

The European orientation of Georgia

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Abstract

The European orientation of Georgia from ancient times until today is discussed in the work. Every important issue, which took place during this part of the history is briefly reviewed in the article. The following topics are discussed in the article: relationships of Georgia with ancient world; Georgian identity similarities with European; Georgian participation in the Crusades; the correspondence of the Georgian kings with the Pope; activities of the Catholic missionaries in Georgia; the attempts of Georgian kings to establish relations with Europe; the activities of Georgian immigrants in Europe and their role in unifying Europe; the participation of Georgia in European integration processes and its impact on further development of the country.

Despite many obstacles, Georgia has always had cultural, religious, military, diplomatic, political and economic links with European world, which eventually determined the relations of Georgia towards European values and played the crucial role in the orientation of the country. That is why this issue is so topical and its research is reckoned to be an urgent task, as studying historical relations is so important for the future of Georgia.

The goal of the paper is a multilateral research of the processes of the European orientation of Georgia.

The research, at the same time, will enable us to show the influence of European and Western culture and the relationship with Georgian culture, the role of Europe in the development of Georgian culture. Besides, we can find out the Georgia-European co-existence traditions over centuries, what kind of relations existed and how it reflected on Georgia's internal and foreign political orientation.

The content of the work, its conclusions and recommendations will facilitate to create the theoretical basis, not only about the European orientation of Georgia but also on the issues of Georgian-European multilateral relations. At the same time, the conclusions and recommendations should be based on the research of Georgian-European identity characteristics.

Result of the research will help Georgian and foreign scientists to understand European orientation of Georgia better, to perceive European identity of Georgia, which will be something of a novelty for the Georgian and European historiography.

Keywords: Europe, Georgia, European integration, Georgian identity, Catholic missionaries.

1. Introduction

Georgia's European orientation has not started today. It has deep historical roots. Precisely the cultural, political and economic ties with the European world (unless the break-up period that has made a big blow to the country's further development) has defined Georgia's attitude towards European values and played a crucial role in Georgia's European orientation.

Therefore, research of the orientation is an urgent task of Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration, since the study of historical relations with the Western world and new understanding is of a great importance for further development of the country. This vastly increases the actuality of the proposed topic. In addition, Georgia has signed the Association Agreement with the European Union, (which) that has clearly identified the issue of the country's orientation and finally determined political and cultural choice.

As it is known, the country's development vector in general is determined many factors, including cultural, historical and geopolitical. Today, at the modern stage of historical development, in terms of occupation and annexation of the country, the priority of Georgia's foreign policy should be Europe and it has no other alternative. That is why, in Georgia the European orientation, as an opinion about very important foreign policy vector, needs legitimization.

Therefore, research on orientation of Georgia has special importance for the development of the country and creates a new reality for the fundamental reconstruction of its social, political, economic and cultural sphere.

Georgia's relationship with the European world

Georgia's relationship with the European world has not started today, it has started much earlier and more or less it has been going on throughout history and continues to be active even today. The aspiration for a common European heritage was very important factor in our country. From time immemorial it participated in the ongoing processes in the Mediterranean Sea. As it turns out, The Kartvelian tribes may have had genetic relationships with the peoples of the Pre-Greek civilization (Pelagians, Lelegians, Minoans etc.), also with the Etruscans - the ancient population of Italy. It seems that Greek-Georgian centuries-old relationships originate from the Mycenaean era¹. These permanent multilateral relations have defined Georgia's attitude to European values and have played a key role in Georgia's current European orientation.

Despite the claiming of many scientists, that the foundations of European identity emerged in the bosom of ancient civilization, there is also a different view, according to which Europe's identity as a cultural space is quite distant from the past, and it is possible that it goes beyond antiquity. Therefore, it would be good for the study of cultural identity of the antiquity to find out which cultural components were the basis of it at an early stage in history. Here, of course, we cannot bypass the people who, from time immemorial, have been

¹ authors: (Gordeziani & Tonya 2007)..

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involved in the processes in the Mediterranean basin, with which the Greeks had come into contact and who had lived on this territory until their arrival. It is noteworthy that the Kartvelian tribes were also inhabited that place. Georgian and foreign historiography keeps many interesting documents about it².

Georgian-Greek relationships have been renewed now in the Black Sea basin from ancient period. From this time on, these relationships have become more intense, especially since so-called the founding of New Settlement of the Great Greek (VIII-VI BC).

The establishment of The Greek New Settlement played an important role in the development of cultural-economic relations with the ancient world of the Black Sea coastal population, which was followed by Mediterranean Hellenization and its impact on the local population has increased from a religious, cultural, political, socioeconomic point of views.

Later, from the middle of I c. BC, after Rome formed a new political order in Asia, so after reinforcing the West Vector, the whole Asia Minor became part of the Euro antique civilization, so, in fact the Georgian political world have been freed from the Southern threats for a long time³. [3]

From today's view, in the context of Georgia's European orientation, it is very important the question of Egrisi's orientation, when they supported the West (Byzantium), despite the assassination of King Gubaz by the Byzantines in the VI century (During the confrontation between East and West, Iran and Byzantium, which also crossed in West Georgia).

Thus, besides the multilateral relations with the ancient world, for Georgia, the adoption of Christianity was also of a great importance, that led to Georgia's eventual "civilized separation" from the Asian world. This was a crucial stage in the history of the Georgia as a state, and it ultimately defined the European identity of the country. This decision was so important that despite repeated conquest of Georgia by its enemies and the intermittent relations with Europe, the country has maintained its originality and statehood to the present day and largely defined the European identity of the country.

There have been many contradictions at Georgia over the centuries -external enemy or inner disorder. First the Persians, then Arabs, Mongols, Turk-Seljuks, Tsar's Russia's occupation of the Soviet Union and finally the Russian Federation, which ultimately hampered Georgian identity, but still couldn't change.

However, Georgians have not stopped striving for Europe and European ideals. A unique example of this is the idea of creating a body, similar to parliament, called – "Karavi", headed by Kutlu-Arslan, who demanded the restriction of the King's rights which represented some form of democratic governance back in the 12th century⁴.

The participation of Georgians in the crusades is also of great importance in Georgian-European relationships. Although the Georgians were engaged in fighting with the Turk-Seljuks, David Agmashenebeli's army used to help the Europeans in the Crusades.⁵

² Author: (Pazhava2019).

³ Author: (Pipia).

⁴ Authors: (Gardapkhadze, Gordeziani, Dularidze, Tarkhishvili, Nadareishvili, 2012).

⁵ Author: (Mtreveli1990).

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The Georgian Knights are fighting bravely in the Crusades, according to "Crusader History."

As we can see, the political relations between Rome and Georgia, which began during the Crusades, later developed into cultural relations, followed by the activities of Catholic missionaries in Georgia.

It's true that the hopes on Popewas collapsed, but the Georgian Kings did not break the contact with Rome; on the contrary, such a successful activity of the Catholic missionaries in Georgia indicates in itself how much the Georgian secular and religious leaders respected the Pope and their representatives.

It is also noteworthy that the issue of Church unity did not lead to polemics or any serious discussion. It may have some other explanation, however in the XIII-XV centuries the political leaders of our country linked the solution of the unification of the Georgian Orthodox Church to the Roman Catholic Church with the actual military assistance of the Pope against the enemies of Georgia.

Thus, the relationship between Georgia and Vatican was an important direction of Western policy of the Georgian kings in the XIII-XVIII centuries, which began with the search for a military political ally in Rome against Muslim aggressors and ended with the expansion of Catholic missionaries in Georgia⁶.

The self-sacrificing fierce battles with the Turk-Seljuks and Mongols, Georgia slowed down the offensive waves of these invaders on European lands, but itself became a victim of repeated attacks by the Osmalians and Persians.

The conquest of Byzantium and Constantinople by the Osmalians in 1453 significantly hampered Georgia's relations with Europe, and if Europeans had previously asked Georgian Kings for help, the situation had then changed and the Georgian Kings themselves asked for the help from Europe.

Georgian kings and princes were eager to establish relations with Europe, "for centuries the Kings of Georgia have aspired for union with Europe, because Georgia was not Asia, neither physically nor spiritually, nor by nature, nor by way of life, nor morally.

Between Georgia and Asia as between Europeanism and Orientalism there was such a difference and it still is, as the difference between Asia and Europe itself.

In 1783, though, "the pro-Western orientation of the Karti-Kakhetian kingdom was very serious⁷ the country was still forced to sign the Treaty of Georgievsk with Russia, by which Russia had to halt Iran-Ottoman expansion. Later, Russia began to violate the treaty and Georgia has lost statehood, centuries-old autocephaly and freedom of the Georgian Church.

And the country is still a victim of Russian expansion and suffers from the two-century deformed mentality. According to this problem, some part of the intelligentsia ... believe that we just can't get out of the Russian space or it won't be profitable. Such a view is the product of Soviet thinking. It goes against national identity ... it also goes against humanism and universal values.

⁶ Author: (Papashvili, 1995).

⁷ Author: (Guruli, 2009).

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Despite this, Georgia has not stopped looking for ways to Europe and has been able to do so in various ways.

From the XIX century Georgian educationalists considered Europe - a symbol of freedom and humanity. They were fascinated by European values, socio-political and philosophic ideas.

The homeland of these values was historically Georgia, just like the first Europeans. Georgia is a unique country in terms of multiculturalism and tolerance. That is why Georgia has been able, in almost all parts of its history, to be a recipient of diverse cultures, and this has helped to preserve Georgian identity. That is why it was difficult for all the invaders to destroy it. The most ruthless, organized battle was declared by the "Russian Civilization" to the "Caucasian Civilization"⁸.

In the case of popularization of European values and their establishment in the Georgian reality, the nineteenth-century Georgian thinkers Niko Nikoladze and Archil Jorjadze also play a huge role. Their views on Georgia's Europeanization are still actual today.

"We want to talk to Western Europe, - wrote A. Jorjadze, - ...we should introduce to Europe Georgia, its past, present and future hopes. For us, the moral sympathies from Europe should be precious and thus, we can encourage our poor and desperate little nation⁹.

Although Niko Nikoladze and Archil Jorjadze's views on political orientation differed (in particular with Russia), both generally agreed that Georgia's political orientation should be directed to the West, as "light and movement" came from the West, and therefore these values - the rule of law, freedom, democracy, free market, and so on - should have been the basis for Georgia's revival.

In 1918, the former Russian Empire took advantage of the Russian Revolution and restored its independence. Including Georgia, the independent Georgian republic actively sought to integrate into European space and organizations but it was thwarted in 1921, this time as a result of the occupation of Bolshevik Russia, which lasted until 1991.

After the occupation many Georgian scientists, politicians and public figures were forced to leave their homeland and flee abroad. Being emigrated they have not lost the hope that Georgia would regain its independence and it would have a worthy place in the united Europe. They created many works on emigration (It should be noted that these works have not been fully studied to date, so there is still a great deal of work to be done in studying the immigrant heritage), some of which were devoted to the ideas of creating a united Europe.

Georgian scientists working in emigration made special contribution to the idea of the united Europe - Mikheil Muskhelishvili (1903-1964) and Alexander Nikuradze (1901-1981).

⁸ Author: (Baramidze, 2014).

⁹ Newspaper - (Georgia, 1903).

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Georgian emigration scholars supported the idea of the European unity and hoped that Georgia would again gain independence and become a full member of the united European family. In 1991, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Georgia gained independence.

In 1992, the European Union officially recognized Georgia's independence. That is where the rapprochement between Georgia and the EU begins. The first project launched by the European Union towards Georgia was the Technical Assistance Program under the TACIS (Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States).

The TACIS program helped Georgia develop its independence, market economy and democracy. In 1996, in Luxembourg, representatives of the EU Member States, the Presidents of the European Commission and Georgia signed the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between Georgia and the EU, which entered into force in 1999.

On April 27, 1999, Georgia became a full member of the European Council. It was an important step towards bringing Georgia closer to the European family.

In November 2006, the adoption of the EU-Georgia Action Plan (ENP AP) under the European Neighborhood Policy took the process of bringing Georgia's legislation closer to that of the EU to a qualitatively new level.

Harmonization of Legislation continued since 2007, European Neighborhood Policy Georgia-EU Action Plan (ENP AP) accordingly.

The Russian occupation of Georgia in August 2008 has accelerated the process, and has in some ways triggered positive EU response to the initiative. Accordingly, in December 2008, the European Commission was commissioned to submit proposals related to this initiative. The European Commission published the communication on Eastern Partnership on 3 December 2008, which was approved at a meeting of the European Council on 19 March 2009. Although the Eastern Partnership is "not an alternative to the prospect of EU membership, it promotes deepening of the partner countries' integration into the EU, spreading common values, enhancing security in the region and economic development through bilateral and multilateral cooperation."

Negotiations between Georgia and the EU on the Association Agreement started on July 15, 2010 and ended in July 2013.

In 2014, following the signing of the Association Agreement, the European Neighborhood Policy Action Plan (ENP AP) replaced the Association Agreement Implementation Action Plan.

The EU-Georgia Association Agreement was signed on June 27, 2014, including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA).

In December 2015, the process of ratification of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement by the EU Member States was completed.

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On July 1, 2016, the EU-Georgia Association Agreement fully entered into force.

On March 28, 2017, visa-free travel to EU / Schengen territory was officially introduced for Georgian citizens. From now on, any citizen of Georgia can travel within the EU / Schengen area visa-free for a maximum of 90 days for any 180 days.

On November 20, 2017, Georgia and the European Union approved the updated Association Agenda for 2017-2020.

Conclusion

Thus, Georgia's European orientation, which has been a major priority of the Georgian state for centuries, is undergoing an unprecedented evolution throughout the 21st century. With the initialing of the Association Agreement, a new phase of cooperation between the EU and Georgia has begun, which will deepen political, cultural and economic relations.

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