

POLITICKÉ VEDY / POLITICAL SCIENCES

Časopis pre politológiu, najnovšie dejiny, medzinárodné vzťahy, bezpečnostné štúdiá / Journal for Political Sciences, Modern History, International Relations, security studies

URL časopisu / URL of the journal: <http://www.politickevedy.fpvmv.umb.sk>

Autor(i) / Author(s): Marine Vekua – Ramaz Lominadze
Článok / Article: The Long Way of Georgia to Europe
Vydavateľ / Publisher: Fakulta politických vied a medzinárodných vzťahov –
UMB Banská Bystrica / Faculty of Political Sciences
and International Relations – UMB Banská Bystrica

Odporúčaná forma citácie článku / Recommended form for quotation of the article:

VEKUA, M. – LOMINADZE, R. 2017. The Long Way of Georgia to Europe. In *Politické vedy*. [online]. Roč. 20, č. 4, 2017. ISSN 1335 – 2741, s. 134-152. Dostupné na internete: <http://www.politickevedy.fpvmv.umb.sk/archiv-vydani/2017/4-2017/marine-vekua-ramaz-lominadze.html>.

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THE LONG WAY OF GEORGIA TO EUROPE

Marine Vekua – Ramaz Lominadze*

ABSTRACT

Georgia, a small country located at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, has a long history of relations with Europe. In spite of difficulties in negotiations with Russia (first Empire, then Soviet Union) Georgia, since 13th century up to nowadays, single-mindedly has been striving towards the West. Year 2017 constitutes one of the landmark years for Georgia's European integration. On 28 March, visa free regime between Georgia and the EU came into force. This historical achievement will contribute the enhancement of economic, cultural and social ties between the EU and Georgia. Furthermore, this is a significant political recognition from the EU that Georgia successfully implements complex reforms, ensures development of democratic institutions and sustainability of country's economy. The aim of the research was to analyse the understanding and interpretation of general human principles during different historical periods in Georgia; trends in development of young democracy in Georgia; attitude of civil society towards priorities for democratic values and issue of identity. The modern methodology was outlined in the research process, specifically: historical, ethnographic, critical discourse, comparative and quantitative research methods. The article includes the introduction, five chapters, conclusions and bibliography. The results of research of social opinion to the issue were mostly positive and gave the strong hope that the process of integration of Georgia into the European Community would be successfully completed. Based on the research we can conclude that in all historical era Georgia recognised: the importance of universal and national values; democratic, already completed and still ongoing, reforms; Georgian society endorses the Western-oriented state foreign policy.

Key words: EU-Georgia, relationships, democracy, cultural values, identity

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Introduction

The presented article reviews the historical aspect of Georgia that reflects the Western European orientation of the country in different social and political epochs. The authors analyse the Declaration of Independence (1991) of Georgia as the first step of foundation of young democracy. The article analyses the country's EU integration as the only right and confident course and justify with arguments the readiness of Georgian society to enhance their commitment to the principles and challenges of modern democracy. The article analyses some aspects of the national identity, which demonstrate fully consistent with the universal democratic values system.

The aim of the research was to analyse the understanding and interpretation of general human principles during different historical periods in Georgia; trends in development of young democracy in Georgia; attitude of civil society towards priorities for democratic values and issue of identity.

The modern methodology was outlined in the research process. Namely: the method of historical research - in order to establish a different approach to democratic principles during different historical periods of Georgia; the ethnographic research method helped to analyse the attitude of the Georgian mentality towards universal human values; several scientific and media outlets were studied based on the critical discourse method; on the basis of comparative analysis we were able to figure out the Georgian society's attitude to the principles of democracy in different epochs; on the basis of quantitative research the values priorities of the part of modern Georgian society (the survey comprised more than 300 respondents divided by age, job position and gender) were studied.

The text of the article is divided to introduction, five chapters, conclusion and bibliography. The article uses modern contemporary philosopher' works, which discuss the theories of modern culture; the essence and problems of identity; understanding, interpretation and trends of development of democracy; some issues of the history of Georgia related to the value system and the official documents reflecting the relations between Georgia and the EU.

1 Historical review of the issue

June 27, 2014 is a significant date in recent history of Georgia. On this day, the EU-Georgia Association Agreement was signed in Brussels, which also

included the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement. This event put an end to one important stage of the long way, leading Georgia to the EU.

This big event was preceded with centennial dream of Georgia, surrounded by Muslim countries, to realise its striving towards Christian Europe. Georgia, having a long history of statehood, during its existence, has been practically permanently struggling for independence. Georgia was looking for allies in this fight and Europe seemed to be the best option. However, it happened to be vice versa as well. As early as 13th Century, the initiator of 4th Crusade, the Pope of Rome - **Inokenti III** (1198-1216), in his letter addressed to Georgian king, called on the monarch of strong Christian Country to participate in defence of Holy Land. (Metreveli, 2003, p. 272).

Five centuries later, extremely weakened Georgia unsuccessfully tried to get assistance from European monarchs. This was the Europe, which Georgia considered itself to be part of. The famous travel (known as 'Great Ambassadorship') of outstanding Georgian figure - **Sulkhan Saba Orbeliani** to appeal to European monarchs for assistance, was also unsuccessful. (Chaladze, 2015)

In 18th Century, a new political player appears on the political arena of Caucasus –Russia. Georgia, scattered into pieces, getting no assistance from Europe, is inclined to orthodox Russia. Besides, tight political links with Russia are giving Georgia the stable guarantee of security and hope for return to the European space.

This was the reason that led to the signing the treaty of Collaboration and Protectorate (Treaty of Georgievsk) between Kartli-Kakheti Kingdom (Eastern Georgia) and Russia in 1783. (Saginashvili, 2010)

According to the treaty, Georgian kings recognised the authority of Russian Empire; however, Russia should not have interfered in internal affairs of Georgia. Unfortunately, Russia did not keep the promise. Quite soon, in 1801, the kingship was abolished in Eastern Georgia and independence was lost. The rest of Georgian kingdoms and principalities suffered the same fate. Russia brought them under her rule by force, abolished kingship and annexed the territories. The oldest Georgian kingdom became one of the provinces of Russia. The country that had been ruled by the Bagratovan Dynasty for almost ten centuries fell in hands of vicegerents of Russia.

The Empire intentionally used to ruin Georgian identity. The autocephaly of Georgian Orthodox Church was abolished, Georgian church service was replaced with Russian one, Holy belongings of Georgian Churches were

robbed, church icons, cultural monuments were distorted, censorship was introduced, general introduction of Russian language ousted Georgian language from educational institutions, court and administrative bodies. Many patriots and outstanding figures were exiled to Russia. Russian officials tried to evoke ethnical conflicts among different nationalities living in Georgia. It had far reaching and deplorable effects.

Despite unbearable pressure, Georgia and Georgian people, dominated by Russian Empire during the entire 19th Century, had been trying to preserve national identity and had been carrying on the unsuccessful fight for independence.

The hope for independence of Georgia again sparked at the beginning of 20th Century. Russian Empire, similarly to many other empires known in history, ran out the force. As a consequence of internal and foreign contradictions, after losing the war with Germany, Russia suffered the bourgeois revolution of February 1917 and abolishment of 300 year reign of the Romanov Dynasty, and later on, in October, Russia faced Bolshevik Socialist Revolution. As a result of Empire breakdown, marginal regions were given the chance of independence.

On March 3, 1918 Russian Bolsheviks signed the peace treaty of Brest-Litovsk, according to which Russia ceded to Turkey two territories belonging to Georgia (Batumi, Ardaghani), and one territory belonging to Armenia (Karsi).

On May 26, 1918 in Tbilisi, National Council of Georgia declared Georgia as an independent sovereign country and set up the Democratic Republic of Georgia. "The Act for State Independence of Georgia" adopted by the council, together with many other statements declared that Democratic Republic of Georgia is a neutral country during the war-time, and that Georgia wants to have neighbourly relations with all the members of International community, especially with bordering countries and nations; Democratic Republic of Georgia within its borders equally supports civil and political rights of all citizens, as well as non-discrimination on the basis of nation, religion, social status and gender. The Act also stated that Democratic Republic of Georgia would grant freedom of action to all the nations living on its territory. Georgian Democratic Republic, during the short span of its existence had not betrayed these principles of humanism. (Tadiashvili, 2015)

The first Democratic Republic of Georgia existed just for a few years (1918-1921). During this short period newly established Georgian democratic state had been struggling hard for self-preservation and for gaining international

recognition in order to protect itself from territorial claims and aggression from neighbouring Russia and Turkey.

In order to defend themselves against Turkish aggression, Georgia and Armenia chose German orientation, as far as Turkey and Germany were allies. Consequently, Georgia escaped Turkish occupation and Turkey occupied only South-Western part of Georgia, including Batumi.

However, it turned out to be impossible for Georgia to defend itself against Russian occupation. Nevertheless, the hope for survival still existed and this hope was the support and assistance from the side of Western, particularly European countries. The attempts of the diplomats of a young Georgian state to gain international recognition and support turned out practically unsuccessful. Georgia was not accepted to the League of Nations. Western countries recognised it only as de facto state. Negative positions of the UK and France towards Georgia appeared to be the insuperable obstacles.

It was the irony of fate that Georgian Democratic Republic was first recognised by Soviet Russia on May 7, 1920. Russia recognised its sovereignty, territorial entity and borders. Russia recognised Georgian state in order to occupy it later. Very soon, on February 25, 1921, Russian troops invaded Georgia and put a red flag over Tbilisi.

Georgia left without any military and political allies, similarly to Armenia and Azerbaijan a bit earlier, without any international partners, became the victim of Soviet Russia. Red Russia, with practically tacit consent of Europe, successfully sovietised Transcaucasia. Georgia's attempt to preserve long wished independence with the support of western countries and international recognition ended in failure.

The Government of defeated Democratic Republic of Georgia immigrated to France and tried to carry on the fight from there. This fight was also unsuccessful. Economic, political and military strengthening of the Soviet Union had gradually made this country the important political player. The recognition of the Soviet Union, first by the UK and then by France in May of 1939, when the parliament of France ratified the non-aggression pact between the Soviet Union and France, stopped the legacy of the government of Georgian Democratic Republic in Paris.

2 Declaration of independence of Georgia in 1991 - new challenges and perspectives

Georgia again was caught in the iron grip of Russia, this time that of Soviet Russia. It was only 70 years later, after the collapse of Soviet empire, when Georgia was given the chance of striving towards freedom and Europe again.

On April 9, 1991, Georgia declared the restoration of state independence. Once more, exactly in the same way as 70 years ago, long wished freedom was reached at the expense of historic cataclysms. The Soviet Union, the Soviet Empire, similarly to Russian empire some time ago, could not deal with the home and foreign disagreements and collapsed. Initially, Georgia, similarly to former Soviet Baltic republics refused to join the Commonwealth of Independent States, which is practically modified Soviet Union. Georgia openly declares its western orientation. However, such development of the events does not satisfy Russia. It cannot accept losing the control over the central country of Southern Caucasus. It takes advantage of the complex economic and political situation of the country and with well-proved, old imperial method again supports evoking the ethnic conflicts on the territory of Georgia. (Erkvania, 2015) Unfortunately, Europe quietly observes the development of the events in one of the regions of Georgia – Abkhazia. Indeed, the first war between Russia and Georgia is practically evaluated as ethnic conflict. (Korneli, 2016)

Eduard Shevardnadze, after his return to Georgia, is trying to carry out balanced policy and has no way out than to join Georgia to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). In spite of very complex situation, (Civil War, the war in Abkhazia, ruined economy, etc.) Georgia still manages not to only declare, but to carry out European orientation. Consequently, in 1992 Georgia joined the Organisation of United Nation, and in the same 1992, European Union officially recognised independence of Georgia. On April 27, 1999, Georgia became the 41st member state of European Council. On the membership meeting, **Zurab Zhvania**, Head of Delegation and the Head of the Parliament of that time declared: ‘I am Georgian, therefore, I am European’. This is how he stressed that Georgia is the European Country. It was pleasant that on the same ceremony, Lord **Russell Johnston**, the President of Parliamentary Assembly, addressed Georgian delegation with the following words: “Georgia, welcome back home!” (Gvaxaria, 2004)

In 2004, as result of the “Revolution of Roses”, new government came, which refused to carry on balanced foreign policy and chose to lead definitely

pro-Western policy, the contacts with European countries and structures were progressing and developing further. In 2004, Georgia took part in “European Neighbourhood Policy”, and in 2009 – in the “Initiative of Eastern Partnership”. (‘Initiative of Eastern partnership’, 2010)

The relations with European Union after declaration of the Independence of Georgia were initiated with the agreement on ‘Cooperation and Collaboration with EU’. In 2014, they further developed with the ambitious agreement between EU and Georgia and completely came into force on July 1, 2016. (EU-Georgia Association Agreement, 2016)

On December 18, 2015, the European Commission stated that Georgia fulfilled all the requirements of action plan for liberalisation of visa regime and technical process of visa liberalisation was successfully finalised. This means broadening of multilateral and various relations, making Georgian citizens feel free in the family of European people, and to enable them to travel practically without restrictions. At the same time, this also means that Georgia, Georgian citizenship and Georgian passport will become more attractive for Abkhazian and Ossetian citizens, who, due to misfortune, live on the territory occupied by Russia. The visa free travel to Schengen zone countries is the award that small Georgia received not only for democratic reforms, but for steadily following declared pro-Western course since the restoration of independence till today. In spite of indisputable, inevitably European orientation of modern Georgia and its population, appearance of Eurosceptics is noticeable.

According to the regular survey of NDI, the ratio of supporters of European integration is about 60% and the ratio of supporters of going back to Eurasian space reaches 20 %. (NDI Poll, 2014)

In majority of cases, the increase of number of Eurosceptics is linked to ineffective and, in populations’ point of view, frequently unjustifiable actions of European structures. For example, the procrastination of finalisation of visa liberalisation process causes fair indignation as far as Georgia has scrupulously carried out all the responsibilities imposed on it in this direction. The object of serious indignation among the population is the issue of NATO membership. As early as 2002, **Eduard Shevardnadze**, the then-President of Georgia, officially expressed his wish to integrate the country into the North-Atlantic Alliance. For the population of Georgia, NATO is unconditionally Western orientation point. Georgian people confirmed the wish of joining the Alliance with the referendum. Bucharest Summit has also confirmed that Georgia will become NATO member state by all means. However, it is becoming evident that if earlier the main

reason for refusal was 'insufficient readiness of Georgia' for membership, now the main reason is the political will that considers interests of Russia.

3 Georgia's Western orientation

It has been quarter of century since Georgia restored the independence and took the place among sovereign states. During this time, its pro-Western orientation has become evident; the country is striving towards complete joining the family of democratic European countries. The way towards Europe did not appear to be simple and safe. Just due to declaration of Western orientation, 20% of Georgian territory is occupied and this process has not been stopped yet. Nevertheless, Georgian population has hopes for future. They are sure that country will be able to restore territorial entity, to establish economically developed, democratic state. However, in order to solve this task, Georgia urgently needs timely and energetic support from the West.

Therefore, in the last 20 years, Georgia has completed a number of obligations imposed by the European structures, in order to eventually become a fully-fledged member of the European family. One of the main obligations was the development of democracy with its principles, rules, standards, preferences, goals, ideals.

The principles of democracy create a system of values on which the entire state institutions are dependent. The history of Georgia can demonstrate important facts about such kind of progressive, human number of values starting from Middle Ages with its developing and transformation nowadays. The basis of democracy such as universal and national values, especially cultural, make the platform for Georgia to reach one of its main goal - to gain a worthy place in the family of European countries.

Democracy is a developing, dynamic process. Correspondingly, its definition undergoes different interpretations over time. Democracy encompasses standard definitions (for example, people's power, public participation in solution of social and political problems and administration of the affairs of state importance) as well as those brought with times and circumstances that are directly or indirectly linked to different forms and mechanisms of public involvement (for example: direct democracy, parliamentary representation, self-government and etc.). If the first aspect is crucial and permanent for democracy, the other can be changing due to level of the development of the society, its traditions, and the type of political culture, as well as due to different geopolitical

and historic circumstances. Western model of democracy is one of the most successful among the modern political system models. However, it would not be right to consider it universal and directly export it to any country without difference, ignoring historic and traditional elements, specificity and the identity of the society, as well as certain period of political development that must be taken into consideration. Today, in transition period, the so-called 'surgical interference' is very dangerous. The society that is not completely aware of civil responsibilities, the obligation of self-regulation and self-limitation is under the risk of losing the motive power of democracy - government of people and weaken human freedom and equality.

Specific historical epoch of one specific country places particular emphasis on certain values and sets certain priorities that are put on each side of the scale: on one side of the scale there are the values that bear interest of the state and nation and on the other side, there are the values bearing the interest common to all humankind.

Thus, young democracy of such a small country as Georgia is facing certain challenges. As a rule, such challenges are characteristic to the countries that underwent strict, mono ideological regimes that collapsed in 1990s pulling down national identity wealth and values gained over centuries. Unfortunately, these processes touched Georgia as well. However, the country has managed to protect, keep and bring to 21st Century - up to now, the inestimable values that ultimately define her true identity - language, religion, traditions and culture. It is indisputable that in any county, in Georgia among them, especially in modern globalisation process, time decides which tradition should be abandoned and which one can be transformed, weakened or strengthened, can take new shapes that is adequate response (or tries to be so) to modern challenges.

Today, in our country, it is difficult even to discuss or write on democracy, it is difficult because for 25 years, since the declaration of Independence of Georgia, plenty of things have been done on behalf of 'democracy' and the 'reforms' connected to democracy. However, later, they were evaluated in the absolutely opposite way. 'Democrats' themselves have changed their image and position towards different values for several times. Such processes considerably hinder the development and strengthening of the democracy.

One more challenge facing such a small country as Georgia, is the globalisation - it is an inevitable process. This is the reality, where Georgia falls under global financial influence, which by itself is revealed directly or indirectly in political and other processes related to it.

The danger of losing control over social conflicts – it is one more challenge that the young democracy of Georgia is facing. For the last 25 years Georgia, especially since the so-called ‘Revolution of Roses’, has been in almost constant process of elections. The choice made by the country in favour of market economy created the high risk of social conflict. The government should try to find the ways to minimise the aspects of such conflicts. From this point of view, the democratic type of government legitimation that means the supremacy of law and transparency of the entire election process in the concrete environment would be the ideal variation of social disagreement and public agreement.

Referring to democracy, it is impossible not to remember the well-known words by **Winston Churchill**: “Many forms of government will be applied and still apply in this sinful world. Everyone understands that democracy is not perfect. Correctly stated that democracy - the worst form of government, except all the others that have been tried from time to time.”

Democracy is nothing more than commonly recognised system of values: freedom of speech, choice, equal rights, general human freedoms, personal independence, responsibility, supremacy of law, active participation in ruling the country, strong state institutions.

True Democracy recognises tolerance and social equality, legal equality, civil position, ethics and morality, as the regulator of the cohabitation in civil society and declares human rights as the highest value of democratic society that is based on humanism principles. Human rights, freedom, duty and responsibility, their proportional correlation and harmonic cohabitation build the basis of democracy, open society. Different interpretation of the democratic values by different social and political groups of the society can lead the recognised values to their undesirable transformation. Furthermore, “in hands” of too radical political power, the simplest democratic values can take absolutely unacceptable shapes. For example, the activeness can be transformed into authoritarianism; freedom ideas into carelessness, absolutely lack the responsibility; cognitive elements-into objection of the knowledge gained by previous generations in science, art, culture and literature.

It is very dangerous occurrence, when the authoritarian tendencies disguised as the “democracy” are revealed in some regions in different shapes – be it “colourful” (in case of Georgia that “of roses”) revolutions and their ‘exports’ or unjustifiable, unadvised, hasty and in some cases, unacceptable reforms for a major part of the society inside the country. Democracy - first of

all, is the involvement of people, active part of the society in government processes. This is the recognition of values and devoted fight for them. While discussing democracy, besides the recognition of the human rights as the most valuable treasure of the humankind, the special importance is given to identity problem, the system of the values this or that nation/nationality is based on.

In context of values, the special emphasis is placed on culture, as on complex and versatile in the life of society and individual that defines its (cultural) functional variety.

Culture is multi-functional system. The principal function of phenomenon of culture is human-creative or humanistic one. All the rest are more or less linked to it or comes from it. (What is culture, 2015) The most important is the function of social experience transmission. It is often called historic and hereditary or informative function. Culture is the complex system of signs. This is the only mechanism for transmission of social experience from one generation and epoch to the next, from one country to another. In fact, besides culture, society does not possess any other mechanism for transmission of the rich experience accumulated by the humankind. That is why it is not occasional that culture is considered to be the social memory of mankind.

4 Main priorities of cultural values of Georgia

4.1 Knowledge and education

Georgian history is the clear example of how, through what stages and what is most important, with what priorities Georgian culture has been developing during centuries and how much Georgian culture has in common with European and general humankind values. I would like to stop on a few most important facts, which clearly demonstrate it.

Geopolitical location of Georgia – at the crossroad of Asia and Europe fostered the development of intercultural and economic relations with the countries of the region. It was expressed in different directions - creating material or cultural values.

Special emphasis should be placed on educational sphere of the country – unambiguous attitude towards knowledge and literacy.

According to the archaeological data, creation of Georgian alphabet is linked to the period of 4th-5th Century A.D. and **Parnavaz I**, the king of that time. The earliest surviving literary work “The Martyrdom of the Holy Queen Shushanik”

was created in the 5th Century. Georgian alphabet follows the order of Greek one and it is one of 14 existing alphabets.

It is known that the earliest, regularly operating Bologna University in Italy was founded in 11th Century. In the same period Georgia, dominated by Byzantium, sets up two educational centres in Eastern and Western Georgia: The Academy of Ikalto - in 11th Century and Gelati Academy – 12th Century. At these Academies, like at other Byzantine higher educational scholastic schools of that time, seven main branches of science were taught: Grammar, Philosophy, Rhetoric, Arithmetic, Geometry, Music and Astronomy.

As it has already been mentioned above, the first surviving Georgian book is “The Martyrdom of the Holy Queen Shushanik’ by **I. Tsurtaveli**. It is dated to the 5th Century. 12 centuries had passed before the first Georgian book was printed. It was Georgian-Italian Dictionary, which was printed in Rome with the support of **Nikipore Irbakhi** (birth name: **Nikoloz Cholokashvili**) in 1699, after 189 years since invention of book printing. **Nikipore Irbakhi** was the ambassador of **Teimuraz I** - king of Georgia to the Pope of Rome in 1626-1629. This is exactly when the history of the first Georgian printed book started. This work is finalised with the fact that the king **Vakhtang VI** supported the establishment of the first printing-house in 1708-1709 in Tbilisi – capital of Georgia.

Next historic period, especially 19th Century was marked with the aspiration towards education and science. Many young people were leaving for Europe in order to get the education. They worked at leading European universities. This processes prepared the solid basis for young educated and experienced people to come back to Georgia and with the strong efforts of prominent figures, in 1918 the first national University was established in Caucasus. This university, taking into the consideration Georgian educational traditions, built the solid basis to the European type High School in Georgia.

While discussing the education, it is impossible not to mention in parallel the moral and ethical frameworks of the nation that was brought to Georgia together with the spreading of Christianity in the 1st Century. Christianity was preached by the Apostles of Christ – **Saint Andria** the first called and **Svimon Kananeli**. Christianisation of Georgia is linked to the Name of **St. Nino** and King **Mirian** – the king of Georgian in that time, who officially was converted to Christianity. Georgian Church considers that it happened in 326. By the year 325 Christianity had already been widespread in Georgia, as far as in Abkhazia (breakaway territory of modern Georgia), in Bichvinta, there existed the eparchy and

stratopilos – the bishop of Bichvinta, who attended the first worldwide Council of Nicaea.

Spreading of Christianity is indirectly linked to the emission of money and its development in Georgia. The first coins were emitted in 7th-6th Century B.C. and it substituted the goods. Cholchis was among those leading states, which started the emission of money. In the first quarter of 12th Century, the economic advancement of Georgia was significantly supported with money reform. By the end of 10th Century Georgia had had very close relations with Byzantium that was reflected in the development of Georgian coin. Muslim signs disappeared from the coin and they were replaced with Christianity symbols.

As it has already been mentioned above, Gelati Academy was founded in 11th Century and is linked to the rule of prominent Georgian king – **Davit Aghmashenebeli** (the builder). We cannot separate his attitude to education from other his progressive initiatives. Many reforms had been carried out in the country from the point of view of structural organisation of the state, in monetary, police and other directions. He, with his personal example, introduced the tolerance towards the representatives of other religious minorities. Due to its geographical location and due to Georgian character, Georgia was populated by different nations. Since then up to now, Georgia has been carrying the values that were established centuries ago. While speaking on tolerance, we should bring the example of King **Tamar** (12th Century). During his reign Georgia has extremely increased its borders, many unforgettable, literary, architectural or other monuments have been created. King **Tamar** abolished death penalty and introduced especially merciful attitude towards captives.

4.2 Gender

Equality is a commonly recognised important value that supports the quality of democracy. While discussing this fundamental value of democracy, we should refer to the phenomenon of woman and its specificity in the history of Georgia: **Medea** is a mythological character, who is connected with the history of Argonauts (14th – 13th Century B.C.); **Shushaniki** is a literary woman-hero of the 5th Century, who sacrificed herself to Christian belief; **Nino** from Kabadokia, who brought Christianity to Georgia (15th Century). In Georgian language, the word “kali” (meaning woman) (or its synonym “deda” meaning mother), or “da” (meaning sister) make up plenty of compound words. For example: “deda-

mitsa" (the Earth), "deda-kalaki" (capital city), "ded-mama" (mother and father), "kal-vazhi" (daughter and son), "da-dzma" (sister and brother). Georgian history remembers outstanding, prominent queens, who reigned over the country successfully, built the basis of education, won the wars, and strengthened the country: King **Tamar** (1166-1213), Queen **Ketevan** (1565-1624), and Queen **Rusudan** (1194-1245). In history of Georgia special meaning is given to a white kerchief (kerchief-the important element of woman's attire) – the symbol of peace and reconciliation. In Georgian family, the woman is the object for special respect, esteem and considerations. However, it should be mentioned that modern Georgia knows the situations where women were oppressed and their rights were violated. This is mostly connected with family life realities. Nevertheless, I do believe that each woman should make her choice: get education, obtain profession and qualification that will support her independence or to accept the reality, where gender discrimination is carried out in this or that form. Thus, women's rights, their recognition, protection and fight for them have long, centennial history in Georgia and to make this "discovery" today would be exaggerated and artificial.

4.3 Identity and culture

As we are all well aware, the culture of nation mostly reflects the values and specificity of nation and expresses its identity and uniqueness.

In our everyday life, the word "culture" is associated with art, high-class literature, movie, architecture, the norms of clothing and behaviour, etc.; it is the symbol of belief, the means of expression of values common to all humankind. It also serves the regulation of experience and behaviour among people. The beliefs and attitudes of the group are often considered sub-cultural. Culture is cement for building a social life. In the process of socialisation and contact with other cultures, it builds the bridge from one person to another and wakes up the feeling of belonging to a certain group. Modern scholars, while studying this issue, consider the national and cultural identity of the individual to be the one of the most significant among many other possibilities. The feeling of national identity is normally awakened by those values that bear the meaning of national symbolic culture in the opinion of society. In Georgia, one of such values is the unique, traditional, polyphonic singing-chanting. We would like to quote **Merab Mamardashvili**, outstanding Georgian Philosopher of 20th Century, saying "I am Georgian, spiritually as well as morally, I am the product of Georgian polyphonic

structure... Georgian music defined the fate of some of my spiritual abilities... I was born by this music". (Tsurtsunia, 2011) The attitude of a Georgian man towards his traditional musical culture is quite natural – a fact that is reflected in different social groups of modern Georgian public that sees its ethnic and national identity in Georgian polyphony.

Modern Georgians have quite different musical taste. "Melosphere", analogically to the biosphere, which we have to live in, can be understood as the 'musical envelope' created by the consciousness of the human being, that is made up by musical of the human beings inhabiting the earth as well as those of local cultural entities or individuals. In short, this is a real phenomenon that is created by the musical of the individual, which, for its part, influences the further activity of human consciousness. In spite of Georgia's different historic and political situation, until the end of the 19th Century, cultural entity of the country, including that of musical type, was more or less preserved; traditional Georgian secular and church music that represented one of the powerful layers of national symbolic culture, defined the "melosphere" shaped by Georgian musical consciousness. However, it does not mean historically musical and cultural homogeneity of the country, considering the existence of local "melospheres". For example, it is known that 12th Century Tbilisi population was ethnically diverse and this was reflected in musical culture of the city as well, and correspondingly, formed concrete sub-melospheres.

Musical "melospheres" of Georgian society that were regulated and controlled with the fight for national independence in the 19th Century and totalitarian ideology in 20th Century, did not much differ from each other in visual appeal. Musical types that were prioritised by the society in this period were traditional and classical music. The new wave of changes in Georgian society "melosphere" started from the 1990s of the last Century, when after the collapse of the communist regime, the society recognised liberal values. (Mamardashvili, 2013)

Musical identity has a complex, polygenic structure, similar to the "melosphere" created by its consciousness. The balance of its constituents is not harmonious as well. National identity of Georgian society is doubtless, i.e. its each member feels himself/herself as Georgian. Besides general mankind values they share and bear the values, historically rooted in the nation during the centuries, and in the personal consciousness of whom there always exists the understanding of ethnic or national, where, each time, on hearing Georgian tunes, "Georgian is born over and over again". (Mamardashvili. 2012)

However, it does not mean that if the person identifies herself/himself with Georgian culture, he/she cannot share and have feeling of closeness to other cultural categories, especially today, in modern globalisation tendencies. This is exactly the feeling that makes individual the valuable member of modern national and ethnic community and at the same time, highlights the complex, multi-layered structure of individuals' identity with the society, one of the most important elements of which is musical identity. The attitude of different social and cultural groups of modern Georgian society towards different types of music, ascertaining its function and significance, is a very important issue, as far as it helps us to highlight the musical values of this society and completes our views on its general cultural orientation. Georgian folk and classical music, this is the greatest treasure, which distinguishes Georgia from other countries with its originality and uniqueness.

It is a very rare occasion that such a small country as Georgia has created opera, ballet, and symphonic music. It is noteworthy that in the middle of the 19th Century drama theatres opened in Tbilisi and in 1851 – Tbilisi State Opera and Ballet Theatre. Georgian traditional musical layer – folklore, church polyphony and classical music made up that specific "melosphere", which represented the synthesis of Eastern and European musical expressive elements and those of Georgian.

5 The attitude of Georgian civic society towards democratic values

The attitude of modern Georgian society towards democratic values stirs great interest. For this purpose, we made up a questionnaire and held the inquiry with random sampling. Three hundred respondents participated in the questionnaire. We addressed the respondents in our survey asking to rank the democratic values. Among them were freedom, equality, human rights, personal independence, responsibility, supremacy of law, active participation in state government, strong state.

Respondents were asked to indicate their age, gender and education. As a result of the survey, the rating of democratic values resulted in two contradictory tendencies.

In the first case, the priority was given to freedom, equality and personal immunity. The respondents, interpreting and understanding democracy like this are the people with liberal values.

The second tendency expresses the attitudes of those respondents that apprehend democracy, in the first place, in connection with powerful state, responsibility and supremacy of law. The respondents who make such rating, stand far apart from liberal attitudes and support authoritarian models of government.

More detailed analysis of the cognitive picture of democracy gives us the possibility to generalise the attitudes of diverse groups.

The analysis of the survey results according to respondents' gender found out that women prioritise equality, active participation in state administration and powerful state. Certainly, such kinds of rating results can be ascribed to Georgian woman's role in social as well as in the family life. It is noteworthy that all of them have one in common - key value of the democracy –activism.

According to the analysis of the survey results, for male respondents more important values are freedom and personal independence, which can be explained with ambitious desires, mental features, with the desire to be the leader in the family.

In prioritizing the above-mentioned components of the democracy, the age plays one of the crucial roles. The youngest group (from the age of 15 to 20) gives advantages to active participation in the state administration. It is quite natural for their age – orientation towards future and a strong desire of realisation of their resources. Middle age respondents (from 45 to 55) think that triumvirate, which democracy should be based on, is the unity of freedom, responsibility and supremacy of law. This fact tells us that this age group is really the carrier of liberal values. The third age group (from 55 to 80) does not share the stereotype of authoritarian values that was quite expected. Their majority give advantage to responsibility that probably can be explained with their personal age experience, objectively passed road, full of historic cataclysms.

The third parameter, according to which we tried to ascertain the respondents' attitudes towards democratic values, is the education. It turned out that the respondents, who have incomplete secondary and incomplete higher education, placed the responsibility on the final position. As it seems their self-control mechanism is law and they can't completely understand the importance of responsibility. The survey also showed the correlation between education and a strong state. People with secondary education give the first place to a strong state and people with higher education give these values of democracy the second place. These data were unexpected, as far as many surveys state that

low level of education and the signs of authoritarianism have certain correlations. We can suppose that in this concrete case, our respondents personify the first painful wave of democratic reforms and this explains their negative attitude towards strong state.

Conclusion

Georgia, which has the most difficult geopolitical location, during its long history, has always protected and safeguarded its own land, state, cultural and spiritual wealth. Although there were difficult historical periods, the country was permanently falling under the influence of this or that conqueror (which, unfortunately, even now are continuing in a form of open aggression or "creeping occupation"). Nevertheless, the year of 1992 was very important in the history of country – Georgia declared its independence and the main foreign priorities. This dates back to the beginning of the relationship between Georgia and EU. Thereby, the fact that for the country with such long, dramatic and, at the same time, rich history, its attitude to the west and to democratic values demonstrates its the strong will to become a competent part of Europe and to gain a worthy place in the family of European countries.

Georgia stands for consistent steps for strengthening and promoting democratic institutions. Democratic reforms implemented in different fields of social life - human rights and freedom, independent judiciary, transparent and fair electoral system, the growing index of media pluralism - are the most important achievements on the way to building a young democracy. Georgian society with its national identity is systematic, fulfilling commitment to the EU, which confirms the country's European choice. The flaws of many governmental institutions are open for public criticism or discussions, what has been achieved through the involvement of civil society in the process of country's management.

The research outcomes make it clear that to the major part of the society the values that the key principles of democracy are built on, were natural. Furthermore, humankind universal values have a long standing history in Georgia. As a rule, they are recognised, protected and respected. The most important conclusion could be done – the process of integration of Georgia into the European Community will be successfully completed.

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