conceptului de oraș, habitate urbane lu-

xuriante, așa-numitele „orașe suspendate” sau „orașe deasupra orașului”, în straturi succesive, verticale, de urbanitate²³.

Primarul sau Președintele Consiliului Municipal va avea drepturi politice, de reprezentare a metropolelor la diferite întruniri inter-metropolitane, echivalent cu înalții demnitari ai unui stat din prezent.

Teritoriile mega-orașelor vor fi împărțite în subdiviziuni teritoriale, precum comune, orașe, districte, sectoare, departamente, cartiere, care vor avea propriile lor autorități locale, subordonate însă, în domeniile esențiale, autorităților metropolitane.

Delimitarea teritorială a subdiviziunilor teritoriale ale unui mega-oraș se va face prin lege metropolitană, emisă de Consiliile Municipale (ajunse adevărate parlamente metropolitane) și după consultarea prin referendum a cetățenilor metropolitani.

Orașele suspendate (ridicate pe CAV-uri) sau pe thysenkruppi (clădiri-piloni reprezentând baza pentru aceste orașe sferice sau tubulare din vârful lor) vor forma Lumea de Sus, cu reglementări juridice și ordini politice distincte, separate de Lumile de Jos. În ceea ce privește „Fundațiile Lumii urbane de Sus”, un posibil prototip de thysenkrupp, în comentariul nostru, apare ca o clădire-pilon al unui oraș-sferă din vârful său, izolat de Lumea de Jos²⁴. Un alt concept de viitor oraș suspendat pleacă, în opinia noastră, de la prototipul numit „Turnul Namaste” (India), proiectat să conțină grădini interioare și să ofere o priveliște aeriană panoramică asupra

Oceanului Indian și asupra orașului Mumbai²⁵.

Organizarea politică pe verticală a lumii post-statale: Lumile de Sus și Lumile de Jos. CAV-urile (Complexele Arhitectonice Verticale sau Orașele Suspendate)

Interesant de precizat, în opinia noastră, ar fi faptul că procesul de emancipare al metropolelor de sub autoritatea statală și din lumea decadentă a statelor va avea loc, spre sfârșitul sec. XXI, nu doar pe orizontală (prin separarea teritoriului metropolitan emancipat de sub tutela statului decadent și prin consolidarea autorității metropolitane până la organizarea conceptului de „metropolă-fortăreață” (davă)) ci și pe verticală (un proces de separare a două lumi – „Lumea de Sus” și „Lumea de Jos”). La început, conceptul de „oraș suspendat” poate lua forma unui turn izolat de lumea blocurilor obișnuite de jos; ulterior, conceptul urban evoluează la ridicarea unui întreg oraș în vârful unor complexe verticale (CAV-uri), asemeni unui cuib de pasăre²⁶. Un alt tip de mega-turnuri ce pot constitui, în perspectiva futuro-ekisticii, prototipuri pentru „orașe-cuib de pasăre” sau mini-ansambluri verticale arhitectonice, așezate în vârful unui zgârâie-nori, poate fi și turnul Milad (Iran)²⁷. Alte mega-turnuri înălțate, ce pot reprezenta un prototip arhitectonic pentru conceptele futuro-ekistice sus-menționate sunt, în opinia noastră, și turnurile Petronas, Malayesia.

Pe fondul procesului de construire a mega-zgârâie-norilor și a unor Com-

plexe Arhitectonice Multi-Structurate (CAMS-uri sau „pădure înlănțuită de ziggurate”, mega-complexe de orașe suspendate pe verticală), orașele noi vor deveni insule ale lumii super-avansate a sec. XXI, dispuse la înălțimi amețitoare, complet separate economic, politic, militar de Lumile decadente de Jos (unde se vor extinde haosul, conflictele, luptele pentru dominație între actorii underground, statele decadente care vor încerca să reziste și vor fi nevoite să lupte pentru a își proteja teritoriile imense și vulnerabile), TNC-uri și rețele de criminalitate transfrontalieră operând acum trans-continental. Prototipul pădurii urbane de mai sus poate avea ca sursă de inspirație un exemplu din natură – o autostradă a baobabilor naturali, sălbatici, în Madagascar²⁸. În aceeași linie inspirațională privind evoluția urbanistică, putem să dăm ca exemplu „turnurile-baobabi” (din Singapore), alcătuind o centură – un prototip în opinia noastră, a viitoarelor orașe-centură maritime, orbitale sau hybrid (cu componente sau părți dispuse în mai multe tipuri de medii)²⁹. De asemenea, Taiwan devine o parte activă în elaborarea unui futurologic plan urbanistic și în implementarea lui, precum Taichung Gateway-Active Gateway City, cu un model de clădiri verzi în stilul arhitectural propus de Bionic Arch³⁰. O altă sursă de inspirație pentru modele de clădiri urbane ale viitorului sunt „Baobabii-turn postmoderni, rotitori”³¹.

Pentru a rezista și a organiza prosperitatea și civilizația secolul al XXII-lea, mega-orașele se vor consti-

tui în adevărate metropole izolate în nori, în complexe arhitectonice și politice totodată, interconectate (grupuri de zgârie-nori cu funcționalități diferite), cu economii supraterrane, cu armate proprii sau private, cu tehnici de supraveghere a împrejurimilor turbulente de jos. O viziune a noilor orașe-insulă, situate deasupra orașelor vechi, re-dimensionează spațiul pe verticală, într-o revoluție urbanistică diferită de modificările istorice – pe orizontală – ale lumii urbane³². Un exemplu de prototip, în futuro-ekistică, al unui oraș-sferă, ca un concept autonom, este și orașul înălțat parțial pe linia coastei marine sau a unui lac, parțial deasupra malului acestuia (partea urbană lacustră)³³ sau dezvoltarea unui oraș artificial, complet acvatic, din materiale ușoare, flexibile, separat de coasta maritimă, precum conceptul deja realizat de oraș, numit Atlantis City, din Palm Dubai, insulă artificială urbanizată³⁴.

Lumea, începând cu a doua jumătate a sec. al XXI-lea: o lume globală a mega-orașelor

Statul nu a fost întotdeauna unitatea de bază a oricărui sistem internațional. Procesul de ascensiune al metropolelor și al rețelilor de metropole (lumile metropolitane, inter-conectate în ceea ce vom denumi „Arcuri de prosperitate metropolitană” și „Arcuri de securitate metropolitană”) din a doua jumătate a sec. al XXI-lea - sec. al XXII-lea va fi de fapt, o prelulare și re-inventare a unor etape specifice istorice ale evoluției sistemului internațional. În fapt, ne referim la

sistemul getic al multi-davelor (rețele de cetăți, cetăți-orașe așezate la înălțimi și fortificate), din care au derivat, milenii mai târziu, orașele-regate mesopotamiene; ne vom mai referi și la sistemul orașelor-republici-imperiale din epoca medievală (Veneția, Genova, Florența).

Astfel, în sistemul elen, apărut recent (după 1600 î.e.n.) pe scara istoriei (ca un sistem urban apărut cu milenii după sistemul getic al multi-davelor), unitatea politică principală era polisul (orașul-stat, iar alte unități ale sistemului erau statele tributare, coloniile militare și coloniile nemilitare)³⁵. Aceste polisuri au devenit foarte puternice cu timpul, reușind să creeze un adevărat imperiu thalaso-crat în jurul unui nucleu (orașul-stat inițiator și conducător al imperiului). Orașe-stat ca Atena și Sparta au dat forma unui sistem bipolar de putere, constituit în jurul Ligii Helenice și a Ligii Peloponeziene³⁶.

În sistemul medieval european (din secolul al XIII-lea până în secolul al XVIII-lea, constituția Veneției rămânând neschimbată de la 1310 până la 1796) se remarcă Serenissima (Republica Leului, Veneția). La începutul secolului al XV-lea, acest oraș-stat se afla la apogeul puterii sale, stăpânul Mării Mediterane, reprezentând cea mai mare națiune de negustori din lume, cu colonii comerciale până în Orientul Mijlociu și chiar în Orientul Extrem, cu o flotă comercială și militară în stare perfectă, cu un sistem de guvernare autonom³⁷ (un oraș-stat care s-a declarat republică în 727 e.n. și care a evitat

să se lase în mâna familiilor aristocrate, precum celelalte republici-orașe, fiind mai degrabă condus de un sistem rotativ de comitete anonime și nenumărate, care decideau prin vot majoritar)³⁸. Pentru 700 de ani, guvernarea acestui oraș-stat a fost una foarte solidă, evitându-se ca familiile de vază să dețină puterea reală și absolută în cadrul Maggior Consiglio sau a altor instituții specifice acestei republici³⁹. Serenissima a fost, pentru aproape o mie de ani, ceea ce azi denumim un „hub” comercial și de afaceri al lumii sale, dispunând de o rețea comercială pe o jumătate de glob și de o poziție geostrategică imposibil de cucerit⁴⁰.

Începând cu sec. al XXI-lea, sistemul internațional se schimbă fundamental în ceea ce privește actorii, modalitatea de înțelegere și de operare a puterii în sistem, tipurile de resurse, accelerarea regionalismului economic, constituirea de blocuri economice regionale. Însă nici aceasta nu este ultima formă a sistemului internațional, încă dominat de unitatea de bază (statele-națiune).

Ascensiunea metropolelor, fenomenul politizării și al autonomiei lor față de statele-națiune (în condițiile extinderii haosului în sistem și al incapacității statelor de a îl opri sau de a-l gestiona pentru a asigura condiții minime de stabilitate, de prosperitate în sistem) va duce la schimbarea din temelii a întregii ordini internaționale, așa cum o cunoaștem azi.

Începând cu a doua jumătate a sec. al XXI-lea, metropolele și megapolisurile vor conștientiza capacita-

tea lor de a se opune turbulențelor globale, de a rivaliza și de a opri tendințele de dominație economică și politică exercitată de TNC-uri și de diferiți alți actori privați care operează transnațional și fără ca statele să îi mai poată controla în vreun fel. Metropolele și megalopolisurile își vor folosi resursele, își vor consolida puternic competențele de decizie politică, economică și vor forma protorețele, apoi rețele și structuri interconectate de gestionare a noii lumi și de dominație asupra actorilor statali (confrunțați cu un fenomen de decădere) dar și asupra celor non-statali.

Metropolele și megalopolisurile vor fi unitatea de bază a noului sistem global din a doua jumătate a sec. al XXI-lea - sec. al XXII-lea și vor realiza multiple structuri de cooperare, inclusiv mergând până la forme de integrare regională pe cinci niveluri:

- realizarea unor arii de comerț liber inter-metropolitane
- realizarea unor uniuni vamale inter-metropolitane
- realizarea unor piețe comune regionale a unui grup de metropole puternic dezvoltate economic (cu posibila formare de periferii metropolitane, integrate la proiect, în mod diferit, conform modelului cercurilor concentrice)
- realizarea unor uniuni economice și a unor uniuni monetare între cele mai puternice (economic, militar) metropole și megalopolisuri.

Cele trei Lumi metropolitane: COM, CMT, CMO

Sistemul global inter-metropolitan se va extinde în decursul secolul al

XXII-lea, în opinia noastră, cuprinzând Centura metropolelor terestre (CMT), Centura metropolelor oceanice (CMO) și Centura orbitală metropolitană (COM). Diferite tipuri de politici se vor naște plecând de la această realitate, politici de guvernare și de gestionare a COM, care vor avea strategii și obiective diferite de necesitățile și de specificul CMT și CMO. Cele trei Centuri vor exprima priorități politice distincte de guvernare a Celor Trei Lumi.

În opinia noastră, în sec. al XXII-lea, metropolele vor fi de două categorii:

- metropole multi-funcționale;
- metropole specializate (metropole-războinice, metropole-biblioteci, metropole sportive, metropole industriale, metropole agricole, metropole-academii și centre de cercetare, metropole artistice, focalizând mediile artistice la nivel global). Unele orașe specializate pot fi orașe suspendate dezvoltând o perspectivă verticală, panoramică, asupra orașelor vechi de la picioarele lor⁴¹.

Am putea spune că, din a doua jumătate a sec. al XXI-lea, statele își vor măsura în termeni realiști capacitatea de a fi superputeri/mari puteri, după noi factori precum:

- numărul de metropole existent deja pe teritoriul lor (metropolele sec. al XX-lea).
- capacitatea acestor metropole de a controla fenomenele sărăciei urbane, a nerespectării drepturilor omului, a aglomerării informale urbane, a violenței și a lipsei de resurse în mediu urban.

- numărul de metropole noi (construite după cerințele lumii celei de-a doua jumătăți a sec. al XXI-lea), adică a Metropolelor Lumii Super-civilizației
- capacitatea de a converti metropolele lumii vechi (aparținând secolului industrial) în funcționalități noi, specifice unor metropole a lumii sec. al XXI-lea.
- capacitatea de a deține controlul asupra metropolelor de pe teritoriul său.
- capacitatea de cooperare cu metropolele de pe teritoriul său și cu metropole din teritorii vecine (dacă statul nu mai este capabil să dețină controlul asupra lor, fiind un stat în situație avansată de decadență și necesitând sprijinul specializat al metropolelor - asigurarea funcțiilor vitale de securitate, economice, financiare, a ordinii publice pe teritorii metropolitane și periferice aferente).

Desigur, acest set de instituții inter-metropolitane nu reprezintă decât o primă etapă în cadrul evoluției sistemului global inter-metropolitan (faza terestră de integrare), urmată de o trecere într-o etapă intermediară (prin avansarea urbanismului, a calității materialelor de construcție, a concepțiilor despre orașe și despre funcțiunile acestora), după care construcția metropolelor va trece spre formarea unui sistem mixt de metropole terestre, oceanice și orbitale. În acest context se vor dezvolta concepte politice specifice lumii globale a metropolelor, precum: guvernare urbană, bună guvernare urbană, pace

sustenabilă inter-metropolitană, dezvoltare urbană sustenabilă, concepte necesitând implementarea unor tipuri noi de instituții la nivelurile diferite ale ordinii globale metropolitane.

Instituțiile mega-orașelor, în ordinea globală metropolitană a celei de-a doua jumătăți a sec. al XXI-lea

În ordinea globală a metropolelor, puterea politică se fragmentează și trece de la state la mega-orașe, fie prin transfer de competențe de la nivelul central statal la nivelul infra-statal, fie prin slăbirea statelor (pe fondul incapacității lor de facto de a mai domina o lume tot mai haotică și pe fundalul pierderii monopolului legitimității și al violenței legitime în fața actorilor non-statali).

Dintre cei mai importanți actori non-statali care reușesc să își impună supremația inclusiv în planul politic al ordinii celei de-a doua jumătăți a sec. al XXI-lea, până la a modela fundamental tipul de ordine politică și geo-economică, se reliefează, în opinia noastră, mega-orașele (actori infra-statali).

În prezent, mega-orașele sunt actori atipici, aflați la nivelul infra-statal, în relație de dependență economică și politică față de nivelul superior (al statelor-națiune), actori care contribuie fundamental la bugetele statelor și care țin (prin economia lor prosperă, prin forța radiantă a culturii și a civilizației pe care o emană, prin caracterul de hub-uri ale tehnologiilor, know-how, prin științe și invenții), întregul stat în funcțiune.

Mega-orașele sunt conduse în prezent de autorități specifice (primari, consilii municipale) cu natură autonomă față de nivelul central, la care se adaugă prefectii (reprezentanți ai autorității centrale)⁴². Însă această natură autonomă a autorităților mega-orașelor este una limitată, în sensul că nu schimbă natura de actor subordonat statelor, de actor infra-național al metropolelor.

În acest studiu, vom lua în considerare doar metropolele și megalopolisurile, adică acei actori infra-statali care dispun de suficientă forță economică, politică, culturală, pentru a se emancipa de sub controlul statelor și a forma propria lor ordine politică, numită ordinea globală a metropolelor, din lumea post-statală a celei de-a doua jumătăți a sec. al XXI-lea (o lume marcată de căderea imperiilor statale, a extinderii zonelor haotice, a rivalităților cronicizate între state și a slăbirii sistemelor instituționale internaționale capabile să ofere soluții la criza sistemică a lumii decadente statale din a doua jumătate a sec. al XXI-lea).

Pentru a stăvili expansiunea haosului provocat de state în luptele pentru supremație (energetică, politică etc.), în a doua jumătate a sec. al XXI-lea, noi actori politici se vor ridica: noii gladiatori globali sau mega-orașele, prin activarea nivelului infra-statal într-o lume urbană globalizată încă de la începutul sec. al XXI-lea (avem aici în vedere un anumit fenomen al globalizării, cel caracterizând secolul al XXI-lea).

Din simple unități administrativ-teritoriale ale ordinii statale, mega-orașele vor deveni entități politice de sine stătătoare, dotate cu suveranități proprii și cu dreptul de comandă și control asupra propriului teritoriu și asupra propriilor lor cetățeni (vorbim de apariția unei cetățenii metropolitane), vor fi entități capabile să stea în justiția internațională și regională în nume propriu, capabile să își trimită reprezentanți diplomatici în foruri și în organizații ale noii ordini globale a celei de-a doua jumătăți a secolului al XXI-lea (atât în cadrul organizațiilor decadente, care încă vor mai avea funcții – tot mai formale, lipsite de substanță – de a fi cadre de negociere între state, cât și în cadrul noilor organizații, post-statale, care vor fi directe forumuri de negociere multilaterală între mega-orașe).

A doua jumătate a secolului al XXI-lea va cunoaște, pe fundalul cronicizării luptei pentru putere dintre state, o decredibilizare a acestora, ca efect a incapacității lor de a mai atrage, de a păstra, de a prezerva resurse pentru cetățenii lor, pe fondul corupției sistemice, al scăderii interesului pentru politică și al decredibilizării reprezentanților politici ai statelor, pe fondul decăderii clasei politice statale, desprinse de nevoile cetățenilor și izolate într-o sferă a propriilor interese; pe fondul crizelor interne ale statelor, revoluții, revolte de tot felul care vor măcina sistematic și neîncetat statele, pe fondul incapacității claselor politice de a mai răspunde nevoilor cetățenilor, de a mai asigura stabilitatea și prosperitatea la

nivel național, pe fondul creșterii nivelului de violență și al zonelor infrastatale neguvernabile, constituite în auto-sisteme mai mult sau mai puțin clandestine de funcționare (stat în stat), pe fondul înmulțirii zonelor interlope, a spațiilor underground, neguvernabile, care vor afecta stabilitatea nu doar a statelor ci și siguranța vieții urbane.

Pe acest fundal, autoritățile mega-orașelor se vor desprinde treptat, într-un proces natural, de nivelul corupt, decadent și incapabil al guvernării statale (centrale) și vor încerca să reziste presiunilor tot mai mari ale lumii haotice în plină expansiune (amenințărilor transnaționale, inclusiv prin întărirea puterii politice proprii și prin auto-organizare.

În a doua jumătate a sec. al XXI-lea, dreptul administrativ va suferi o modificare esențială, anume se va transforma într-un drept metropolitan (corpuri de norme juridice emise de mega-orașe, prin autoritățile proprii-primari, consilii municipale, dotate acum cu adevărate puteri legislative suverane- și obligatorii pentru acestea) iar acest drept metropolitan va căpăta progresiv un caracter global (întrucât singurii actori capabili să mai stăvilească forțele haotice în plină expansiune, în urma decăderii statelor, vor fi mega-orașele). Acest tip de drept va ajunge echivalentul dreptului internațional actual, care reglementează exclusiv relațiile între state suverane și egale în drepturi.

În lumea haotică a celei de-a doua jumătăți a sec. al XXI-lea, dreptul metropolitan global va reglementa

(inclusiv prin instituții specifice, la nivel global, precum un Consiliu Global al Mega-Orașelor), relațiile juridice între toate mega-orașele, federațiile de metropole, ligile metropolitane, imperiile-megalopolisuri, arcurile de metropole-înfrățite.

Adevărata rivalitate a celei de-a doua jumătăți a sec. al XXI-lea și începutul sec. al XXII-lea nu va fi între mega-orașe și statele decadente, în plină disoluție (în urma incapacității de gestionare a epocii globalizării, slăbite de presiunile migraționale datorate războaielor nefinalizate, schimbărilor climatice, crizei de resurse naturale, crizei apei, crizei alimentare) ci între mega-orașe și alți actori non-statali (corporații transnaționale, în special). Acești actori transnaționali vor încerca să profite de lumea haotică în care sistemele instituționale ale statelor sunt în plină degradare și nu mai funcționează decât formal, și vor încerca să își extindă influența în cadrul unui soi de ultra-corporatism global.

TNC-urile⁴³ vor tinde să își aplice ideologia lor, așa cum au făcut-o și în cadrul lumii sfârșitului sec. al XX-lea și începutului sec. al XXI-lea, când statele-națiune erau actorii dominanți. Însă, din pricina greșelilor statelor-națiune, TNC-urile vor ajunge să ocupe o poziție dominantă în ordinea turbulentă post-statală⁴⁴, slăbind ireversibil capacitatea statelor-națiune de a mai putea întârzia sau de a opri extinderea zonelor haotice și ascensiunea actorilor non-statali (între care TNC-urile ocupă o poziție predominantă).

Ascensiunea noilor actori (metropolele și megalopolisurile) în ordinea post-statală a celei de-a doua jumătăți a sec. al XXI-lea va duce la un fenomen de politizare a orașelor, la apariția cetățeniilor metropolitane ca legături juridico-politice noi, între locuitorii metropolelor și megalopolisurilor și acești actori emancipați de la nivelul infra-statal, ridicați până la gradul de veritabili concurenți, pentru dominația asupra lumii sec. al XXI-lea, cu statele decadente și cu puter-nicele TNC-uri.

Într-o lume turbulentă, marcată de revendicarea dominației asupra lumii și împărțirea ei în piețe globale de către TNC-uri și de alți actori trans-naționali sau underground (rețele transnaționale de criminalitate organizată etc.), singurele entități capabile să se organizeze în forme cvasi-statale sau de rețea (federații de metropole, ligi războinice de metropole dotate cu puternice formațiuni militare, fie private, fie publice) vor fi metropolele. Acestea vor deveni practic, un fel de substituenți de nevoie ai statelor confruntate cu o perioadă de decadentă, sub impactul lipsei de viziune politică, al eșecului politicilor tradiționale, al corupției cronicizate, al slăbirii autorității statale în întreg teritoriul statal, al incapacității statelor-națiune de a putea controla sau opri procesele globalizării (ce avantajează actorii non-statali în detrimentul lor)⁴⁵.

Pe fondul scăderii în importanță a suveranității statale (măcinate de impactul nesfârșitelor disensiuni sterile ale partidelor politice incapabile să

mai gestioneze eficient resursele și să confere putere și prestigiu statelor), se va contura o formă nouă de suveranitate, cea metropolitană, care va fi înscrisă în Carte ale Metropolelor, adevărate constituții votate de adunări speciale reprezentând cetățenii metropolelor.

Ascensiunea metropolelor în a doua jumătate a sec. al XXI-lea se va reflecta în atribuțiile consolidate de putere publică pe care le vor primi de la proprii cetățeni (prin referendumuri locale, unde se va decide desprinderea de statele decadente și întărirea caracterului politic independent față de state, al metropolelor). Cu timpul, metropolele politizate se vor alia, vor ajunge să formeze diferite structuri organizaționale (ligi războinice, confederații de metropole, federații metropolitane etc.). Unele metropole ale sec. al XXI-lea vor ajunge inclusiv să controleze porțiuni întinse de teritorii odată aflate în granițele statale, formând adevărate imperii metropolitane, terestre sau maritime. Se vor forma Arcuri de Prosperitate Metropolitane, structurate ca parteneriate strategice între metropole, pentru dezvoltarea și implementarea unei Agende Comune a Metropolelor participante la aceste parteneriate de securitate și de stabilitate trans-regionale (ele pot avea caracter trans-oceanic, trans-continental, reunind metropole din diferite arii civilizaționale și geografice, în cadrul unui singur concept strategic de apărare sau de expansiune războinică).

Treptat, prin Carte ale Metropolelor, aprobate de Adunările speciale

reprezentative ale cetățenilor metropolitani, mega-orașele își vor acorda drepturi care altădată aparțineau strict statelor în ordinea internațională⁴⁶: dreptul de legiferare (competența de a stabili norme de conduită generală și obligatorie pentru toți locuitorii metropolei respective, indiferent dacă sunt sau nu cetățeni ai acelei metropole); dreptul de a organiza forța publică (monopolul violenței organizate și legitime, asupra teritoriului metropolitan și asupra locuitorilor săi), competența de a proteja metropola (fie prin forțe militare private, fie prin forțe militare proprii) de atacuri din exterior; competența de a menține ordinea publică și siguranța în interiorul teritoriului lor; dreptul de a defini și de a proteja un domeniu public metropolitan; dreptul de a bate monedă metropolitană proprie; dreptul de a exercita justiție prin autorități proprii (judecătorii metropolitani, în cadrul sistemelor judiciare metropolitane proprii); dreptul de a stabili taxe și impozite proprii; dreptul de a construi și de a întreține infrastructura metropolitană; dreptul de a autentifica; dreptul de a stabili obiective strategice de interes metropolitan.

De asemenea, metropolele își vor rezerva dreptul de a controla și de a exercita puterea de jurisdicție exclusivă asupra apelor maritime, fluviale, a mărilor teritoriale, a oceanelor aflate în limitele jurisdicțiilor lor, toate fiind stabilite prin tratate intermetropolitane, în cadrul conferințelor și adunărilor metropolitane. La aceste adunări metropolitane pot participa doar metropole și megalopolisuri

care și-au desăvârșit procesul de statalizare, care au suveranitate metropolitană recunoscută la nivel intermetropolitan, prin pacte și tratate cu valoare universal valabilă în lumea globală a metropolelor.

Metropolele vor fi singurele entități suficient de puternic dezvoltate economic, cultural, militar, capabile să se opună tendinței TNC-urilor și actorilor underground (rețele clandestine de crimă organizată transfrontalieră etc.) de a extinde haosul la nivel global, pe seama căderii statelor-națiune și a împărțirii lumii în sfere de influență private (piețe globale).

Instituții regionale ale ordinii globale metropolitane

Într-o ordine politică, economică și culturală în care mega-orașele își asumă funcții multiple, pentru a combate și a opri expansiunea haosului generat de actorii non-statali rivali (TNC-uri, indivizi, rețele transfrontaliere de crimă organizată, grupări paramilitare etc.), inclusiv un haos generat de statele decadente (incapabile să mai gestioneze lumea haotică și să o ordoneze conform principiilor westphaliene), metropolele devin singurele entități politice suficient de închegate și de numeroase spre a forma rețele de stăvilire a turbulențelor globale și de a re-ordona lumea conform unui model nou.

Acest model este unul complex, bazat pe structuri de rețele (principiul orizontal, al cooperării între metropole și megalopolisuri, formând inclusiv tipuri specifice de parteneriate,

precum Arcurile de Prosperitate Metropolitane- parteneriate strategice în domeniul economic, inclusiv concretizate prin preluarea funcțiilor de “nuclee” ale unor mega-proiecte transcontinentale începute de state-precum Drumurile comerciale cu produse de lux sau cu produse strategice, conform nevoilor societăților metropolitane din a doua jumătate a sec. al XXI-lea).

Ne referim la o lume globalizată deja la începutul sec. al XXI-lea, în care una din dimensiunile globalizării a fost cea a privatizării violenței organizate (trupele private armate), care (începând cu a doua jumătate a sec. al XXI-lea și al XXII-lea) vor fi plătite de mega-orașe, spre a asigura protecția înalților demnitari metropolitani (gărzi speciale de protecție) cât și pentru apărarea teritoriilor metropolitane sau a unui cartier de zgârie-nori organizat ca un AAMF - Ansamblu Arhitectural Multi-Funcțional). La aceste Arcuri se pot adăuga Arcurile de Securitate Metropolitane, bazate pe parteneriate strategice între mega-orașe în domeniul apărării și securității comune, acoperind diferite regiuni ale globului și fiind supuse patrulării trupelor mixte, competenței alianțelor de securitate metropolitane, trupe care pot fi atât trupe private⁴⁷ cât și trupe proprii, ale metropolelor ca atare (metropolele statalizate, care au preluat atribuțiile-cheie din domeniile regaliene ale statelor decadente).

O altă latură a modelului metropolitan este și organizarea unei dimensiuni ierarhice a puterii (este po-

sibil să se formeze structuri organizaționale bazate pe o așezare pe verticală a puterii, între metropole și megalopolisuri). Avem aici în vedere formarea de imperii metropolitane, cu o metropolă-nucleu (metropola-mamă) care a înființat, a extins și care menține imperiul.

Într-o ordine bazată pe un model global a metropolelor, o parte importantă a acestuia o constituie structurile integraționiste de tip metropolitan (așa-numitele entități de integrare supra-metropolitană, formate în domeniile economic, politic, care cumulează mai multe metropole).

Instituțiile unor astfel de entități regionale multi-metropolitane (constituite din metropole și megalopolisuri care sunt de acord, prin tratate inter-metropolitane, ratificate de înalții lor reprezentanți, să își transfere unele atribuții asupra unui nivel superior de guvernare politică) pot fi diferite, în funcție de regiunile globului, ca atribuții, componență, denumiri, politici.

Astfel, pot apărea înspre a doua jumătate a secolul al XXI-lea, entități regionale constituite din mega-orașe⁴⁸, care să funcționeze pe baza unui set unic de instituții specifice pentru entitatea supra-metropolitană respectivă:

- un Consiliu Regional al Metropolelor (Consilul regional al metropolelor din zona Asia-Pacific, de exemplu)
- un Congres Regional al Metropolelor (Congresul African Metropolitan, Congresul Asiatico-Central al Metropolelor)
- Adunarea Regională a CAV-urilor (de ex., Adunarea regională a CAV-

urilor din zona Marilor Lacuri Africane, Adunarea CAV-urilor din perimetrul geopolitic al fluviului Dunărea)

De asemenea, în lumea globală a metropolelor a sec. al XXII-lea, toate seturile de instituții internaționale existente (care primesc în prezent, în componența lor, doar state-națiuni) vor fi înlocuite cu seturi de instituții metropolitane, în care membrii vor fi doar metropolele și megalopolisurile, cât și reprezentanții Arcurilor de Prosperitate Trans-continentale Metropolitane (cel mai înalt nivel de agregare a unităților metropolitane în arii de economii inter-conectate și de securitate împărtășită). Aceștia vor dispune de drepturi de reprezentare juridică și politică pe plan global, în asemenea instituții precum:

- Consiliul Global Intermetropolitan
- Camerele de comerț intermetropolitane
- Organizația de comerț intermetropolitan
- Organizația de cooperare între APMs (Arcurile de Prosperitate Metropolitane)
- Forumul de Dialog al ASMs (al Arcurilor de Securitate Metropolitane)

Ligile Metropolelor Războinice (metropole specializate pe furnizarea de securitate la nivel regional sau global, adevărați actori regionali/globali cu agendă proprie de securitate, capabile să asigure securitatea pentru metropole mai slabe sau specializate pe alte domenii –agricultura metropolitană inteligentă, industrii nepoluante, gestionarea ecosisteme-

lor, gestionarea industriei turismului metropolitan, sport și divertisment, securitatea informației- în metropole-biblioteci, în metropole-campusuri multi-universitare și în orașe-centre de cercetare și inventică etc.).

Instituții globale ale ordinii metropolitane

În ordinea globală a metropolelor și a megalopolisurilor a sec. al XXII-lea, în opinia noastră, o serie de instituții globale pentru identificarea și gestionarea unei Agende Globale a Metropolelor (AGM) va fi posibil să apară, prin instituții și forme de cooperare precum:

- Consiliul Global al MegaOrașelor
- Arcurile de Prosperitate Metropolitane (parteneriate strategice între o salbă de metropole și megalopolisuri situate într-o regiune a globului, sau trans-oceanice, trans-continentale), pentru dezvoltarea cooperării în domeniul gestionării resurselor strategice –materii prime, resurse naturale, cursuri de apă transregionale etc., al transferurilor de tehnologie, pentru cooperare științifică și tehnologică, pentru construirea de mega-proiecte comune trans-oceanice și transcontinentale ori în domeniul cooperării pentru reciclarea deșeurilor
- Arcurile de Securitate Metropolitane (parteneriate strategice privind dezvoltarea cooperării în domeniul securității și al apărării comune, între metropolele parteneri)

- Bănci regionale metropolitane
- Organizații de arbitraj comercial inter-metropolitan etc.
- Instanțe judiciare globale pentru reglementarea diferendelor între metropole
- O adunare generală a megalopolisurilor
- Ligile războinice (organisme private, folosite de metropole pe bază de contracte speciale de asistență armată, specializate pe gestionarea conflictelor armate între metropole, pe pacificarea regiunilor haotice de pe glob, în intervenții rapide oriunde pe glob când securitatea unui Arc Metropolitan este amenințată de acțiunile actorilor underground – de TNC-uri, de rețele diferite de organizare a violenței, de state decadente sau când perimetrul de protecție al unui Arc este invadat de mase

migratoare care pun presiune asupra teritoriilor metropolitane, amenințându-le securitatea și prosperitatea).

În concluzie, putem spune că recunoașterea metropolelor ca actori statalizați, cvasi-statalizați sau eo ipso, din partea statelor, nu va mai fi un criteriu obligatoriu pentru ca o metropolă să funcționeze ca subiect juridic de sine stătător în ordinea juridică inter-metropolitană a sfârșitului secolului al XXI-lea și primei jumătăți a sec. al XXII-lea. Nu doar de facto dar și prin codificarea progresivă a unui set de norme specifice relațiilor inter-orășenești, precum dreptul metropolitan, acest tip de ordine globală va reflecta, în concepția noastră, dominația metropolelor, ca actori politici distincți, față de state, față de TNC-uri și de alți actori ai politicilor viitorului.

Note

- ¹ Pe arealul României de azi, urbanitatea este exemplificată prin așezări cu vechime de peste 6 500 ani, precum orașul descoperit la Hârșova; așezările urbane ale civilizației matriarhale neolitice Cucuteni, cu 12 000-20 000 locuitori (așezări dispuse în adevărate rețele urbane), prima civilizație urbană a Europei, cf. specialistei Marija Gimbutas. Cf. Lucian Iosif Cuesdean, *Istoria antică a neamului românesc*, București, 2011, pp. 42-44.
- ² Corneliu Manda, *Drept administrativ*, Editura Universul Juridic, București, 2008, p. 97.
- ³ *Ibidem*, p. 97.
- ⁴ A se vedea documente internaționale și regionale în materie, precum

Istanbul+5, The UN Special Session of Great Assembly, Urban Habitat, Raportul "State of the World's cities, 2012-2013. Prosperity of cities", UN-HABITAT, "For a better urban future", Routledge, 2013, Canada, www.unhabitat.org.

- ⁵ Arnold Toynbee, *Orașele în mișcare*, trad. Leontina Moga, Editura Politică, București, 1979, pp. 15-16.
- ⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 16.
- ⁷ Jacques Bonnet, *Marile metropole mondiale*, col. *Secolul XX*, Editura Institutul European, traducere de Bogdan Geangălău, Iași, 2000, p. 200.
- ⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 200-204.
- ⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 200.
- ¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 204.
- ¹¹ William McNeill, *Ascensiunea Occidentului. O istorie a comunității*

- umane și un eseu retrospectiv, ed. Arc, CEU Press, trad. Diana Stanciu, Editura Arc, Chișinău, 2000, pp. 29-32.
- ¹² Arnold Toynbee, *op. cit.*, p. 260.
- ¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 260.
- ¹⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 267-269, 281-282.
- ¹⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 260-261.
- ¹⁶ *Ibidem*, pp. 260-261.
- ¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 261.
- ¹⁸ Mădălina Virginia Antonescu, *Uniunea Europeană, un imperiu modern?*, Editura Cartea Universitară, București, 2005, pp. 16-18.
- ¹⁹ Arnold Toynbee, *op. cit.*, pp. 268-269.
- ²⁰ Corneliu Manda, *op. cit.*, pp. 99-101.
- ²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 102.
- ²² *Ibidem*, pp. 98-99.
- ²³ <https://weirdttwist.wordpress.com/2012/10/09/images-12-stunning-infinity-pools/>.
- ²⁴ <https://www.nextbigfuture.com/2020/09/new-tallest-skyscrapers-plan-s.html/>.
- ²⁵ <http://www.cunoastelumea.ro/turnul-namaste-cladirea-ultramoderna>.
- ²⁶ <https://www.everything-kuala-lumpur.com/kuala-lumpur-tower.html>.
- ²⁷ Mega-turnuri. Turnul Milad, Iran. Sursa- <https://twitter.com/tehranpics/status/555782347610529793>
- ²⁸ The road running through the Baobab Alley of Madagascar, <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/a-venue-of-the-baobabs-unique-places-of-madagascar.html>.
- ²⁹ <https://www.707-inc.com/garden-by-the-bay-singapore?lightbox=data-item-izm9f5r2> . Gardens by the Bay, Singapore. Turnuri-baobab în forma de centură. Construcții-pâlc de arbori, care pot constitui, în opinia noastră, un prototip de „oraș-pădure” (un CAV). Sursa foto: <https://onetour.vn/tin-tuc/cam-nang-du-lich-singapore/diem-danh-cac-dia-diem-du-lich-mien-phi-o-singapore.html>.
- ³⁰ Taiwan. Model de „clădire verde” a sec. XXI, design Bionic Arch, by Vincent Callebaut Architecture, parte a noului master plan Taichung Gateway- Active Gateway City, un oraș al viitorului proiectat a fi situat în centrul Taiwanului. Sursă imagine: Bionic-Arch is a Futuristic Green Skyscraper for Taichung / Vincent Callebaut, September-12-2011, <http://www.evolo.us/bionic-arch-is-a-futuristic-green-skyscraper-for-taichung-vincent-callebaut/>.
- ³¹ <https://www.commercialrealestate.com.au/news/worlds-first-rotating-skyscraper-planned-for-dubai-34567/>
- ³² Noile orașe-insulă, de deasupra orașelor vechi. Sursa- <https://www.snapmunk.com/arconic-air-skyscraper/>.
- ³³ Oraș-sferă. Oraș autonom, înălțat jumătate deasupra apei și deasupra uscatului (pe linia coastei) (prototip). Sursa- <https://bengalsfan1220.wordpress.com/dubai-death-star/> .
- ³⁴ <https://www.fly4free.com/flight-deals/europe/collection-of-ultra-luxurious-5-hotels-in-the-persian-gulf-from-only-e163/>
- ³⁵ Vasile Pușcaș, *Relații internaționale/transnaționale*, Editura Sincron, Cluj Napoca, 2005, p. 51.
- ³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 52.
- ³⁷ John Julius Norwich, *Veneția, stăpâna Mediteranei*, în vol. *Marile orașe din istoria omenirii*, coord. John Julius Norwich, trad. Ligia Caranfil, Editura Art, București, 2010, pp. 130-131.
- ³⁸ *Ibidem*, pp. 130-131.
- ³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 131.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 133.
- ⁴¹ Orașe suspendate, cu orizont deschis, privind deasupra orașelor vechi. Sursa- <https://73parkavenuetravel.wordpress.com/2019/07/28/swimming-in-the->

- worlds-largest-rooftop-infinity-pool-with-jaw-dropping-city-views.
- ⁴² Corneliu Manda, *op. cit.*, pp. 101, 38, 237-238. Trebuie remarcată și definirea principiului autonomiei locale, conform căruia „administrația publică locală are dreptul de a satisface interesele propriilor unități administrative locale fără amestecul autorităților centrale, principiu din care derivă descentralizarea administrativă, autonomia fiind un drept, iar descentralizarea fiind un sistem ce implică autonomia” (Anibal Teodorescu). Este vorba de o autonomie locală limitată (economică și financiară), exercitată obligatoriu în limitele și în condițiile impuse de legea statului. Este și o capacitate efectivă, nu doar un drept al autorităților administrației publice locale, de a rezolva și de a gestiona în nume propriu și sub responsabilitatea lor, o parte importantă a treburilor publice, în interesul colectivităților locale pe care le reprezintă” (definiție derivată din Carta Autonomiei Locale).
- ⁴³ Transnational corporations („multinaționale”).
- ⁴⁴ David Held, Anthony McGrew, David Goldblatt, Jonathan Perraton, *Transformări globale. Politică, economie și cultură*, trad. de Ramona-Elena Lupașcu, Adriana Ștraub, Mihaela Bordea, Alina-Maria Turcu, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2004, pp. 324-325.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 222-223. După cum apreciază doctrina, „globalizarea contemporană a comerțului a transformat noțiunea de autonomie a statului și a determinat schimbări la nivelul politicilor statului”. Mai mult, se apreciază de către experți, că „reglementarea globală a comerțului de către organisme precum OMC, implică o redefinire radicală a noțiunii westphaliene de suveranitate a statului”.
- ⁴⁶ Corneliu Manda, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-89.
- ⁴⁷ David Held et alii, *op. cit.*, pp. 172-176. Acești autori au în vedere conceptul de „societate postmilitară”, odată cu globalizarea violenței militare, prin reglementarea sa într-un „regim global al securității militare”. Autorii sus-citați folosesc sintagma de „transnaționalizare a bazelor militare industriale de apărare”, la care se adaugă „restructurarea globală a producției industriale”.
- ⁴⁸ Straturi succesive de apă-uscă care integrează habitatul uman, într-un oraș suspendat. Sursa-<https://weirdtwist.wordpress.com/2012/10/09/images-12-stunning-infinity-pools/>.

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- <https://www.707-inc.com/garden-by-the-bay-singapore?lightbox=dataItem-izm-g9f5r2>
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EVENIMENT

Conferința internațională „Reconfigurări ideologice în Europa”

Pe 5 decembrie 2025, Departamentul de Științe politice al Universității „Petre Andrei” din Iași, în parteneriat cu Universitatea „Aldo Moro” din Bari, Italia, a organizat Conferința

internațională *Reconfigurări ideologice în Europa*, coordonată de Prof.univ. dr. Sorin Bocancea, Prof.univ.dr. Sabin Drăgulin și Prof.univ. dr. Angelo Chielli.



Au susținut prezentări: Prof.univ. dr. Guido Liguori (Universitatea „Aldo Moro” din Bari) – *Moștenirea*

lui Gramsci și politica comuniștilor italieni în perioada postbelică



Prof.univ.dr. Fabrizio Fiume (Universitatea „Aldo Moro” din Bari) – *„Prezent și viitor”: Gramsci și viziunea sa asupra prezentului și a viitorului*



Prof.univ.dr. Angelo Chielli (Universitatea „Aldo Moro” din Bari) – *Reziliența ordoliberalismului în construcția Uniunii Europene*



Conf. univ. dr. Serhii Hakman (Centrul Regional pe Perfecționare Cernăuți, Ucraina) – *Conotațiile socialiste ale populismului contemporan. Retrospectivă și actualitate.*



Prof.univ.dr. Anton Carpinski
(Universitatea „Al. I. Cuza” Iași) –
Reconfigurari ideologice în Europa

*de Est. Emergența politicii-spectacol
în era post-adevărului*



Muzeograf Ioana Cristea-Drăgulin
(Muzeul Național Cotroceni) și Prof.
univ.dr. Sabin Drăgulin (Universitatea
„Petre Andrei” din Iași) – *Reinventarea*

*stângii clasice. De la dictatura
proletariatului la hegemonia culturală
și civilizațională a neomarxismului.*



Lect. univ.dr. Georgeta Condur
(Universitatea „Petre Andrei” din

Iași) – *Mișcări tectonice ideologice.
Primele semne ale Europei viitoare.*



Prof.univ.dr. Sorin Bocancea (Universitatea „Petre Andrei” din Iași) – *Chipul Rusiei în Europa: mișcările suveraniste*



Conf.univ.dr. Ciprian Iftimoaei (Universitatea „Petre Andrei” din Iași) – *discursul elitelor politice în contextul reconfigurărilor ideologice actuale*
Elitism versus populism în



Au mai conferențiat: Armida Salvati (Universitatea „Aldo Moro” din Bari) – *Politica socială europeană – direcții de evoluție*; Prof.univ.dr. Cristian Bocancea (Universitatea „Petre Andrei” din Iași) – *Guvernările de mare coaliție și declinul familiilor ideologice tradiționale*; Prof.univ.dr. Daniel Șandru (Institutul de Investigare

a Crimelor Comunismului și Memoria Exilului Românesc) – *Mixajul populist al postcomunismului românesc: legionaro-ceaușismul*; Lect. univ.dr. Silvia Bocancea (Universitatea „Petre Andrei” din Iași) – *Exploatarea populistă a conservatorismului în România actuală.*



Lansarea *Caietelor din închisoare* ale lui Antonio Gramsci

Pe 5 decembrie 2025, la Universitatea „Petre Andrei” din Iași s-au lansat *Caietele din închisoare* ale lui Antonio Gramsci, traduse în

limba română de către Sabin Drăgulin și Ioana Cristea-Drăgulin, pachetul de patru volume fiind editat de Editura Timpul din Iași.



Ediția este îngrijită de Sabin Drăgulin, Ioana Cristea-Drăgulin și Angelo Chielli. Lansarea a fost, practic, o dezbatere la care au

participat, pe lângă persoanele ce au îngrijit volumele, politologii Anton Carpinski, Guido Liguori și Fabrizio Fiume.



Conferința „De ce democrație acum? Ce înseamnă să fii cetățean în era post-adevărului și a dezinformării”

Pe data de 17 decembrie 2025, Alianța Internațională a Jurnaliștilor Români, platforma *Veridica*, cu sprijinul Ministerului Educației din România și finanțat de Regatul Țărilor

de Jos, în parteneriat cu Universitatea „Petre Andrei” din Iași, au organizat conferința *De ce democrație acum? Ce înseamnă să fii cetățean în era post-adevărului și a dezinformării*.



Prezentările au fost susținute de Lect.univ. dr. Marin Gherman (Universitatea „Ștefan cel Mare” din

Suceava) și jurnalista Oana Șlemco. Moderatorul evenimentului a fost Prof.univ.dr Sorin Bocancea.





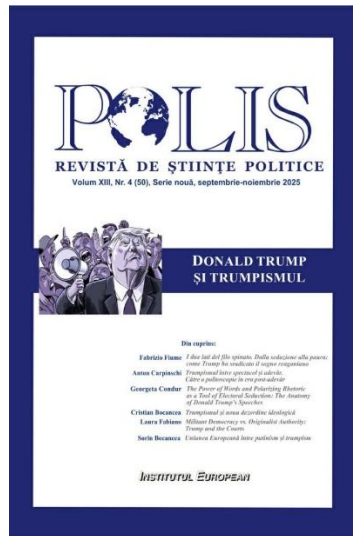
În cadrul conferinței, s-a arătat că fenomenul dezinformării și al manipulării publicului prin propagandă și răspândirea de fake-news este în continuă extindere la nivel global. Accesul facil la informație și la rețelele sociale, diversificarea surselor și, mai nou, dezvoltarea rapidă a inteligenței artificiale pot deveni

instrumente distructive în mâinile unor actori rău intenționați, interesați de destabilizarea societăților democratice. În acest context, adolescenții și tinerii sunt adesea ținte predilecte, motiv pentru care trebuie pregătiți pentru a nu deveni victime ale acestui fenomen.

Lansarea numărului 50 al revistei *Polis*

Pe 17 decembrie 2026, a avut loc lansarea numărului 50 al revistei *Polis*, având ca temă *Trump* și

trumpismul, coordonatorii acestuia fiind Sabin Drăgulin și Angelo Chielli.



Acest număr al revistei reunește în primul rând contribuții ale celor ce au participat la Conferința internațională de științe politice, ediția a III-a, desfășurată la Bari pe 6-7 octombrie 2025, în organizarea Universității „Aldo Moro” din Bari și a Universității „Petre Andrei” din Iași, a cărei temă a fost *Noul secol american*.

Din cuprinsul acestui număr reținem: *I due lati del filo spinato. Dalla seduzione alla paura: come Trump ha sradicato il sogno reaganiano*, de Fabrizio Fiume, *Trumpismul între spectacol și adevăr. Către o politoscopie în era post-adevăr*, de Anton Carpinschi, *The Power of Words and Polarizing Rhetoric as a Tool of Electoral Seduction: The Anatomy of*

Donald Trump's Speeches, de Georgeta Condur, *Trumpismul și noua dezordine ideologică*, de Cristian Bocancea, *Trumpismul ca reacție iliberală la globalizare*, de Constantin Ilaș, *Trump: The Psychology of the Rise or Decline of an Empire/Empires. Psychological, Political Science and Philosophical Perspectives*, de Lavinia Maria Pruteanu & Teodora Liliana Prelipcean, *Economia, ca narațiune emoțională: Trumpismul*, de Otilia Bălinișteanu & Gabriel Mursa, *Tehnologie, discurs și politică: Donald Trump și Elon Musk între popularitate și comunicare*, de Sabina-Adina Luca & Bogdan Gheorghită, *Militant Democracy vs. Originalist Authority: Trump and the Courts*, de Laura

Fabiano, și *Uniunea Europeană între putinism și trumpism*, de Sorin Bocancea.

De asemenea, recomandăm și interviul luat de Ioana Cristea Drăgulin lui Dan Pavel, în opinia căruia „Trum-

pismul este un fenomen de revizionism etic, cultural, ideologic, legal, constituțional, religios, politic, geopolitic”. Prezentarea numărului a fost realizată de Sabin Drăgulin și Sorin Bocancea.

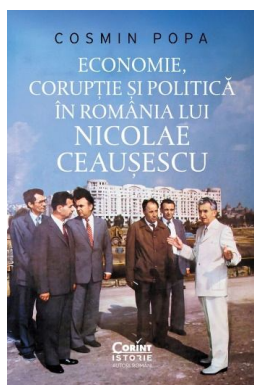




Rubrică realizată de Sorin BOCANCEA & Andrei CUCU

RECENZII

Corupția – instrument al puterii în România ceaușistă



Cosmin Popa, *Economie, corupție și politică în România lui Nicolae Ceaușescu*, Editura Corint, București, 2025, pp. 411

Ca fenomen despre care se vorbește zilnic în România postcomunistă, corupția a primit mai multe explicații, realizându-se un evantai al cauzelor de diverse naturi: psihică, socială, culturală, instituțională, politică ș.a.m.d. Se spune adesea – fie cu dispreț, fie cu admirație – că „românul e hoț”, chiar cel mai hoț!, și că orice măsură s-ar lua împotriva acestei boli morale nu ar avea niciun efect. Se invocă tarele istorice care ar fi lăsat urme adânci în mentalul colectiv și care nu ar putea fi șterse cu niciun fel de politică. Expli-

cația este în parte adevărată, însă trebuie să ne apropiem tocmai de aceste tare. Corupția este prezentă în orice societate și fiecare a depus eforturi în direcția identificării cauzelor pentru a găsi remedii, însă pe noi ne interesează cum a ajuns societatea românească să fie atât de infiltrată și de afectată de fenomen.

De regulă, dorința de obținere a unor foloase pe calea scurtă a eludării legilor este principala cauză a corupției. Însă, într-o societate în care legea vine împotriva nevoilor primare ale individului, corupția devine un mod de viață sau, în cazuri extreme, o modalitatea de supraviețuire. Iar societatea românească a fost în timpul regimului ceaușist una în care corupția a devenit mod de viață.

Recenta lucrare a istoricului Cosmin Popa, pe care o supun cum atenției, este una ce ne prezintă resursele economice și politice ale corupției în România ceaușistă. Este o carte ce ne prezintă în cea mai mare parte economia comunistă și mai ales modul în care politicul a intervenit în acea economie centralizată. Ordinea în care autorul a plasat în titlu economia, corupția și politicul mi se pare a

nu fi întâmplătoare, corupția fiind plasa-tă ca un termen mediu între economie și politică, pentru că fenomenul corupției a fost potențat tocmai de presiunile politicului asupra economiei. După cum ne spune însuși autorul, scopul lucrării este „să descrie mecanismele unei radicalizări politice care a produs consecințe economice, tehnologice, sociale și morale; să ilustreze maniera în care economia și societatea se obișnuiau cu presiunile ideologice și organizaționale exercitate de regim și mai ales cum ruptura dintre realitate și propagandă era conciliată doar prin minciună și corupție” (pp. 12-13).

Cum funcționa, de fapt, ceaușismul? Este întrebarea pe care și-au pus-o mulți dintre cei ce vor să înțeleagă fenomenul comunismului românesc. Primul capitol, cu valoare introductivă, poartă tocmai acest titlu și autorul se concentrează pe două aspecte ale epocii: *economia și corupția*. S-a spus adesea că regimul comunist a fost o „dictatură de modernizare”, însă pre-zentă a fost mai mult dictatura decât dezvoltarea, deoarece de această mult invocată dezvoltare a beneficiat doar o parte a populației, îndeosebi cea rurală fiind exceptată, iar orice pas înainte în domeniul economic nu avea alt scop decât consolidarea poziției politice a conducătorului. Autorul arată că planul de dezvoltare a României a fost cel ce a adâncit țara în datorii și-n dependența față de resursele venite de la Est, deși Ceaușescu dorea o distanțare de URSS. Efectele ineficienței deciziilor centralizate au fost orientate spre societate, încât dictatorul a anulat practic rolul social al statului:

„Ceaușescu se considera deasupra obligației de a se menține în limitele unui compromis între dezvoltare și consum, între viziunea regimului și nevoile dezvoltării sociale, ceea ce a atras după sine dezvoltarea componentei represive, pe măsură ce eșecurile economice se înmulțeau” (p. 24).

Un efect al acestei crize economice și sociale a fost corupția, ce a ajuns la un nivel fără precedent în comunism. Însă, în opinia istoricului, nu ea a fost cel mai devastator fenomen, ci „deformarea moralei publice, mulți dintre români ajungând să creadă că exercitarea abuzivă sau condiționată a unei funcții sau a unei însărcinări publice, în folosul propriu sau al unui grup, este o realitate ce decurge din natura sistemului însuși, fiind imposibil de combătut” (pp. 24-25). Nu atât creșterea fenomenului, ci legitimarea lui la nivelul mentalului colectiv a fost cu adevărat gravă.

Ceaușescu a privit corupția cu dublă măsură, ea fiind condamnată în societate și tolerată în rândul nomenclaturii, pe care o controla astfel: „Tolerată de lider și practică pe scară largă, corupția din România comunistă a servit drept alternativă la schimbările instituționale și reformele politice, pe care situația reală le impunea. Osificarea alertă a întregii structuri, în pofida dinamismului mimat prind schimbările de formă, nu a făcut decât să potențeze permanent răspândirea corupției, atât în formele ei funcționale, cât și în cele disfuncționale” (p. 29).

În al doilea capitol, *Primăvara „tehnocraților de partid”* (1966-

1970), autorul prezintă măsurile pe care Ceaușescu le-a adoptat în economie în cincinalul '66-'70. Dorind să-și depășească înaintașul, el a impus creșteri ale ritmului industrializării țării precum și recuperarea întârzierilor din agricultură, însă posibilitățile tehnologice de atunci erau cu mult sub aspirațiile sale. Pentru atingerea acestor obiective, a dispus crearea unui aparat central de partid care să asigure comunicarea între structurile teritoriale de partid și unitățile economice în probleme de planificare. Astfel, s-au impus specialiștii de partid, fapt ce a însemnat nu doar controlarea acestei categorii, cât și o anumită profesionalizare a structurii de partid. Fără responsabilitatea îndeplinirii planurilor de producție, acești „tehnocrați de partid” erau intermediari între ministere și conducerea politică și constituiau o structură necesară realizării planurilor cincinale, întrucât erau delegați pentru a asista în teritoriu agenții economici și organizațiile de partid pentru a elabora și fundamenta planurile de producție. Partidul avea la nivelul organizațiilor „colectivele de coordonare” formate din activiștii locali și din membri ai structurilor naționale. Practic, Ceaușescu a urmărit suprapunerea componentei politice peste cea economică, proces ce se va definitiva la finalul anilor '70, odată cu introducerea „planului unic de dezvoltare”.

Între dictator și structura economică – Consiliul de Stat al Planificării (CSP) și ministere – cu tehnocrații ei a fost o relație tensionată, aceasta din urmă sesizând faptul că propunerile venite sunt nesustenabile și recurgând

la diverse stratageme pentru a se pune la adăpost: realizarea de strategii de implementare a propunerilor, recomandări de achiziționare de tehnologie și amânarea termenelor de intrare în funcțiune a unor capacități de producție. Unele întâlniri s-au soldat cu decizii rezonabile, altele cu impunerea cerințelor absurde ale lui Ceaușescu, care era tentat să vină cu soluții simple la probleme complexe. De la acest nivel, nu avea cum să vadă și să înțeleagă consecințele dăunătoare ale deciziilor sale.

La limita intelectuală a lui Ceaușescu se adăuga ineficiența investițiilor industriale ca urmare a ritmului mare de asimilare a tehnologiilor într-un sistem cu o mare inerție și cu resurse umane slab calificate. Pentru a compensa și pentru a susține ritmul tehnologizării, Ceaușescu a pus accentul pe fluidizarea comerțului exterior, pentru a obține valută. Însă toate țările socialiste urmăreau asta și, prin urmare, concurența era mare. Tehnocrații au atras atenția că exportul către țările occidentale era mai lipsit de rentabilitate decât spre țările socialiste, pentru că în primul caz România exporta ieftin și importa scump. Însă ei nu pomeneau de lipsa de eficiență a economiei, motiv pentru care Ceaușescu ajungea să susțină că rezolvarea vine dintr-o mai bună organizare.

Autorul arată că, deși cunoșteau tensiunile din sistem, tehnocrații susțineau că rata redusă de tehnologizare era cauzată de o insuficientă urmărire a graficelor de absorbție de către conducerea uzinelor și tergiversării birocratice din partea firmelor de la care

se importa tehnologia. Însă, întârzierile veneau și din omiterea unor etape ale tehnologizării (documentare, negociere, livrare) și din instruirea precară a personalului. De asemenea, lanțul birocratic al deciziilor nu lăsa managerii de întreprinderi să ia decizii operative sau să colaboreze cu cei din lanțul de producție. Însă, chiar tehnocrații lăsaus în plan secund aceste probleme.

Mai mari probleme pândeau dinspre agricultură, rămasă în urmă ca urmare a atenției date industriei. În al treilea capitol, *Întoarcerea la pământ*, Cosmin Popa ne arată care erau problemele acestui sector: „Agricultura avea și ea nevoie de investiții, de modernizare, dar mai ales de noi moravuri, care să readucă entuziasmul revoluționar pe câmpuri” (p. 69). Pentru acest obiectiv, în 1966, s-a redat țăranilor dreptul de proprietate pe case și pe maxim 800 m² și dreptul de folosință a 30 ari precum și s-a introdus dreptul la pensie al agricultorilor. Dar, problemele din agricultură nu erau eliminate cu aceste măsuri, pentru că agricultura cooperatistă era plină de furturi comise în primul rând de cei cu funcții de conducere, de rețele ce porneau de la brigadieri și ajungeau la șefii județeni de partid și la șefii organelor de anchetă. Iar din scrisorile primite la Secția Scrisori și Audiențe a CC al PCR, Ceaușescu știa acest lucru. La aceste probleme s-a adăugat și birocratizarea Consiliului Superior al Agriculturii, prin introducerea agriculturii intensive.

După cum observă autorul, măsurile luate de Ceaușescu nu au vizat

sistemul ca atare, ci efectele lui, propunând un control politic mai mare pentru a preveni fraudele, fapt ce a dus, însă, la creșterea fraudelor. Iar această creștere a cazurilor de fraudare nu a fost recunoscută, ci prezentată ca îmbunătățire a activității organelor MI.

Realizând faptul că fraudele se produceau cu participarea organelor ce erau obligate să le combată, Ceaușescu a propus legiferarea averilor. În capitolul *Corupția ca fond și motor al reformelor*, autorul arată modul în care dictatorul a exploatat situația corupției de la niveluri inferioare pentru a o transforma într-un instrument de control în rândul membrilor nomenclaturii. Astfel, *Legea 18/1968* (a „ilicitudinii”) prevedea un tratament diferit pentru cetățeanul de rând și pentru demnitar.

Reorganizarea administrativ teritorială din 1968 a fost un alt act prin care Ceaușescu a destructurat grupurile din jurul prim-secretarilor regionali pentru a-și fideliza propriii oameni în teritoriu. Cu noua sa gardă, după introducerea cumulului de funcții politice cu cele administrative, el pregătea noua revoluție industrială, fiind convins că introducerea autogestiunii în întreprinderi și planificarea din jos în sus vor duce la responsabilizarea funcționarilor de partid. „De fapt – arată autorul –, descentralizarea unor activități... măsura considerabil autonomia funcționarilor și a managerilor din economia socialistă și, în consecință, creștea posibilitatea extinderii practicilor de corupție” (p. 117).

Iată care erau „păcatele” funcționarilor de partid: „aprovizionarea directă din gospodăriile agricole, traficul de

influență, favorizarea rudelor, delapidările, mita, cumpărarea de bunuri la prețuri avantajoase – în special, automobile – și revânzarea lor la preț dublu” (p. 118). Însă controalele organelor de anchetă aveau nevoie de încuviințarea structurilor locale de partid care raportau că s-au supus dezbaterii cazurile și le îngropau pentru a evita controale mai ample de la Centru. Structura teritorială se autoconserva colaborând chiar cu organele judiciare, cea mai gravă sancțiune pentru un funcționar de partid fiind trimiterea în producție (rar se ajungea la dosar penal). Cazurile Gurahonț și Argeș, prezentate în al cincilea capitol, sunt exemple pentru a înțelege mecanismul prin care corupția la nivelul vârfurilor locale ale partidului era tratată preferențial de legislația adoptată în primul cincinal al conducerii lui Ceaușescu.

Capitolul al șaselea este dedicat reformelor economice ale anului 1967, în care autorul recunoaște o „planificare minuțioasă a liberalizării”. Crearea Băncii Agricole și a Băncii de Comerț Exterior erau măsuri menite să impulsioneze creșterile din aceste sectoare, însă un plan de perfecționare a conducerii va introduce un centralism mai mare. În acest sens, s-a creat „centrala economică” (ce reunea mai multe întreprinderi) ce decidea aplicarea măsurilor politice în domeniul producției. Deși părea o descentralizare, crearea acestor structuri a însemnat o politizare, pentru că din consiliile lor de administrație făceau parte reprezentanți a conducerii de partid. În agricultură funcționau structuri simila-

re, ce comasau ferme și întreprinderi agricole.

În structura lucrării, urmează două capitole ce analizează condițiile și consecințele creșterii economice din România în primul cincinal al lui Ceaușescu, autorul arătând că aceste creșteri s-au realizat cu prețul unor mari dezechilibre. România a importat mai mult decât a exportat, iar dorința de industrializare rapidă a făcut ca investițiile să nu fie exploatate imediat, ca urmare a întârzierilor punerii în funcțiune a unităților industriale. Pentru menținerea echilibrului balanței de plăți, a fost sacrificat consumul intern. Deși experții au avertizat asupra acestor riscuri, aspirațiile planului cincinal au fost mai importante. Nevoile de consum ale populației era asigurate tot de gospodăriile individuale, iar România era la coada clasamentului statelor comuniste la consumul de produse agricole, care nu acopereau cererea.

După prezentarea acestei dure realități, în capitolul al nouălea, autorul reia tema corupției, arătând consecințele sociale ale măsurilor economice care au dus la penurie. „Întregul sistem economic – mai ales când în chestiune erau bunuri alimentare de larg consum sau orice alte produse necesare traiului civilizat – era gândit astfel încât mecanismele de cointerесare personală să fie inseparabile de fraudarea acestuia” (pp. 179-180). Produsele plecau pe piața neagră încă din fabrici și nimeni nu avea interesul să stopeze procesul. Pentru că în întregul lanț de fraudare erau implicați și oamenii partidului, Ceaușescu a decis să

mute presiunea politică pe întreaga societate, și autorul ne prezintă măsurile prin care acesta le-a luat pentru a ține sub control fenomenul corupției în cincinalul 1970-1975.

La nivelul activiștilor, lucrurile rămăneau la latitudinea partidului, iar în rest represiunea s-a îndreptat asupra celor ce comiteau nemijlocit faptele, cei mai numeroși fiind gestionarii. „Conducătorilor țării le era mai ușor să considere că hoția este o trăsătură națională decât să observe efectul pe care îl avea filosofia de funcționare a statului comunist asupra cetățenilor obișnuiți. Deși autoritățile încercau să ascundă faptul că activiștii de partid implicați în scheme de corupție riscau cel mult degradarea din funcție și o «săpuneală» partinică de fațadă, cetățenii știau că orice schemă infracțională organizată avea un protector politic sau din rândurile aparatului de represiune. Convertirea competențelor profesionale în produse și servicii deficitare și bani nu era percepută ca o infracțiune, ci ca o modalitate de funcționare a sistemului în ansamblul său. Sustragerea din averea statului nu era considerată un act imoral, ci mai degrabă o modalitate de compensare a nedreptății și de combatere a unor deficite, iar toată țara știa că partidul, miliția și securitatea beneficiază de rețele proprii de aprovizionare și de impunitate în fața legilor” (p. 188).

Pentru că Miliția își dovedise incapacitatea în lupta cu fraudele și pentru că o parte importantă dintre șefii ei erau corupți, începând cu 1972 ea a primit o infuzie de ofițeri de securitate la nivel de conducere. În opinia auto-

rului, decizia de creare a unui aparat unic de represiune „făcea partea dintr-o politică mai amplă de pregătire a societății și a statului pentru un nou model economic, ce avea să aducă și mari schimbări politice. Mecanismele de partid aveau și ele nevoie de schimbare, iar relativa libertate ideologică de care se bucura societatea trebuia să fie atent supravegheată pentru a descuraja tendința de consum excesiv a societății și pentru a pune regimul la adăpost de orice pericole interne sau externe” (p. 220).

În capitolul *Încercări de corectare și soluții strănii (1970-1979)*, autorul ne prezintă deciziile prin care Ceaușescu a încercat să gestioneze în deceniul opt al secolului trecut consecințele măsurilor luate în primul său cincinal la conducere. „Creșterea exporturilor, contractarea de credite internaționale și reducerea consumului erau cele trei mari pârghii pe care Ceaușescu le avea la dispoziție pentru a continua industrializarea, care părea să nu aibă un obiectiv final” (p. 221). În februarie 1971, el a reintrodus distribuția centralizată a resurselor economice (după ce introdusese acea falsă descentralizare în 1967), prin care se prevedea producția pe baza materiilor prime interne, a reorganizat conducerea unităților economice de stat (autogestiunea și, în consecință, răspunderea pentru eșec), legea privitoare la activitățile de comerț exterior (importatorul trebuia să-și procure valuta și producția trebuia să aibă desfacerea asigurată), iar în iulie a lansat la Mangalia celebrele teze ce puneau bazele ideologice ale viitorului pro-

gram. „La fel ca Stalin, Ceaușescu era convins că progresul economic este posibil în absența celui social. Statisticile consumului în România, chiar și puternic manipulate, precum și cele ale infrastructurii sociale arătau o țară care făcea progrese, dar continua să rămână slab dezvoltată, chiar și în raport cu țările socialiste” (p. 238).

Aderarea la GATT și FMI au fost măsuri salvatoare, alimentându-i însă lui Ceaușescu fantasmele dezvoltării extensive și ale planificării. El a ignorat recomandările șefului CSP și și-a aplicat planul de recentralizare. În 1973, va crea Consiliul Suprem al Dezvoltării Economice și Sociale, al cărui președinte s-a pus.

În al unsprezecelea capitol, intitulat *Obsesii locative la nivel înalt*, autorul revine la fenomenul corupției, mai exact la abordarea lui de către Ceaușescu în ultimele două decenii ale comunismului. „După ce, pentru o perioadă, a mutat presiunea luptei împotriva abaterilor de la «morală socialistă» dinspre partid și administrație spre societate, Ceaușescu s-a trezit totuși în mijlocul unor scandaluri de corupție la nivel înalt. Casele demnitarilor comuniști, mai exact modul în care erau construite, sugerau cum funcționa corupția instituționalizată în România” (pp. 295-296). Măsurile luate în cazurile din București și Neamț s-au luat în limita în care nu au destabilizat sistemul.

În următorul capitol, *Soluțiile în acțiune – noul mecanism economic (1979-1989)*, autorul ne prezintă măsurile economice din ultimul deceniu al comunismului, în centru fiind „noul mecanism economic”, care presupu-

nea „retragerea finanțelor statului din economie și societate, prin modificarea legilor adoptate încă din 1972, în sensul eliminării sprijinului întreprinderilor de stat, combinată cu transferul unei mari părți a cheltuielilor sociale și culturale către acestea și comunități. Planificarea devenea însă mai centralizată și mai minuțioasă, păstrându-și caracterul executoriu. [...] Legea transforma întreprinderile și unitățile administrativ-teritoriale într-un fel de «obști» responsabile în fața partidului și a statului, reprezentate de lider, pentru îndeplinirea unor planuri economice care nu aveau mai nimic de a face cu nevoile comunităților locale. Legea era gândită să dea aparența normalității procesului de spoliere a întreprinderilor și a comunităților, prezentând reducerea consumului drept consecință a unui mecanism economic, fără legătură cu puterea politică” (pp. 315-316). Din acel moment, vremea „tehnocraților de partid” a apus, Ceaușescu dialogând doar cu prim-secretarii județeni, care nu-i mai aduceau la cunoștință chestiunile tehnice, ci îi confirmau toate obsesiile. „Efortul lui Ceaușescu era acela de a-i face pe ceilalți să-i vorbească despre industrie și tehnologiile sale, astfel încât ele să devină accesibile capacităților sale de înțelegere. Doar într-o astfel de realitate paralelă economia imaginată și înțeleasă de el funcționa ireproșabil” (p. 320).

De fapt, *Legea cu privire la dezvoltarea economico-socială planificată a României*, din februarie 1979, nu viza atât economia, cât societatea, care deconta planificările nerealiste și deciziile lui Ceaușescu de a controla poli-

tic economia. „Concentrarea deciziei economice în mâinile lui Ceaușescu nu constituia atât un simptom al crizei, cât rezultatul hotărârii sale de a așeza economia pe cadrele similare cu cele ale puterii politice. România se transformase într-o dictatură de clan, în frunte cu Nicolae Ceaușescu, iar economia nu putea funcționa, cel puțin în opina sa, după altfel de reguli decât cele ale sistemului politic” (p. 324). Practic, la începutul deceniului nouă concepția lui Ceaușescu ajunsese să fie pusă în practică: „Noua concepție despre socialism ajunsese la maturitate, iar dificultățile financiare ale țării doar grăbiseră desăvârșirea ei. Fundamentele ei fuseseră puse în anii 1972-1973, pentru ca în anii 1978-1979 doar să fie formalizată, iar «intuițiile» lui Ceaușescu, transformate în legi” (pp. 346-347). Achitarea în avans a datoriei externe nu avea să aducă vreo ameliorare a nivelului de trai, pentru că Ceaușescu planifica rețehnologizarea industriei și transformarea României în creditor al țărilor în curs de dezvoltare. În aceste condiții, cetățeanul României socialiste urma să plătească erorile liderului și să-și ducă traiul legând relații în afara legii care pur și simplu nu-i luau în calcul viața.

Parcurgerea lucrării lui Cosmin Popa nu este una ușoară, pentru că volumul de date pe care ni-l pune la dispoziție este foarte mare. Însă autorul reușește de fiecare dată să recupereze lectorul din hățișul cifrelor și al

structurilor instituționale create de conducerea de partid și de stat pentru a-l ține conectat la firul argumentării. Alternanța capitolelor în care sunt prezentate deciziile politice care au vizat economia cu cele în care este evaluat mecanismul corupției ne ajută să înțelegem faptul că un proiect economic aberant nu putea fi aplicat decât cu un aparat corupt și nu putea produce decât corupție generalizată, pe care am numit-o cândva „braconaj la lumina zilei”¹. La toate nivelurile, exista o formă de corupție: de la cumpărarea de exclusivități doar de dragul manifestării puterii și de la „autoretribuirea” din avutul obștesc al cetățenilor de rând până la furtul în stil mare al șefilor de unități economice și al celor de la partid. Pentru ambele cazuri, puterea o tolera pentru că-i folosea pentru control: cu pedepse exemplare pentru cei de rând și cu iertări pentru oamenii ei.

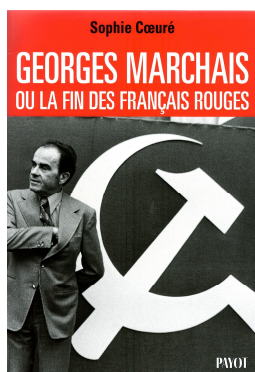
Obișnuit cu alternanța capitolelor despre economie cu cele despre corupție, lectorul cărții s-ar fi putut aștepta ca după capitolul despre „noul mecanism economic” să urmeze unul dedicat modului în care a fost gestionată corupția după „maturizarea” acestuia. Probabil că mai are de așteptat până când Cosmin Popa va scrie o lucrare despre economie, corupție și politică în România post-ceaușistă.

Sorin BOCANCEA

Notă

¹ Cf. „Rezistența prin mica corupție în România comunistă”, în *Vector*, Nr. 3/2006, pp. 99-105.

Ce căuta Georges Marchais în România?



Sophie Coeuré, *Georges Marchais ou la fin des Français rouges*, Editions Payot & Rivages, Paris, 2025, 352 p.

În toamna anului trecut, a apărut o foarte interesantă biografie a liderului comunist francez Georges Marchais (1920-1997), scrisă de profesoara Sophie Coeuré, specialistă în chestiuni ruse. Volumul e bazat pe o solidă cercetare în arhive, în fonduri franțuzești, americane, rusești, dar și românești. Bibliografia cuprinde, de asemenea, ample surse de presă și peste 120 de lucrări consacrate temei abordate. În librăriile pariziene, cartea a fost vândută cu o banderolă pe care scria „Splendeur et déclin d’un grand parti de gauche”, teza politică a volumului fiind că Marchais e secretarul PCF care duce partidul la guvernare în 1981-1984, apoi contribuie la căderea

lui sau, altfel zis, la sfârșitul comunismului *à la française*, chiar dacă în anul când moare mai erau încă 220 de mii de francezi ce plăteau cotizația de membri.

Volumul e împărțit în cinci capitole: primul e consacrat tinereții liderului comunist, unul dintre cei 650 de mii de muncitori francezi trimiși să lucreze în Germania în timpul Ocupației; al doilea are ca obiect cariera în interiorul partidului, dar și felul cum și-a înțeles mandatul de deputat francez sau european ori prezența în mass media; al treilea capitol tratează legăturile lui Marchais cu lumea comunistă internațională; al patrulea insistă asupra conceperii unei căi franceze a comunismului și a modului în care secretarul general al PCF a gestionat-o între 1972 și 1994; ultimul capitol îl evocă pe militantul care a știut să se înfățișeze în interiorul formațiunii sale ca „onest” și „jovial”. Toate capitolele sunt pline de interes, iar pentru publicul de la noi – extrem de utile pentru înțelegerea unui tip de cultură politică de extremă stânga foarte diferită de cea din țările cu regimuri comuniste, inclusiv România. În scurta recenzie pe care v-o propun aici, voi insista asupra celui de-al treilea capitol, fiindcă el ne îngăduie să răspundem la întrebarea: ce căuta secretarul PCF în

România? De ce îl frecventa pe Ceaușescu?

Am menționat deja că volumul semnat de Sophie Coeuré folosește informații din arhivele românești. Mai precis, este vorba despre cinci dosare din fondul CC al PCR, aflat azi la Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale, câte unul din 1967, 1968 și 1974 și două din 1984. Autoarea mulțumește, între alții, profesorului Florin Țurcanu de la Facultatea de Științe Politice a Universității din București, pentru sprijinul acordat în documentarea privitoare la Ceaușescu și la conversațiile acestuia cu secretarul general al PCF. Marchais e liderul comuniștilor francezi 11 ani sub Brejnev, trei ani în vremea lui Andropov și Cernenko, șase ani în vremea când Gorbaciov e la putere și alți doi după dispariția URSS, iar dosarul său de la Moscova nu e accesibil, notează Coeuré, adăugând că nu e singurul caz și că mulți alți lideri din țările „frățesti” sunt încă protejați de succesorii sovietelor. În cazul analizat, interzicerea accesului la dosar face imposibil răspunsul la întrebarea dacă, așa cum a fost acuzat la un moment dat, Georges Marchais a urmat școala de cadre leninistă de la Moscova. În orice caz, între 1953 și 1994, el a asumat rolul de participant la mișcarea comunistă internațională (MCI) și a făcut, de aceea, cum o indică un tabel de la p. 165 a volumului, 116 voiaje în străinătate: 26 în URSS, 11 în Cuba, 8 în Bulgaria, 8 în RDG, 7 în Italia, 6 în Ungaria, câte 5 în România, Algeria și Nicaragua, 4 în Polonia, câte 3 în Cehoslovacia, Iugoslavia și RFG, câte două în

Belgia, Elveția, Spania, Mexic, Grecia, Congo și Mozambic și câte unul în Vietnam. Suedia, Finlanda, Japonia, Luxemburg, Bolivia, Liban, Madagascar, Portugalia, China, Coreea de Nord, Angola, Benin, Norvegia și Statele Unite. Unele cifre pot intriga, dar cele mai multe spun totul despre geografia politică a versiunii franceze a MCI. Dintre cele cinci vizite în România, prima – din 1964 – e doar consemnată. Cea de-a doua a avut loc în august 1967, când eroul cărții îl însoțește pe Waldeck Rochet, secretarul general din acel moment, cei doi având o întâlnire de două ore și 45 de minute cu Ceaușescu (p. 145). În 1968, liderul PCF nu e pe aceeași lungime de undă cu secretarul general al PCR în chestiunea atitudinii față de „linia sovietică”, fiindcă francezul e pro-Moscova, iar Ceaușescu e contra (p. 146). Tutela sovietică asupra „fratelui” francez e o constantă mai bine de două decenii, cât timp G. Marchais conduce partidul din Hexagon, dar care nu va încerca, observă Sophie Coeuré, să cunoască în profunzime URSS, mulțumindu-se cu limuzinele negre, hotelul de lux din Moscova, mesele acoperite cu catifea verde, sticla de apă minerală și sucurile de fructe oferite la congrese și recepții (p. 160). În România e primit în reședințele de vară de la Snagov și Neptun și e invitat să viziteze Canalul Dunăre – Marea Neagră, în timp ce Ceaușescu făcea băi de nămol, sau să meargă la vânătoare ori să joace șah, ceea ce, aflăm din volum, nu era tocmai pe placul interlocutorului său francez. Care trebuie, în schimb, să asculte

lungile expuneri ale dictatorului român despre succesele în plan economic sau social ale RSR. Secretarul PCF e conștient că, deși Ceaușescu cita obsesiv „neamestecul în treburile interne”, își băga nasul în politica din Franța, inclusiv felicitând-l oficial pe adversarul François Mitterrand pentru alegerea ca președinte în 1981. Tovarășul Marchais era deranjat, în momentul vizitei în România din 1984, constatând că ziarul *Scânteia* acorda mai puțin spațiu vizitei sale decât celei făcute de Thomas Sankara, efemer președinte al Voltei Superioare. În fine, în paginile consacrate vizitelor în România ale lui Marchais, Sophie Coeuré amintește că, imediat după Revoluția din 1989, presa franceză a republicat comunicatul oficial al întâlnirii din 1984, care pomenea „stima, încrederea și înțelegerea reciprocă” între cele două părți, silindu-l astfel să reacționeze pe secretarul general al PCF, care a minimalizat lucrurile, pomenind doar patru din cele cinci vizite și insistând că a fost vorba doar despre relații „de la partid la partid”,

care i-au consumat numai 12 ore din viață (pp. 170-172). Autoarea cărții trage o singură concluzie despre relația Ceaușescu – Marchais: francezul a fost perceput la București ca un opozant oarecare în interiorul regimului francez.

Din arhivele ministerelor francez, dar și român de externe, pe care le-am cercetat la rândul meu, reiese cam același lucru, cu o nuanță care merită indicată: cele mai frecvente discuții care au loc între PCR și PCF privesc sejururile pe litoralul Mării Negre, oferite de regimul Ceaușescu, într-un soi de concurență cu „frații bulgari”. Închei recomandând traducerea în română a volumului semnat de reputata specialistă franceză. E un model de analiză a mișcărilor politice. Iar figura lui Georges Marchais merită cunoscută nu doar fiindcă a fost un interlocutor al lui Ceaușescu, ci și întrucât a încarnat o versiune a Franței care azi nu mai e în circulație.

Cristian PREDA

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Germania lui Hitler și Rusia lui Stalin (coed. Andrei Muraru, 2020), and at the “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University Publishing House in Iași, the coordinated volume is in print *România – de la Marea Unire la integrarea europeană* (coed. Bogdan Ștefanachi, 2020). He has published dozens of studies and articles on the monarchical problem in post-communist Romania, the history of the Holocaust, the history of mentalities and the developments generated by these topics.

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Dacian VASINCU – graduate of the University of Bucharest and the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration (SNSPA), holds a Ph.D. in Political Science and International Relations. For more than two decades, his professional life has been intertwined with the institutional destiny of the Senate of Romania, where he has served as a parliamentary adviser. This role has offered him direct access to the backstage of political decision-making and to the complexity of the mechanisms through which laws are born. His path is also an academic one. Trained at SNSPA, he has enriched his expertise through conferences, research projects, and training programs in political science and constitutional law. He has published regularly in journals of political science and critical thought: *Polis*, *Expert Electoral*, and *Punctul Critic* have hosted his studies on legitimacy, representation, and institutional reform. He is a member of the Order of Legal Advisers of Romania and of the Union of Professional Journalists of Romania (UZP). An active participant in international conferences and public debates on parliamentary democracy, the legitimacy of representation, and institutional reform. Initiator and co-author of legislative proposals and projects dedicated to strengthening the relationship between Parliament and the citizen. Selected works and contributions: “Romania in Institutional Crisis at the Border between Pandemic and War – Diagnostic Analysis of Institutional Political Actors in 2021-2022”, *Punctul Critic* 3-4 (41-42); “Coronavirus – The New Epidemic Structurally Affecting Society, Including its Impact on the Romanian Political Class”, *Punctul Critic* 4 (38); “Evolution or Decision-Making Involution, 2016-April 2020 – Diagnostic Analysis of the Profile of the Romanian Parliamentary Society and of the Socio-Political Mentality of the Last Period“, *Punctul Critic* 1-2 (31-32); “An Analysis of the Profile of the Romanian Political-Parliamentary Society and of the Socio-Electoral Mentality of the Last Period“, *Cogito – Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, XII(2), June; “Evolution or Involution of Parliamentarianism. A Comparative Analysis of the Romanian Parliament after the Great Union and Today”, *Polis. Journal of Political Science* 7(3); “Radiography of the 2019 European Elections – A Case Study on the Campaign and the Impact of Results on Romania”, *Punctul Critic*, 2; „The 2016 Parliamentary Elections – Another Stage in Contemporary Political Life”, *Expert Electoral*, 1(14).

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Anastasia ZAKARIADZE is a Habilitated Doctor of Philosophy, Professor. She is the Head of the Anthim the Iberian Scientific Research Centre for Philosophy and Theology at the Institute of Philosophy, and a member of the Representative Council of Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University. She has served as the project leader of several grant-funded research projects dedicated to the heritage of St. Anthim the Iberian, the results of which have been published in seven books. Her scholarly output includes six monographs and more than seventy articles and manuals published in Georgian, English, and Romanian. Among her notable works are *Anthimian Studies*; *St. Anthim the Iberian: Selected Works* (parallel trilingual texts); *St. Anthim the Iberian: Ethos and Poetics of the Enlightenment*; *Philosophy in Georgia from Neoplatonism to Postmodernism*; *Ethics: Dilemmas and Challenges*. She is also co-head of the MA and PhD programs in Philosophy. She holds the title of Doctor Honoris Causa of Ovidius University of Constanța (Romania). Her awards include the Medal of the Virgin Mary for contributions to academic activity and for fostering fruitful cooperation between Romania and Georgia; the Decorated Cross of the Archdiocese of Râmnic for contributions to research on St. Anthim's heritage; the Order of St. Apostle Andrew from the Archdiocese of Râmnic for strengthening Georgian–Romanian cultural, scientific, and educational ties; and the Medal of St. Anthim the Iberian awarded by the Archdiocese of Bucharest and Saint Anthim's Monastery. She is also the recipient of the Shalva Nutsubidze Academic Award from the National Academy of Sciences of Georgia.

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Bibliografie

CARPINSCHI, Anton, BOCANCEA, Cristian, *Știința politicului. Tratat*, Editura Universității „Al. I. Cuza”, Iași, 1998.

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Resurse electronice

STAN, Liliana, „Elemente ale metafizicii idealului la Petre Andrei”, *Transilvania*, Nr. 11, 2011, http://www.revistatransilvania.ro/nou/ro/anul-editorial-2012/cat_view/45-anul-editorial-2011.html, p. 60 (accesat pe 23 februarie 2013)

NOTĂ: Tabelele și figurile vor fi incluse în textul articolului și numerotate în ordinea apariției, după modelul de mai jos. Vă rugăm să nu folosiți tabelele și figurile în mod excesiv.

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Tabelul 1: *Model de tabel*

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[...] Este o chestiune pe care politologul român Mattei Dogan o prezintă atât în studiile sale interbelice, cât și în lucrările recente¹. [...]

¹ Mattei Dogan, *Comparații și explicații în știința politică și în sociologie*, Editura Institutul European, Iași, 2010, pp. 241-261.

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All articles must comprise **an introductory part**, a section devoted to **the paper's content**, divided into chapters and subchapters – in which the research hypotheses mentioned in the introduction should be argued for or against -, and a section of **conclusions**.

Bibliography

- BELL, Daniel, *The End of Ideology. On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass., 2001
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NOTE: Tables and figures should be inserted in the text and numbered in order of appearance, according to the model below. Please do not use tables and figures in excess.

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Table 1: *Table model*

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[...] In is a matter that the Romanian political science scholar Mattei Dogan describes both in his interwar studies and in his recent works¹. [...]

¹ Mattei Dogan, *Comparații și explicații în știința politică și în sociologie*, Editura Institutul European, Iași, 2010, pp. 241-261.

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