

The Role of Europe in the Identity Formation of Post-Soviet Georgia

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Disclaimer

As an author of the present dissertation, I state that this thesis represents my original work and does not contain materials published, submitted for publication, or presented for the defense by other authors without being properly referenced or cited.

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Abstract

The research relates to the undertakings of the United National Movement (UNM) government directed towards redefinition of the Georgian political identity in line with the European project within the period of 2004-2012. The project of Europe was introduced in Georgia by President Mikheil Saakashvili and the UNM government after assuming the power in 2004. The study engages to answer the question: *To what extent did the UNM government manage to revise Georgian political identity through the European project?*

The key theoretical concepts to be explored are the concepts of political identity and the European project. The study is interested in the process of identity formation. Here the key is to demonstrate the dynamics of identity change, how it has transformed over time as well as how “earlier meanings of Europe have influenced and been influenced by the Europeanization drive towards European unity”¹.

Because of the interdisciplinary character of the issue, the study utilizes the following methods: 1. A historical review and analysis of events that might have been influential for shaping identity; 2. A discourse analysis of debate(s) and discussion(s) among the political elites in 2004-2012. This second part of the research, however, solely focuses on President Saakashvili’s narrative.

The research finds that the UNM government redefined the political identity of Georgia through articulation of the national political project with the European values of liberal-democracy. Institutionalization of the European project, which targeted modification of cognitive principles, particularly semantic and normative notions, yielded new frames of the national political project. The pillars of the reimaged national project were “independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, democracy, prosperity and Europe”². The main pillar of the national political project, Christianity disappeared from the project, however it retained its centrality during the Saakashvili’s regime, as a cultural heritage of the country. Moreover, the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) was gradually dethroned from controlling cognitive principles by the UNM government through adopting laws and altering normative principles (eg. Law on registration of religious organizations, law on gender equality). And even though throughout 9 years there was obvious disagreement on the certain aspects of European values between the UNM government and the GOC, the cautious politics directed towards the Catholicos Patriarch and the church smoothed the conflict which saved the country from “the formation of an internal frontier”.

¹ Strath, B. and Af Malmberg, M (eds) (2002) *The Meaning of Europe. Variety and Contention within and Among Nations* Oxford, Berg Publishers, pp.7

² Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia: “I was planning to go to the Parliament to offer them cooperation”, (speech, 02 August 2013), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

The research further argues that the European project introduced by the Georgian government in 2004 changed in 2006 due to escalating tensions with Russia. Escalation of relations with Russia, however, contributed to strengthening a position of the European project in Georgia in spite of all odds. Hence, although the European project in Georgia experienced certain difficulties because of the UNM government's mistakes and failure to handle internal problems in line with liberal-democratic principles, the European project turned into a main logic of a state building and development of Georgia, while Europe became one of the main pillars of the national political project.

The goal of this study is to contribute to the scarce discourse on the politics of Europeanness and in particular on the project of Europe in Georgia in 2004-2012. The key is to see dynamics of the European project as a dimension of Georgia's political identity. The puzzle is how and why the project changed within the time span of 9 years and also what were intended and unintended consequences of the planned activities and campaigns within the framework of the project; but most importantly how the project of Europe affected the political identity of Georgia. By embarking on the discourse analysis of political elites in Georgia, the study introduces a field of research never before explored in the literature. The aim is to generate new knowledge on the issue opening up the field for further research agendas and questions.

აბსტრაქტი

კვლევა ეხება გაერთიანებული ნაციონალური მოძრაობის მთავრობის მიერ განხორციელებულ აქტივობებს 2004-2012 წლებში, რომელიც მიმართული იყო ევროპული პროექტის მიხედვით ქართული პოლიტიკური იდენტობის შეცვლისკენ. ევროპული პროექტი საქართველოში შემოიტანა ნაციონალურმა მოძრაობამ 2004 წელს. დისერტაციის მთავარი საკვლევია კითხვა: რამდენად შეძლო ნაციონალურმა მოძრაობამ ქართული პოლიტიკური იდენტობის შეცვლა ევროპული პროექტით?

დისერტაციის მთავარი თეორიული საკვლევია კონცეფციები არის პოლიტიკური იდენტობა და ევროპული პროექტი. კვლევას აინტერესებს იდენტობის ჩამოყალიბების პროცესი. მისი მთავარი მიზანია გამოავლინოს იდენტობის ცვლილების დინამიკა - როგორ შეიცვალა იგი დროის განმავლობაში და აგრეთვე როგორი გავლენა ჰქონდათ ერთმანეთზე ევროპენიზაციას და ევროპის უწინდელ მნიშვნელობებს.

გამომდინარე იქიდან რომ კვლევის საგანი არის ინტერდისციპლინალური გამოყენებულია შემდეგი მეთოდები: 1. ისტორიული განხილვა და ანალიზი იმ მოვლენებისა რომელსაც შესაძლებელია გავლენა ჰქონდათ იდენტობის ჩამოყალიბებაზე; 2. 2004-2012 წლებში პოლიტიკური ელიტის დისკურსის ანალიზი, ამ შემთხვევაში კვლევის მთავარი საკვლევია საგანი პრეზიდენტ სააკაშვილის ნარატივია.

კვლევამ დაადგინა რომ ნაციონალური მოძრაობის მთავრობამ შეცვალა ქართული პოლიტიკური იდენტობა ეროვნული პროექტის არტიკულაციით ევროპულ ლიბერალ დემოკრატიულ ღირებულებებზე. ევროპული პროექტის ინსტიტუციონალიზაციამ, რომელიც მიზნად ისახავდა კოგნიტური პრინციპების, განსაკუთრებით კი სემანტიკური და ნორმატიული ცნებების მოდიფიკაციას, ჩამოყალიბა ეროვნული პოლიტიკური პროექტის ახალი ჩარჩოები. სახეშეცვლილი ეროვნული პროექტის მთავარი ღერძი იყო - „დამოუკიდებლობა, სუვერენულობა, ტერიტორიული მთლიანობა, დემოკრატია, კეთილდღეობა და ევროპა“. ეროვნული პროექტის მთავარმა ღერძმა - ქრისტიანობამ შეინარჩუნა ცენტრალური მნიშვნელობა სააკაშვილის რეჟიმის დროს, როგორც ქვეყნის კულტურულმა მემკვიდრეობამ. ამასთანავე, საქართველოს მართლმადიდებელი ეკლესია ჩამოშორებული იქნა კოგნიტური პრინციპების მართვის ბერკეტებიდან ნაციონალური მოძრაობის მთავრობის მიერ ახალი კანონების მიღებით და ნორმატიული პრინციპების ცვლილებით (მაგ. კანონი რელიგიური ორგანიზაციების რეგისტრაციის შესახებ, კანონი გენდერულ თანასწორობაზე). მიუხედავად იმისა რომ 9 წლის განმავლობაში აშკარა უთანხმოება იყო სხვადასხვა კონკრეტულ საკითხებზე ნაციონალური მოძრაობის მთავრობასა და საქართველოს ეკლესიას შორის, მთავრობის ფრთხილმა პოლიტიკამ ქვეყანა გადაარჩინა შიდა ფრონტის ხაზების ჩამოყალიბებისგან.

კვლევა ასევე ამტკიცებს რომ 2004 წელს საქართველოს მთავრობის მიერ შემოტანილი ევროპის პროექტი 2006 წელს შეიცვალა რუსეთთან დაძაბულობის ესკალაციის გამო. მიუხედავად ამისა, რუსეთთან ურთიერთობის ესკალაციამ ქვეყანაში ხელი შეუწყო ევროპის პროექტის პოზიციის გამყარებას. ევროპის პროექტს საქართველოში შეხვდა გარკვეული სირთულეები, ნაციონალური მოძრაობის მთავრობის მიერ დაშვებული შეცდომებისა და ლიბერალურ-დემოკრატიული პრინციპების შესაბამისად შიდა პრობლემების მოუგვარებლობის გამო. მიუხედავად ამისა

ევროპის პროექტი გარდაიქმა სახელმწიფოს მშენებლობის და განვითარების მთავარ საფუძვლად, მაშინ როცა ევროპა გახდა ეროვნული პოლიტიკური პროექტის მთავარ ღეძათ.

კვლევის მიზანია - წვლილი შეიტანოს საქართველოში ევროპელობის პოლიტიკის დისკურსის კვლევაში 2004-2012 წლებში, გამოავლინოს ევროპული პროექტის როგორც ქართული პოლიტიკური იდენტობის ნაწილის დინამიკა, გამოავლინოს როგორ და რატომ შეიცვალა პროექტი 9 წლის განმავლობაში, რა იყო განზრახ და უნებლიე შედეგი წინასწარ დაგეგმილი ღონისძიებებისა და კამპანიებისა, რომლებიც განხორციელდა ევროპის პროექტის ფარგლებში. კვლევას აინტერესებს როგორი გავლენა მოახდინა ევროპის პროექტმა ქართულ პოლიტიკურ იდენტობაზე. კვლევის მიზანია, საქართველოში პოლიტიკური ელიტის დისკურსის ანალიზის ჩატარებით შეისწავოს ის სფერო რომელიც ჯერ არ გამოკვლეულა. კვლევა აგრეთვე მიზნად ისახავს საკვლევ საკითხზე ახალი ცოდნის გენერირებას, რაც ხელს შეუწყობს ახალი კვლევის კითხვების და გეგმების წარმოქმნას.

ძირითადი საძიებო სიტყვები: *ევროპული პროექტი, გაერთიანებული ნაციონალური მოძრაობის მთავრობა, საქართველოს მართლმადიდებელი ეკლესია, ლიბერალური დემოკრატია, საქართველო, ჰეგემონია, ანტაგონიზმი, აგონიზმი.*

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List of Abbreviations

CFSP: Common Foreign and Security Policy

EaPIC: Eastern Partnership Integration and Cooperation

EC: European Commission

ENI: European Neighbourhood Instrument

ENP: European Neighbourhood Policy

ENPI: European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument

ESDP: Common Security and Defence Policy

EU: European Union

GD: Georgian Dream

GOC: Georgian Orthodox Church

INOGATE: Interstate Oil and Gas Transport to Europe

IPAP: Individual Partnership Action Plan

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NIF: Neighbourhood Investment Facility

PCA: Partnership and Cooperation Agreement

SIGMA: Support for Improvement in Governance and Management

TACIS: The Technical Assistance to CIS

TAIEX: Technical Assistance and Information Exchange

TRACECA: Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Central Asia

UNM: United National Movement

1. Introduction

Early 2000s is characterized by the accelerating gravity of the Central and Eastern European countries towards the European Union. Similarly to Central and Eastern European countries, Georgia also contracted the EU integration fever, which means that the state government took its place in a long queue for the membership and started upgrading the policies according to the EU standards. Identity was the main target because it was of key importance for the state to convince its nation at home and 'Others' abroad that Georgia belonged to Europe. For this reason, they adopted a discourse on 'Europe' as of a place of historical dislocation and therefore a place of final destination. This was not a mere, lone- standing discourse on Europe, it was a reflection of the politics as well as political principles the United National Movement (UNM) government was about to bring in the country, which would first of all affect how Georgians define themselves politically.

The internal context for such a choice for Europe is instructive. The legacy the UNM government inherited was full of problems. The key problem was territorial conflicts in two regions, South Ossetia and Abkhazia, as well as potential threat to face similar conflicts in at least three more regions. Weak state institutions as well as political division, which kept the country in the state of turbulence was detrimental as well. And the last but not least, the existential threat had been inexorably looming since the independence, because all the territorial conflicts in Georgia were directly or indirectly utilized by Russia in order to undermine Georgia's sovereignty. Hence, the task was to come up with a project, which would have targeted all the existing problems, but also would have brought a sense of progress in the country and in the perception of Georgian people. Such project turned out to be the European project.

The Rose Revolution in 2003 marks the beginning of the politics when the roadmap to Europe was prioritized and thus hegemonized as the only available alternative for building and development of the country. It was a political decision of President Mikheil Saakashvili and the UNM government to overcome the legacy of the Soviet past and transform Georgia according to European standards and hence integrate Georgia into the European Union. To be sure this was not an easy decision for a post-Soviet country which was generally considered as backward and belonging to the sphere of influence of the Russian Federation. This was very bold but also a provocative choice between Russia and Europe, specifically between being dominated by Russia and being in charge of its own fate. This was a political decision which triggered number of different intended and unintended processes in the country.

To be clear this project was not a new initiative, in fact the road-map for Europe has always been available among other alternatives in Georgian history. However, it was the first time when the European project gained such an importance as well as influence due to UNM government's pro-European bias. This was a timely move because it largely reflected the demand of people to become a member of the European Union.

The introduction of European values of democracy and liberalism, however, was not without challenges in the country which did not have the history of such. It literally meant that the ideological structure of the post-soviet country, dominated by the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) and plagued by the Soviet legacy, was about to be revisited, renegotiated and restructured through political means, which obviously was not a task without challenges and threats. Implementation of the project envisaged cohesion to the European standard, but also close cooperation with the Kremlin and the patriarch in order to ensure smooth integration into the European institutions and consistence in Europeanization process. On the one hand the president had to engage the Patriarch Ilia II and the GOC in the European project to increase credibility and thus support within conservative orthodox groups towards the project, on the other the UNM had to persuade the Kremlin to stay away from meddling into Georgian internal affairs in addition to transforming it into a constructive partner of joint endeavors.

Although the idea for a project was not new, the content, objectives, instruments to implement it and in particular its articulation with the national project represented a new interpretation of European Georgia. The project was very dynamic, open-ended and multidimensional. Even though there were some plans for European integration, they were very general, hence the project seemed spontaneous, as it was being created gradually while being implemented. Project, nevertheless, had its actors and arguably more or less defined politics to deal with various political issues. In the project alignment President Saakashvili and the UNM government were architects of the Europeanization process, who were constituting and revising a story about European Georgia, while the EU along with the US and other international organizations were financial and ideological inspirators and supporters of the European project and hence main internal players. In contrast Russia was allocated a role of an external strategic partner with limited access to internal politics. Whereas the patriarch and the GOC were treated as agonistic internal actors, who were continuously engaged with. But with the time and progress in implementation the project and the actors were affected, which consequently impacted on the cognitive structures and hence people's political self-identification. Therefore the puzzle is: *To what extent did the president with the UNM government manage to revise Georgian political identity through continued hegemony of the European project?*

The research finds that 1. by foreclosing political channels for alternative projects as well as legitimate and illegitimate dissent President Saakashvili with the UNM government ensured continued hegemony of the European project as a sole roadmap for development of Georgia at national level in 2004-2012, which entrenched Europe in the country once and for all. 2. By doing so the president managed to revise the national political project by adding Europe and democracy to it, in parallel to removing and redefining ontology of Christianity within national context. 3. Within this context he reconstituted ontological structure thoroughly

through creating whole new story about Europeaness of Georgia, but also through imbuing national symbols with European features. 4. Whereas normative principles were targeted selectively, particularly democratic reforms, which played a negative role in the process of Europeanization of Georgia. But because the Europeanization process was contingent, even peaceful plans and the positive changes in one objective, specifically in institutional building, had negative impact on another objective of the project, in particular on the relations with Russia. 5. The research believes that the mixture of inclusion and exclusion politics towards the Kremlin collapsed in 2008 due to miscalculations and mistakes resulting into transformation of Russia into the primary antagonist – “Other” - of the country and the project. 6. While a state driven agonistic politics towards the church was successful, as the president managed to keep the patriarch and the GOC involved in the European project, which saw Christianity reimagined as a cultural heritage of Georgian state.

Research Design and Relevance of the Study and Method

The focus of the research is a “political identity as political self-understanding” that is defined as a multidimensional political project. The research intends to generate frames and picture of the political identity of Georgia in 2004-2012. For this end the research uncovers ontological and normative notions introduced and institutionalized by President Saakashvili within the framework of the European project. The aim is to reveal what aspects of a political identity of Georgia was affected by Europeanization drive. The target of analysis is all three dimensions of discourse, specifically oral and written narrative as well as activities undertaken by the UNM government. Hence to measure the impact of the European project on the political identity of Georgia, the research will scrutinize infiltration and presence of Europe into 1. President Mikheil Saakashvili’s public political narrative exclusively, because he was a powerful leader of a hegemonic order in Georgia in 2004-2012, thus his discourse is deemed sufficient for the research; 2. The official documents that shape the policy in the country; 3. “the actual behavior” of President Saakashvili and the UNM government who were involved in “interpreting and implementing the content of those documents”; 4. The national political project of Georgia.

The material for political narrative has been extracted from the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library. The library maintains electronic archives of the speeches delivered by President Saakashvili. At the moment it keeps 464 speeches for the period of 2004-2013. Within the framework of this paper all 464 speeches by President Saakashvili are analyzed. Relevant parts of the speeches were located by typing in a search engine key words such as “Europe”, “EU”, “integration”, church, patriarch, Ilia II, “Russia”, “Kremlin”, “Moscow”. This material gives the substance not only on the inclusion-exclusion politics of the European project but also on the nature of the political, which is defined as an antagonism in the paper.

The research period is 2004-2012. President Saakashvili and the UNM government assumed the office in 2004. In autumn 2012 the UNM government was replaced by the Georgian Dream, but President Saakashvili remained in the office until autumn 2013. Because his narrative is reflection of the government's politics from 2004-2012 his speeches as the president of Georgia from 2013 will be relevant for the research. Even though his power was considerably reduced, President Saakashvili remained one of the most influential figure in Georgia until the end of his presidency in 2013. He unabatedly continued his line of politics by crowding national and international platforms, while the Georgian Dream's actions seemed to be reactions to what the president did or said. The research choice was determined by the fact that the UNM government is the first since the independence of the country, which openly supported the European future of the country and therefore proclaimed as its main goal to "return to European family", to the roots Georgia was long separated. President Saakashvili with his government was the first who institutionalized the European project in Georgia as a sole road map for development of the country.

In the first unit of the paper the study elaborates a theoretical framework, which provides explanatory tools to decipher the European project driven by the UNM government as an agenda and logic of state building and development. The research draws on the discourse theory by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe³ in order to explain how a discourse about European Georgia was created and implemented, and most importantly how the roles within newly constituted national political project were allocated through practicing radical pro-European politics. Out of array of the concepts the study defines the concepts of discourse and articulation, hegemony, politics, the political and agonism. Concept of discourse and articulation clarifies the process of constitution of European Georgia, while concept of hegemony explains the UNM driven radical European politics which focused on an exclusion and inclusion of certain "elements". Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe claim that constitution of political space, within which a national identity is continuously being created, envisages exclusion of antagonists, of those elements which sabotage a political order⁴. Whereas some elements, different in their composition but benign in their nature, are agonistically included to ensure some type of universality of a political space. Along these lines the research claims that the UNM ended up declaring Russia along with corruption and other malicious practices as a culprit for the state-driven European project even though an initial plan was different, while the Georgian Orthodox Church was treated as an agonistic legitimate player which should be engaged with. Although there is almost a conventional assumption that discourse analysis solely cannot measure an identity change, as other methods are needed to draw a comprehensive picture, Laclau is convinced in opposite. He believes that analysis of the political discourse is

³ Laclau, E. and Mouffe, C. (2014) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London: Verso.

⁴ Ibid.

enough to track the process and determine an impact, because political elite as a rule always act and explain the rationale behind their politics, which is directed towards constitution of “objectivity” of a given community⁵.

Second unit of the research outlines the frames of the national political project constructed throughout the history from the period of “Tegdaleulebi” and on. Historical overview, first of all, helps uncover sedimented political aspects which had played the role in structuring the political identity of Georgia. By exhuming the history the research intends to reveal rationale behind the political preferences before independence and later. Secondly, through historical exploration the study outlines the structure and the pillars of the national political project, all or some of which President Saakashvili articulated to the European project and by doing so redefined the project and thus Georgian identity. Thirdly, description and analysis of the national project is meant to help measure degree of permeation of Europe in Georgia as well as “contamination” of the Georgian political identity in 2004-2012 through comparison of the initial national project with the UNM-driven project.

Third unit of the research defines the European project. Different research papers refer to the UNM-driven hegemonic project differently, some of them call it - modernization project, some - revolutionary project, hence the paper explains why the project was European. Moreover, the paper maps the patterns of the European project with the aim to show what the project of Europe is, how it was started and how it was sustained for nine years, what are the mechanisms of implementation, dimensions, instruments etc. The research believes that the European project was introduced as a guidebook for the Georgian state and people to redefine themselves and constitute their “we” with regards to rest of the world.

The European project, defined in the paper as a discourse, an ideological, political programme, a mobilizing political instrument, “as a carrier of certain values in national public life”, was invoked⁶ by the UNM political elite – hegemony - for certain political ends. The project aimed to 1. institute liberal democratic values and principles in the country, which did not have a history of democratic development; and 2. establish “a stateness, meaning efficient governance institutions, full control over the state’s territory and good neighborly relations with other states in the region”⁷. Through implementation of the project objectives the UNM was gradually and piecemeal institutionalizing Europe in the country. Respectively the research zeroes in on the processes and elements of hegemonization of the European project and its impact on the political

⁵ Laclau, E. (2007) *On Populist Reason*. London: Verso.

⁶ Strath, B. and Malmberg, M (eds) (2002) *The Meaning of Europe. Variety and Contention within and Among Nations*, Oxford, Berg Publishers pp.4-9.

⁷ Keil, S. (2013) ‘Europeanization, state-building and democratization in the Western Balkans’. *Nationalities Papers*, 41:3. pp. 343-353.

identity. For this purpose in the fourth unit of the paper the study sums up democratic and institutional reforms and initiatives implemented in 2004-2012 and criticism leveled against the president and the UNM government.

The UNM government was praised for successful implementation of institutional reforms, but was continuously criticized for weakening or/and limiting access to channels of participation for opponents and in particular for non-parliamentary opposition in liberal democratic institutions. The main question is whether political opponents' dissent was related to differential interpretation and implementation of the state-driven European project. Moreover, it is important to see whether there was a consensus among political elite at national level about the European project and institutions which guarantee liberal democracy. To answer this question the paper looks into news articles, reports released by international organizations and scientific papers from the period of 2004-2012. The primary interest is to see 1. Opponents' demands in order to check whether they could have been included in a "conflictual consensus" of the hegemonic project; 2. Their involvement with the UNM government, as of legitimate executors of "power acts"; 3. The UNM reactions to opponents' demands while implementing its project for state building and democratic development.

The analysis of the UNM driven reforms and internal political contestation maps two dimensions of discourse, which are activities and behavior of political elite who is a legitimate executor of "power acts". The third dimension scrutinizes public political narrative of President Saakashvili. This should reveal what aspects of a national political identity of Georgia was affected by Europeanization drive. The aim of the study is to outline pillars of Georgia's political identity delineated by the Georgian government and then determine degree of impact of Europe on ontological and normative notions of the national political project.

In the fifth unit the paper explores the role attributed to Russia in the European project. The research zeros in on relations with Russia and a territorial integrity of Georgia – two tightly interlinked issues - which has been a key challenge for Georgian authorities since independence. The paper scrutinizes the politics of Europeanness, in particular the UNM government's politics of inclusion and exclusion that focused on reinvention of Russia's role and image. While analyzing the image of Russia, the study divides 9 years of the UNM term into two parts: 1. the period from 2004 to 2006 is marked by the politics of inclusion and exclusion when the relations between Russia and Georgia were relatively calm with some occasional tensions but without an open confrontation; while 2. the period from 2006 to 2012 is distinguished by radical exclusion of Russia and by high degree of tension between countries that culminated in the war in August 2008. The division of Saakashvili's presidency into two periods is important to see the patterns of change of the image of Russia over nine years. This will also show whether a new image of Georgia's "we" was created in opposition to Russia within the framework of European project.

Sixth unit covers the government's politics towards the Georgian Orthodox Church. In Georgia the president and government are not uncontested players behind the politics of identity, even though Saakashvili and the UNM were the sole penholders and drive behind the project of Europe. Catholicos Patriarch of all Georgia Ilia II and the GOC are active in structuring the life of its parish through epistles and preaching. When faced with the state-driven project the patriarch did not shy away from being engaged into it. Hence the paper examines the politics of the Georgian government directed towards engagement of the Georgian Orthodox Church in an implementation of the European project in 2004-2012. The study scrutinizes existing literature in order to compare identity politics led by both the president and Catholicos Patriarch. This shows the patterns of relations - divergence and/or agreement - between them with regards to certain parts of the European project. The paper intends "to measure the degree of consensus and main cleavages"⁸ by analyzing President Saakashvili's and Catholicos Patriarch's public political discourse on values of liberal democracy. It is particularly important to see how two main figures and institutions in the country, both of them influential, managed to stay united over Europe, while experiencing major disagreements on the values of human rights and rule of law.

Catholicos Patriarch's speeches were selected randomly according to relevance. The research is limited to the study of the relations between President Saakashvili and Catholicos Patriarch, which were strong leaders of their respective institutions. It is important to acknowledge that there might have been aggravated antagonistic relations between certain archbishops and members of the government, but their statements are not considered relevant for the study, because it is impossible to measure: 1. behind-the-door tensions; and 2. their influence on their respective leaders' and institutions' decisions. Against most of the studies which depict two parallel identity projects ran separately by President Saakashvili and Catholicos Patriarch, this research claims that there was a single state-driven identity project - the project of Europe - in 2004-2012. And Catholicos Patriarch was actively participating in implementation and revision of the state-driven political project.

Even though there is large number of papers focusing on the Saakashvili's and the UNM government and its reforms, some very critical questioning whether the UNM and the president's behavior was genuinely "European", some rather positive praising President Saakashvili for upgrading certain sectors in the country to European standard through the institutional reforms. While these researches are relevant for the dissertation, the objective of this study is not either to validate or refute the existing research outcomes. The research intends to measure impact and the dynamics of the UNM-driven European project on the identity and hence

⁸ Medrano, J.D. (2009) 'The Public Sphere and the European Union's Political Identity' in Checkel, J.T. & Katzenstein, P.J. (eds), *European Identity*, New York, Cambridge University Press. pp.92.

draft the image of the political identity in 2004-2012 in Georgia. Because little has been done to research the European project from this perspective, hence this is the gap this paper seeks to fill in by mapping the research findings in the concluding part of the study.

1. Discourse Theory by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe

The UNM government's engagement with the project of Europe can be best explained by the concepts of articulation, discourse and hegemony from Ernesto Laclau's and Chantal Mouffe's Discourse theory⁹. These concepts have explanatory features for a political project which was driven by the Georgian political elite – hegemon - in 2004-2012 with the aim to change an objective reality in the country. The discourse theory as a theory of creation and fixation of meaning helps lay out the entire European project, define roles of its actors and decipher the UNM driven radical politics, more specifically radical articulation of European discourse, which resulted into hegemonization of the European project and consequent exclusion of other projects. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, who are convinced that a story projection requires almost nothing but a charismatic and strong leader bold enough to initiate radical politics in parallel to closing a political space partially¹⁰, can most logically and argumentatively explain how President Saakashvili overcame the main problem – an absence of a story about European Georgia due to limited relations with Europe throughout the history – through creating completely new discourse about Europeanness of Georgia. The theory has all important tools to measure the impact of the discourse on the political identity of Georgia in 2004-2012.

Hegemony: When a Project Turns into a State

2004 marks the beginning of hegemony of the European project in Georgia, in a sense put forward by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe¹¹. Right after coming to power President Saakashvili institutionalized the project of Europe as a primary plan to bring the country back to the place of historical dislocation, to Europe. As a consequence the EU integration was taken high on the agenda by upgrading it from a foreign policy initiative to the logic of a state building and development, which gradually evolved into the European project. Considering that the foundation of the previous regime was corrupted, a new hegemonic order driven by President Saakashvili was projected to be a complete opposite of an existing order.

“Construction of an alternative hegemony”¹², and in particular of European hegemony, is a very complex and daunting task in general and especially for a country which does not have an experience in practicing liberal democracy. The primary challenge was not only absence of such experience but also failing state institutions which are responsible for ensuring liberal democracy. Thus, President Saakashvili and the UNM government as the legitimate executors of “power acts”, according to most of the critics, had to build state institution in

⁹ Laclau, E. and Mouffe, C. (2014) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London: Verso.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Mouffe, C. (2013) *Agonistics: Thinking World Politically*. London: Verso. pp. 14.

parallel to practicing liberal democracy as an “objectivity”, as a natural part of Georgian reality. But there is still another parallel political struggle the president with his government had to face, which is a direct and indirect confrontation for an establishment of a new “objectivity” at domestic level through which Europe had to become a pillar and an “endogenous” dimension of Georgian state and nation. For this president had to partially close a political space for alternative projects or/and political groups in order to eliminate threats or obstacles for cultivation of Europe and its values in the country.

In Georgia introduction of a new political agenda envisaged “political conflict” with an existing regime - hegemony - and its sympathizers. This was connected with institutionalization of Europe as a sole roadmap for development by the UNM which led the way towards “the naturalisation of one single perspective” that aimed at suppression of “alternative understandings of the world”¹³. The UNM was not unique in doing this. Mouffe claims that “any political order is the expression of a hegemony, of a specific pattern of power relations”¹⁴, hence political conflict is mainly between two hegemonic projects, between well-entrenched old project and a new or emerging contingent plan to rule a country. And because every “hegemonic formation implies a phenomenon of frontiers”, as Laclau & Chantal insists, a confrontation is inevitable because it has to exclude principles of previous order¹⁵. A conflict is particularly fierce when a foundation of an existing project is thoroughly rejected by a new project. Chantal Mouffe outlines the most common description of processes a political order is entangled in while implementing its agenda. She claims that:

“Every order is predicated on the exclusion of other possibilities. Any order is always the expression of a particular configuration of power relations. What is at a given moment accepted as the ‘natural’ order, jointly with the common sense that accompanies it, is the result of sedimented hegemonic practices. It is never the manifestation of a deeper objectivity that is exterior to the practices that brought it into being. Every order is therefore susceptible to being challenged by counter-hegemonic practices that attempt to disarticulate it in an effort to install another form of hegemony”¹⁶.

Therefore even after assuming power a political regime is involved in a never-ending struggle for institutionalization of a particular order because it feels constantly threatened by an alternative political projects which try to accumulate its strength with the aim to dethrone an existing order. To avoid such scenario every order launches “hegemonic interventions”, as Jørgensen et al claims, through practicing

¹³ Jørgensen, M.W. and Phillips, L.J. (2002) *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. SAGE Publications LTD. pp. 37.

¹⁴ Mouffe, C. (2009) *The Democratic Paradox*. London. Verso. pp. 99.

¹⁵ Laclau, E. and Mouffe, C. (2014) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London: Verso. pp.123.

¹⁶ Mouffe, C. (2013) *Agonistics: Thinking World Politically*. London: Verso. pp. 2.

politics¹⁷. Since “hegemony is [...] a political *type of relation, a form, of politics*”¹⁸, interventions mainly comprises of policies, actions and initiatives “by which some fixations of meaning become so conventionalised that we think of them as natural”¹⁹. For political actors in charge of hegemony it is important to glue together “disparate elements into wider political project” and initiate the processes through which a putative hegemonic project “becomes a state”²⁰. The mission of such interventions is to achieve a consensus over a political order and by doing so transform a hegemonic project as “objectivity”- a natural context – of a given community. Therefore “subject positions that are not in visible conflict with other positions are the outcome of hegemonic processes, whereby alternative possibilities have been excluded and a particular discourse has been naturalized”²¹. Main distinguishing feature of Laclau & Mouffe’s hegemony is that a hegemonic project does not need to be founded on historical and conventional elements of a country²² or/and rooted interest of all, as it is power that constitutes “objectivity”. In other words it doesn’t have to emerge from within a community, it can be a completely new project grounded on principles and values unknown to people it targets. But to mobilize people around a project in order to make it politically viable a charismatic strong leader is a must category for establishing hegemony. Ordinarily such leader is good at stirring emotions and in particular admiration among people, which is a main capital for him to push through a hegemonic project. Moreover such leader has a good understanding of an “undecidability” – “contingency” - of a political field where even a good plan with a sound foundation does not guarantee continued hegemony of a political order²³. That is reason he/she is expected to continuously refine and readapt its project according to an unfolding situation never forgetting about certain international standards while taking actions.

Mikheil Saakashvili met almost all criteria of a leader of a hegemonic order especially in the first years of his presidency. Through mixture of charisma and radical politics he created an engaging story about European Georgia and exploited wide variety of state machinery to “naturalize” it. The state-driven European project targeted cultivation of principles of liberal democracy in Georgia. Hence his presidency was evaluated against

¹⁷ Jørgensen, M.W. and Phillips, L.J. (2002) *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. SAGE Publications LTD. pp. 37.

¹⁸ Laclau, E. and Mouffe, C. (2014) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London: Verso. pp.125.

¹⁹ Jørgensen, M.W. and Phillips, L.J. (2002) *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. SAGE Publications LTD. pp. 26.

²⁰ Howarth, D. (2005) ‘Gramsci, Hegemony and Post-Marxism’ in McNally, M (ed.), *Antonio Gramsci: Critical Explorations in Contemporary Political Thought*. Palgrave Macmillan. pp. 202.

²¹ Jørgensen, M.W. and Phillips, L.J. (2002) *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method*. SAGE Publications LTD. pp. 41.

²² Laclau, E. and Mouffe, C. (2014) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London: Verso.

²³ Ibid.

standards and norms of liberal democracy. Therefore to analyze Saakashvili's hegemonic order it is essential to see how a hegemony operates within the context of liberal democracy.

According to Mouffe in liberal democratic regimes plurality of alternatives for interpretation and implementation of "the shared ethico-political principles are not only legitimate but also necessary"²⁴. Pluralism from its side entails conflict between competing alternatives – opponents who recognize each other as legitimate players in making of politics and decisions. Such opponents share "a common allegiance to the democratic principles of 'liberty and equality for all', while disagreeing about their interpretation"²⁵. In such situation human rights is still the point of reference "but on the condition that they are reformulated in a way that permits a pluralism of interpretation"²⁶. The same goes with social justice, disagreement about its implementation is unavoidable consequence of democratic pluralism. Nevertheless, pluralism is limited to certain degree, in a sense that in democracy a political space is partially closed. This is because liberal democratic order cannot accept discrimination on sexual or/and gender basis at political level, such practices are threat to the principles themselves. Respectively principles and practices containing certain threat to liberal democracy are excluded from a political space.

For Mouffe there no such thing as all-inclusive political space or "rational consensus" over values and principles. She believes that every consensus envisages "a dimension of coercion" and exclusion. Mouffe claims that "consensus exists as a temporary result of a provisional hegemony, as a stabilization of power, and that it always entails some form of exclusion"²⁷, as it is impossible to completely absorb multiplicity of "hegemonic blocks" and demands. Hence Mouffe advises to "relinquish the idea" of all "encompassing moral and political unit" and instead accept a "conflictual consensus" nurtured through divergent interpretation of shared-political principles²⁸. Mouffe asks a legitimate question: "are there demands that need to be excluded because they cannot the part of the conflictual consensus that provides the symbolic space in which the opponents recognize themselves as legitimate adversaries?"²⁹. The answer is yes. Even though she does not elaborate on the kind of demands which should not be part of "conflictual consensus", it should be assumed that such demands are the ones that at least reject or infringe on state and its institutions of liberal democracy, including democratically elected government.

²⁴ Mouffe, C. (2013) *Agonistics: Thinking World Politically*. London: Verso. pp.8.

²⁵ Ibid, pp. 8.

²⁶ Ibid, pp.30.

²⁷ Mouffe, C. (2009) *The Democratic Paradox*. London. Verso. pp. 104.

²⁸ Mouffe, C. (2013) *Agonistics: Thinking World Politically*. London: Verso. pp.23.

²⁹ Ibid, pp. 13-14.

In Georgia, the hegemonization of the European project is measured not only by the success or failure of liberal-democratic reforms but also in terms of state- and institution-building reforms and public acceptance of the project. Hence, this paper will scrutinize the UNM-driven activities and reforms targeting state-building and democracy in Georgia, specifically in relation to the media, civil society, elections, political opponents, and political parties. These five institutions are listed as “indicators of achievements” in the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), making their implementation one of the main goals of the ENP Action Plan in Georgia. By focusing on these institutions, the study intends to determine which political channels were open/closed, to what degree, and why. Public opinion polls will be used to shed light on public support for—and the persistence of—the European project in the context of various challenges.

Articulation and Discourse

Laclau & Mouffe claim a story projection starts when a charismatic leader begins “articulation” of different elements with each other³⁰. Along the lines of this theory a story about Europeaness of Georgia was invigorated by President Saakashvili by articulating Europe with Georgia at political level which resulted in a structuration and institutionalization of European discourse in the country. Ernesto Laclau claims that “articulation [is] any practice” which establishes “a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of articulatory practice”³¹. Articulation is not, therefore, a benign undertaking. Reiterative articulation and interaction between different elements yields a “discursive formation”³², which tries to create a reflective objective reality through initiation of “political processes and struggles” and subsequent sedimentation of discourse.

Therefore “the structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice [is] discourse”³³. Ernesto Laclau believes that “discourse is the primary terrain of the constitution of objectivity as such”³⁴ because it is through discourse a political elite “articulate” number of different elements with each other in order to imagine a political community and create its myth/story, which is presented as an objective reality and a reference point for a political action. “By discourse [is not meant] something that is essentially restricted to the areas of speech and writing, but any complex of elements in which relations play the constitutive role”³⁵. To clarify the term even further, Laclau claims that discourse is “the ensemble of the rules, plus those actions which

³⁰ Laclau, E. and Mouffe, C. (2014) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London: Verso.

³¹ Ibid pp. 99.

³² Laclau, E (2000) ‘Constructing Universality’ in J. Butler, E. Laclau and S. Zizek, *Universality Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*, London: Verso. pp. 284.

³³ Ibid pp. 99.

³⁴ Laclau, E. (2007) *On Populist Reason*. London: Verso. pp. 68.

³⁵ Ibid pp. 68.

implement/distort/subvert them”³⁶. This makes discourse a multidimensional structure, because it covers three different aspects of communication, such as speech, writing and behavior of political elite. It seems these three are tied together and should complement each other in an ideal type of communication. In targeted effort three aspects of discourse should connect unconnected or/and even unrelated elements with each other and establish relation between them through revising meanings and features of given elements in order to build an image of harmonious structure. “This means that elements do not pre-exist the relational complex but are constituted through it”³⁷ as Laclau claims.

The target of political elite’s discourse in general and in the case of the UNM government was a political identity as a political self-understanding, which is a political project driven by a political elite. Similar to discourse the concept of political self-understanding is multidimensional, because, as Medrano claims, “there is the political self-understanding reflected in the documents that shape a policy (e.g. treaties, laws, decrees). There is also the political self-understanding reflected in the actual behavior of those interpreting and implementing the content of those documents. Finally, there is the political self-understanding that transpires in the public discourse”³⁸. Thus, in order to generate an image of a political identity of Georgia reinvented by President Saakashvili and the UNM government, all three aspects of discourse will be analyzed in the research.

Through discourse political elite target cognitive principles embedded within political self-understanding which is constituted through institutions, principles, norms, rules and symbols that are widely shared by a political community and that respectively determine behavior, choice, assumptions of political community. Hence in order to modify political identity discourse rearticulates and impacts on ontological and normative notions, which together form cognitive principles³⁹. Ontological notions, in this case, “define the essential characteristics of objects, activities and agents”⁴⁰ as well as symbols within country. Moreover ontological principles charge a country with semantic structure, which signify its role within its territories and in relation to the world. While normative notions “articulate the desirability of certain situations that can in principle occur repeatedly over time and across space. They represent shared views of the way the world should be, rather than how it is”, they stipulate appropriateness of “certain situations”⁴¹. Moreover normative principles

³⁶ Laclau, E (2000) ‘Constructing Universality’ in J. Butler, E. Laclau and S. Zizek, *Universality Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*, London: Verso. pp. 284.

³⁷ Laclau, E. (2007) *On Populist Reason*. London: Verso. pp. 68

³⁸ Medrano, J.D. (2009) ‘The Public Sphere and the European Union’s Political Identity’ in Checkel, J.T. & Katzenstein, P.J. (eds), *European Identity*, New York, Cambridge University Press. pp. 81-82.

³⁹ Duina, F (2004) ‘Regional market building as a social process: an analysis of cognitive strategies in NAFTA, the European Union and Mercosur’, *Economy and Society*, Volume 33 Number 3: 359 – 389.

⁴⁰ Ibid pp. 360.

⁴¹ Ibid pp. 360 .

regulate and hence ensures compliance through imposition of certain regulatory and legislative barriers in order to ensure justice and protection of state and citizens' rights and interests.

Politics and the Political

The project of Europe is connected with multi-dimensional and complex process of Europeanization "by which domestic actors and institutions adapt to the institutional framework and logic of the EU"⁴². Europeanization is a synonym to a change, which "is the consequence of intention, i.e. of a purposive action"⁴³ driven and architected by a political elite at national level. Interest of national political elite is even more crucial when the most powerful incentive to comply - membership perspective, and conditionality related to it, are off the table, as it was in the case of Georgia. Change is achieved through diffusion and subsequent institutionalization of norms, values, principles and beliefs within a political, economic and social system⁴⁴ of "an adopter" country. The EU is the source of such informal and formal practices, "which are first defined and consolidated in the EU policy" and then diffused and "incorporated in the logic of domestic (national and subnational) discourse, political structures and public choices"⁴⁵.

An adopter country's decision to Europeanize entails "motives and consequently a choice between various alternatives"⁴⁶, which is informed by pragmatic calculations. By 2003 the Georgian government did not have other choices but that between Europe and Russia, even though such dichotomy between two projects was deliberately avoided not to instigate geopolitical antagonism. In fact the project of Europe excludes geopolitical aspect due to the EU's reluctance to act as a *political hub* for Georgia and South Caucasian region in a whole. But because the ENP was invented as "an anchor of reform" in the neighborhood, when there is a decision to institutionalize the European project as a roadmap for development, it is not a benign statement of fact, it is a political act which aims at "the establishment of frontiers, the determination of a space of inclusion/exclusion"⁴⁷. This is the moment of decision when a line between "reasonable" and "unreasonable" is drawn. "Reasonable" and "rational" is constructed by a political act as "the common sense" in a community, while "unreasonable" is excluded as an opposite to a "language game" of "reasonable"⁴⁸. For the project of

⁴² Poguntke, T., Aylott N., Ladrech, R. & Luther, K.R. (2007) 'The Europeanization of National Party Organizations: A Conceptual Analysis' *European Journal of Political Research*, pp 747.

⁴³ Merton, R. K. (1936) 'The Unanticipated Consequences of Purposive Social Action'. *American Sociological Review*, 1:6, pp 895.

⁴⁴ Radeili, C. M. (2006) 'Europeanization: Solution or Problem?' In Cini, M. and Bourne, A., *Palgrave Advances in European Union Studies*, Basingstoke, Palgrave. pp 30.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Merton, R. K. (1936) 'The Unanticipated Consequences of Purposive Social Action'. *American Sociological Review*, 1:6, pp 895.

⁴⁷ Ibid pp.14.

⁴⁸ Mouffe, C. (2005) *The Return of the Political*. London. Verso. pp. 143.

Europe reasonable objective reality is constructed on functioning state and institutions which are consolidated around liberal democratic rules of the game, therefore everything that disrupts such reality is excluded as a constitutive outside.

Given the fact that European and Russian projects are founded on alternative objective realities, on alternative “language games”, the gap between value-systems is huge. Hence transformation from post-soviet institutional setting to European standard should entail radical reformatory processes. In radical politics, similar to the one practiced by the Georgian government which aims at “profound transformation of power relations”, the division between *included* and *excluded* starts from a political decision to challenge “the dominant hegemony” with the purpose to transform “existing relations of power” and construct “an alternative hegemony”⁴⁹. This cannot be done without drawing political frontiers and defining adversary or even an “enemy”⁵⁰. For radical politics “enemy” is an “existing relations of power” with its value system which should be replaced through exclusion. Exclusion is an indivisible part of “the political”, because a decision to institute certain norms and principle eliminates an array of hostile values and norms which sabotage a new political order.

Therefore “‘the political’ refers to this dimension of antagonism which can take many forms and can emerge in diverse social relations. It is a dimension that can never be eradicated”⁵¹. This means that “antagonism is an ever present possibility” for a political decision⁵². It is through politics an antagonistic situation – the political - is smoothened. Due to an ineradicable character of the political, the main goal of politics which “always has to do with conflicts and antagonisms”⁵³, is “to domesticate the political, to keep at bay the forces of destruction and to establish order”⁵⁴. For “politics” main instruments to fulfill its functions are “the ensemble of practices, discourses and institutions”. But politics cannot be regarded as a remedy for an exclusion, as Chantal Mouffe claims, in the field of politics “the search for a consensus without exclusion and the hope for perfectly reconciled and harmonious society have to be abandoned”⁵⁵.

Politics can ease a conflicting situation by transforming antagonistic into an agonistic relation, where disagreement between parties leads to peaceful co-existence due to respect and understanding that both sides have legitimate right to exist. Politics is an “endless conversation” with ‘Other’ and efforts to build

⁴⁹ Mouffe, C. (2013) *Agonistics: Thinking World Politically*. London: Verso. pp.14.

⁵⁰ Mouffe, C (2009) *The Democratic Paradox*. London. Verso, pp.121.

⁵¹ Mouffe, C. (2013) *Agonistics: Thinking World Politically*. London: Verso. pp.2.

⁵² *Ibid* pp. XI.

⁵³ Mouffe, C. (2005) *The Return of the Political*. London. Verso. pp. 141.

⁵⁴ *Ibid*.

⁵⁵ Mouffe, C. (2013) *Agonistics: Thinking World Politically*. London: Verso. pp. XI.

alliances with them. However, there are some limits to an impact and workings of politics in this regard. Politics is powerless when an existence of 'they' category is viewed as a threat by 'we'. Irreconcilable differences in terms of political principles, values and institutions are very likely to stir such feelings between 'they' and 'we'. Politics cannot and should not cover every value and principle, cannot extend indefinitely, it should define a nature of a political order through establishing its limits. Politics seems to be most effective when "liberty and equality for all" is a common guiding principle for opponents, however there is a disagreement about their interpretation and implementation⁵⁶ at political level. In this case politics can smoothen disagreement through identifying the most suitable interpretation of the principles of liberty and equality for a given community.

Moreover, the role of politics is to define a guidebook of principles and values which will be a manual for 'we' in a new objective reality. Based on such manual collective identities 'we' are constructed⁵⁷. But the constitution of a 'we' "requires as its very condition of possibilities the demarcation of a 'they'"⁵⁸, demarcation of those values which are complete opposite of 'my' principles and norms, which paves the way for 'we' to be created in opposition to 'them'. In parallel this process of 'we' construction entails building of consensus around those "rules and practices" which 'we' as a community have to share if 'we' are to coexist⁵⁹. 'We' is not simply about respect but mostly importantly about an agreement on "common struggle, since our most pressing problem today are problems we have in common"⁶⁰.

Consensus on common struggle or any other issues within community always entails exclusion, because constitution of 'we' is a "power act" and thus a political issue. Exclusion, in its turn, results in formation of 'they', which is a "constitutive outside" of a 'we' community. This exterior layer governs constitution of 'we' because it hinders final suture of a community⁶¹. Therefore 'they' phenomenon is a culprit, antagonist, limit of 'we'. 'We' "society never manages fully to be society, because everything in it penetrated by its limits, which prevents it from constituting itself as an objective reality", as a harmonious totality⁶². And "this "experience" of the limit of all objectivity does have a form of precise discursive presence, and this is

⁵⁶ Mouffe, C (2009) *The Democratic Paradox*. London. Verso, pp.113.

⁵⁷ Mouffe, C. (2005) *The Return of the Political*. London. Verso. pp. 141.

⁵⁸ Mouffe, C. (2013) *Agonistics: Thinking World Politically*. London: Verso. pp. 5.

⁵⁹ Žižek, S (2012) *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously*. London. Verso. pp. 45.

⁶⁰ Ibid pp.46.

⁶¹ Mouffe, C. (2005) *The Return of the Political*. London. Verso. pp. 141.

⁶² Laclau, E. and Mouffe, C. (2014) *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy. Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London: Verso. pp. 113.

*antagonism*⁶³. “Antagonism as the negation of a given order is, quite simply, the limit of that order”⁶⁴. Because of an antagonism ‘we’ as a community are prevented to “be a full presence for” ‘ourselves’⁶⁵. It functions as a disruption of ‘we’ through situating “itself within the limits” of it. While politics attempts to fix what antagonism tries to subvert, “antagonistic dimension is always present, since what is at stake is the struggle between opposing hegemonic projects which can never be reconciled rationally, one of them needing to be defeated”⁶⁶. Therefore, this is all about power relation, in particular about winning a trophy to institute a new order through revising old sedimented rules and standards and thus construct political identity according to new political principles of an association.

Agonism

The Georgian case of state-church relations is in a way unique because researchers struggle “to apply any of the three dominant perspectives of the sociology of religion”⁶⁷ which are secularization theory, religious market model and religious individualization. It turned out to be difficult to theoretically explain two parallel, simultaneous and at the same time contradictory trends in the country: a strong public presence as well as an increasing popularity of the Georgia Orthodox Church (GOC) on the one hand and on the other progress of a state driven secularization project in the country. According to conventional knowledge the state-driven project of Europe should have led to allocation of religion, as a realm of morality, to a private domain, because the project is founded on liberal democratic principles. One very important feature which was overlooked in the discussions is the EU’s sensitivity towards country-specific culture, its openness to diversity and constant urge for a consensus in the context of multiplicity of opinions and conflict over interpretation of its values. This is the feature which opened the door and ensured integration of the GOC in the European project, but also pressured on the UNM government to seek consensus over contradictory issues with the church in order to avoid antagonism – friend-enemy regroupings - towards the project in the country. Implementation of the European project was full of tensions and confrontations between the GOC and the UNM but this did not lead to dichotomization of national level, that is reason concept of agonism can best explicate patterns of relationship between these two institutions.

⁶³ Ibid pp.108.

⁶⁴ Ibid pp.113.

⁶⁵ Ibid pp.111.

⁶⁶ Mouffe, C. (2013) *Agonistics: Thinking World Politically*. London: Verso. pp. 9.

⁶⁷ Janelidze, B (2015) ‘Secularization and Desecularization in Georgia: state and church under the Saakashvili government 2003-2012’ in Agadjanian, A., Jödicke, A., Zweerde, E.V.D. (eds), *Religion, Nation and Democracy in the South Caucasus*, London & New York, Routledge.pp.77.

The relations between the president and Catholicos Patriarch over the project of Europe can be characterized as agonistic – conflictual. In agonism contestation or “considerable disagreement” is not between annihilating projects, but between competing alternatives about interpretation of values and principles, specifically about how values should “translate into particular policies and institutional arrangement, and on the foundations and character of rights and their application to particular issues”⁶⁸. In comparison with antagonism – a confrontation between enemies, more specifically between ‘we’ and ‘they’ – which most likely leads to a division of a national front, agonistic alternatives are positioned towards each other as ‘adversaries’. In general, such ‘adversaries’ engage with each other, but most importantly “fight against each other because they want their interpretation of the principles to become hegemonic, but they do not put into question the legitimacy of their opponent’s right to fight for the victory of their position”⁶⁹. This is because, as William Connolly claims, opponents cultivate an “agonistic respect” towards each other⁷⁰. Therefore, an agonistic confrontation does lead neither to “the annihilation nor assimilation of the other”⁷¹, because ‘adversaries’ are not enemies for each other, even though the struggle is real. Given the fact that interpretation of values is in a centerpiece of ‘real’ battle between agonistic adversaries, fights seem to be motivated by control and influence over ontological and normative notions embedded within identity of political community. National actors in charge of those notions are automatically in charge of constitution of identity.

In an agonistic model adversaries co-exist in “a conflictual consensus”⁷², this kind of “conflictual consensus” is “based on divergent interpretations of shared ethico-political principles”⁷³. “Conflictual consensus” does not emerge on its own, it should be achieved through a political action, because any conflict is prone to a violent confrontation. Chantal Mouffe is certain that “when institutional channels do not exist for antagonism to be expressed in an agonistic way, they are likely to explode into violence”⁷⁴. Agonism always envisages antagonism – friend-enemy division, which should be constantly tackled. “The crucial task both in the domestic and international domain is to find ways to deal with conflicts so as to minimize the possibility that they will take an antagonistic form”⁷⁵. As already explained elsewhere, exclusion is an indivisible part of consensus and a main source for conflict⁷⁶. Hence instead of seeking all-inclusive consensus politicians should

⁶⁸ Castiglione, D. (2009) ‘Political Identity in a Community of Strangers’ in Checkel, J.T. & Katzenstein, P.J. (eds), *European Identity*, New York, Cambridge University Press. pp. 46

⁶⁹ Mouffe, C. (2013) *Agonistics: Thinking World Politically*. London: Verso.pp.7.

⁷⁰ Connolly, W. E. (2005) *Pluralism*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press.pp.13-14.

⁷¹ Mouffe, C. (2013) *Agonistics: Thinking World Politically*. London: Verso.pp.41.

⁷² Ibid pp.XII.

⁷³ Ibid pp.23.

⁷⁴ Ibid pp.122.

⁷⁵ Ibid pp.23.

⁷⁶ Mouffe, C.(2005) *The Return of the Political*. London. Verso.pp.141.

“accept division and conflict as unavoidable, and the reconciliation of rival claims and conflicting interests can only be partial and provisional”⁷⁷. Therefore because “alterity” - multiplicity of different interpretations – cannot be completely absorbed ⁷⁸ every consensus envisages “a dimension of coercion”, which is seemingly channeled through mixture of different political actions, such as persuasion, cooperation, concession and marginalization, as a method to “transform *antagonism* into *agonism*”.

The last but not least, the importance in an agonistic struggle over interpretation of universal values lies in its ability to challenge existing order with its institutions and principles in order to redefine and reconstruct them⁷⁹. Laclau believes that the outcome of such struggle is “unavoidable hybridization” of identity, “but hybridization does not necessarily mean decline through the loss of identity: it can also mean empowering existing identities through the opening of new possibilities”⁸⁰. Outcome is unpredictable due to contingency of situation in general, therefore “someone who wants to defend an existing order of things has already lost it through its very defense”⁸¹. Laclau believes that there is no going back to the previous state of affairs. In the process of struggle, revision, renegotiation, everything changes, even actors involved, due to unpredictability of a process and thus outcome⁸².

⁷⁷ Ibid pp.113.

⁷⁸ Ibid pp.129.

⁷⁹ Mouffe, C. (2013) *Agonistics: Thinking World Politically*. London: Verso.pp.129-146.

⁸⁰ Laclau, E. (1996) *Emancipation(s)*. London: Verso pp.65.

⁸¹ Laclau, E. (2007) *On Populist Reason*. London: Verso pp.121.

⁸² Laclau, E. (1996) *Emancipation(s)*. London: Verso.pp.65-68.

2. Historical Overview: National Political Project ‘Kartveloba’

The national political project of Georgia has been changing in the course of history, as it was made to reflect the threats, challenges and hence politics of that particular time. Not only structure and pillars of the project used to change by removing and/or adding new ones, but also ontological content of the pillars themselves were being revisited from time to time by different actors in different time and occasions by giving numerous different interpretations. Even when the project seemed in a state of status quo, still political and intellectual elite constantly redefined it in order to adapt its cognitive notions to the unfolding political situation in the country. This way they could tackle problems and challenges in Georgia, remain in charge of politics and keep pace with progress not only in the region but also in global political landscape.

The Concept of Kartveloba by Tergdaleulebi and Ilia Chavchavadze

The major body of the literature on the concept ‘Kartveloba’, which can be translated as Georgianness in English, was constructed during the Russian Empire by a group of Russian-educated intellectuals called “Tergdaleulebi” and in particular by Ilia Chavchavadze, the leader of the group. According to Jones “Ilia Chavchavadze (1837–1907) and the tergdaleulni were the first conscious nation builders in 19th-century Georgia, imitators of Giuseppe Garibaldi, Lajos Kossuth and Frantisek Palacky. Educated in St Petersburg, Moscow or in the European universities of Geneva and Paris, they launched a generational attack on the archaic views and political passivity of their ‘fathers’” by introducing “European ideas through newspapers, election campaigns, business associations and charitable organisations”⁸³ and thus constituting self-consciousness of Georgian people. “Kartveloba” is not just a lone standing concept, this is a well-defined national political project which has a clearly delineated description of its foundational elements, the focus group, the goal, the methods to achieve the project objectives and the enemy, so called “Other”, of people and the country, which prevents them from being “who they are”.

Pillars of the National Project

By ‘Kartveloba’ Chavchavadze meant a national identity of Georgian people which feeds on three main concepts: fatherland, language and Christianity⁸⁴. “We, Georgians, inherited three divine treasures from our ancestors: our motherland, our language and our faith. If we fail to protect these treasures, what merit will we have as humans? How will we explain ourselves to our decedents?”⁸⁵. He believed that these three concepts are tightly intertwined with each other by the joint history of evolution and development. “Our nation has lived a historical life for two thousand years. Many good and bad stones have been laid in the

⁸³ Jones, S. (2006) ‘The Rose Revolution: A Revolution without Revolutionaries?’ *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 19: 1, pp. 37.

⁸⁴ Chavchavadze, I. (1861) in Bakradze, A. (ed)(2006) *ilia WavWavaZe [Ilia Chavchavadze]*, Pegasus, Tbilisi. pp.40.

⁸⁵ *Ibid* pp.40.

foundation on which our present depends for future prosperity” [...] “a nation that forgets its own history” is like a beggar who knows neither his past nor his future”⁸⁶. The glorious history of Georgia was constituted for it to serve as an inspiration for a prosperous future in a Russian governorate, where the present was gloomy and unpromising. But most importantly, for Ilia Chavchavadze the history was a rallying point which had to play a major role in a unification of fragmented Georgia. In 1877 Chavchavadze claimed that “neither the unity of language, nor the unity of religion and kinship can fuse the people with each other as the unity of history”⁸⁷. Zedania believes that the emphasis on the history was decisive for evolution of secular nationalism which impacted “the development of Georgian culture in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.”⁸⁸

The concept of *fatherland* signified the unity of the territories of various Georgian regions which were fought for from antiquity till today. “Kartli, Kakheti, Imereti, Guria and Samegerlo, all are my motherland, my lovely Sakartvelo”⁸⁹. By that time Georgia as a state did not exist, it was part of the Russian Empire, hence the main task for Tergdaleulebi was to cultivate and preserve Georgian identity within the Empire. But apart from the agenda related to the identity, Tergdaleulebi arguably also worked towards preparation of the people for a major struggle which might have led to an independence of Georgia from the Empire, even though such development might have been only a vision among this group of intellectuals about distant future of Georgia. Tergdaleulebi’s poetry and literature can serve as a proof for such vision, which among other issues praised patriotism and bravery of the people, who gave their life for well-being of their fatherland. Hence Tergdaleulebi used a pen to cultivate passion within people towards the homeland, because most probably they had a good knowledge of “the predominant role of passions as moving forces of human conduct”⁹¹.

The concept on *Language* was described as a sacral, spiritual treasure of the nation which reflects its history. “*Language* is the history of a nation [...] the first sign of the identity of a nation is its language” claims Ilia Chavchavadze⁹². He believed that “a nation whose language is corrupted can no longer exist as a nation”. Due to Russification threat the prior concern of the intellectuals was to maintain Georgian language as a primary language in the country. In this “divine matter” the whole nation was encouraged to involve themselves by proclaiming the Georgian nation as “mother of the language”. “Not sure how others but we will not let even

⁸⁶ Chavchavadze, I. (1888) *eri da istoria* [Nation and History] in Gvetsiteli, B., Inanishvili, R., Fanjikidze, B., Qemertelidze, I., Tsaishvili, S., Javakhadze, V., (eds) (1987) Vol. 4, *Sabchota Saqartvelo*, Tbilisi. pp. 153.

⁸⁷ Chavchavadze Ilia in Zedania, G (2011) ‘The Rise of Religious Nationalism in Georgia’, *Identity Studies*, Vol 3:120-128, pp. 124.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Megreli, D. (1901) *me patara qarTveli var* [‘I’m a little Georgian’] accessed June 20, 2016, <http://literatura.mcvane.ge/main/literatura/poezia/574-bbbb-bbbbbbb.html>

⁹⁰ This is a popular verse for children in Georgia.

⁹¹ Mouffe, C. (2005) *The Return of the Political*. London. Verso. pp. 141.

⁹² Chavchavadze, I. (1888) in Bakradze, A (ed)(2006) *ilia WavWavaZe* [Ilia Chavchavadze], Pegasus, Tbilisi.

our fathers subvert our native language. Language is a divine, public treasure which should not be touched by man's sinful hand"⁹³.

Christianity, which is the most contested concept out of three in post-Revolutionary Georgia, was sublimated into the central pivot of the national political project by Chavchavadze. It was declared as a guardian of the Georgian nation, which was miraculously saved from total destruction in the battles with powerful and numerous armies of its enemies for centuries. That is reason it was seen by Ilia Chavchavadze as "an undefeatable sword and a steadfast shield against enemy" of the country. He claimed that "it is 1500 years with this strength Christianity preserved for us our homeland, our language, our identity, our nationness"⁹⁴. In spite of homogeneity of the religion Georgian Christianity endured harassments in different level and forms both during the Russian Empire and later during the Soviet Union - its successor. In 1811 the Russian Empire suspended the autocephaly of the Georgian church and with it preaching in Georgian language. While the Soviet period left many orthodox churches white-washed. Despite this, Georgian Christianity managed to survive and even beef up its influence, particularly after independence. For its role and dedication Chavchavadze charged Christianity with an overarching signification. He claimed that: "*Christianity*, besides, Christian preaching meant for us entire territories of Georgia, meant Georgianness. Even today, Georgian and Christian mean the same in the South Caucasus, instead of saying Christening, they say 'Georgianing'"⁹⁵. Jones argues that "Georgian literary elites constructed a role for the church as an embattled and victimized institution leading a centuries-old struggle to preserve Georgian national identity"⁹⁶. Whereas Zedania, after "analysing texts from the 1850s and 1860s where the project of Georgian nationalism was first articulated", "notices a complete absence of religious motives and themes"⁹⁷. He thus claims that "the religious factor was not important in the development of nationalism in the nineteenth century", because "the Georgian Orthodox Church had been in decline since the seventeenth century and the nationalist mobilization of Georgians within the Russian Empire concentrated on other institutions and issues, such as dynastic and territorial ones". Moreover, Zedania adds that "Orthodox Christianity was a factor through which occupied Georgia was brought closer to the occupying Russian Empire rather than distanced from it"⁹⁸.

⁹³ Chavchavadze, I. (1861) in Bakradze, A (ed)(2006) *Ilia WavWavaZe [Ilia Chavchavadze]*, Pegasus, Tbilisi. pp.40.

⁹⁴ Ibid pp. 101.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Jones, S. (2003) The role of cultural paradigms in Georgian foreign policy, *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 19:3, pp.88.

⁹⁷ Zedania, G. (2011) 'The Rise of Religious Nationalism in Georgia', *Identity Studies*, Vol 3, pp. 123.

⁹⁸ Ibid, pp.125.

Target Group, Strategy and Objectives of the National Project

Chavchavadze's view on the pillars of the national projects had evolved over time. Initially the focus group of the national political project was an Orthodox Christian living on the historical territory of Georgia and therefore speaking Georgian as well as having knowledge of the history of the once powerful kingdom of Georgia which experienced many glorious and doomsdays. Therefore, anyone meeting this criteria was Georgian and hence envisaged by the project, and the rest was presumably excluded. However, later Chavchavadze scraped the limitations which were leaving Muslim population behind the national project by claiming that common history is more important than religion⁹⁹. That is reason Zedania claims that the national political project does not have limitations in terms of integration non-Georgian speaking and non-Christian people living on the territories of Georgia. He argues that through cultivation of "secular nationalism" Chavchavadze and Tergdaleulebi ensured "the cultural integration of the linguistically and religiously extremely diverse population of Georgia"¹⁰⁰.

The strategy to cultivate Georgianness among the people was published in 1881 article "Internal Review" by Ilia Chavchavadze where he notes that "the goal" of "our [Tergdaleulebi] activities" is "to recover our disillusioned self-consciousness and find "the way" to achieve it. For the success of their activities, as Ilia believed, it was important to keep pace with "new time realities" by mastering "European science and experience"¹⁰¹. He urged:

This is what our youth should be prepared for, equipped with European science and experience like a sword and shield, this is exactly that arena which should be circled for their activities and this is the way which should be selected, European science is to be studied as thoroughly as possible, European science should be premised on, and with this gun-equipment [our youth] should take up the affairs of our country. Without this, on the arena, which we meant above, a man cannot even make a substantial step for living, and on that goal and the way, which we mentioned, [a man] cannot mark eventually anything¹⁰².

The goal of the project was to establish a political community defined by the certain criteria which would seek a creation of Georgia as an established European style nation state. For the political unity to be able to take a joint action a certain degree of social homogeneity and shared political values was needed. "For, without

⁹⁹ "In our opinion, neither the unity of language, nor the unity of religion and kinship can fuse the people with each other as the unity of history" Ilia Chavchavadze, 1877, cited in Sharadze, G. (1990). *cxovreba, moRvaweoba, Semoqmedeba* [Ilia Chavchavadze—Life, Activity, Works]. Khelovneba [Art], Tbilisi, vol. 2, pp. 298.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ Chavchavadze, I. (1861) in Bakradze, A (ed)(2006) *ilia WavWavaZe* [Ilia Chavchavadze], Pegasus, Tbilisi. pp. 38-39

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

such unity, there can be no state. This unity must be provided by common substance, in which the citizens share”¹⁰³. The idea behind the national political project was presumably “to determine the whole within which those identities, as different, are constituted”¹⁰⁴. Unity on principles and values, on its turn, was expected to generate the sense of citizenship and responsibility towards the territory to be demarcated by a joint action against the Empire. Through elaboration of the national political project a seed of “the political”, defined as an antagonism¹⁰⁵, was implanted in the Georgian nation, which would await a proper moment to stage a major struggle for independence against an enemy and in this case against the Russian Empire.

Notwithstanding such a straightforward orientation towards Europe, Ilia Chavchavadze’s stance on the trajectory of the country to approach Europe is still much debated, because he believed that the path to Europe laid through the Russian Empire. Jones argues that “until the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, liberal Russia was for Georgians, despite its autocratic tradition, a channel to the West”¹⁰⁶. Such view not only questions Chavchavadze’s stance on a major struggle for independence of Georgia but also on an “enemy figure” allocated to the Russian Empire within the framework of the national political project. Jones insists that “Georgia’s aversion to Muslim states” and thus “rejection of Islam” was the key defining feature of Georgianness¹⁰⁷. Further on he claims that “Georgian identification with Europe was reinforced by the Soviet system. The USSR, more successfully than the Russian Empire, separated Georgia both physically and culturally from the Middle East. In the Soviet period, it was no longer the rejection of Islam that defined Georgians as Christians, but the rejection of communism that defined them as Europeans”¹⁰⁸. Jones draws the line of arguments from Ilia’s article “Hundred Years Ago” published in 1899, which has been in the center of discussions among academics. Based on the article Brisku claims that “it was clear to him [Chavchavadze] that Russia was Europe not only in geopolitical terms but also cultural ones. It was Russia which was the one to have “opened the doors of Enlightenment’ to Georgia, which in turn, at least in geographical terms meant Western Asia”¹⁰⁹. Because of such point of view of Chavchavadze, Stephen F. Jones¹¹⁰ concludes and Brisku

¹⁰³ Mouffe, C. (2005) *The Return of the Political*. London. Verso. pp. 129.

¹⁰⁴ Laclau, E. (2007) *On Populist Reason*. London: Verso. pp. 69.

¹⁰⁵ Mouffe, C. (2009) *The Democratic Paradox*. London. Verso. pp. 101.

¹⁰⁶ Jones, F. S. (2003) ‘The role of cultural paradigms in Georgian foreign policy’, *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 19:3, pp.91.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, pp.92.

¹⁰⁹ Brisku, A. (2013) *Bittersweet Europe: Discourses on Europe, 1878 – 2008*, Berghahn pp.38.

¹¹⁰ Jones, F.S. (2005) *Socialism In Georgian Colors: The European Road To Social Democracy, 1883-1917*, Harvard University Press.

respectively agrees that Ilia was discouraged “from the idea of political self-determination of Georgia from Russia”¹¹¹.

Ilia Chavchavadze might have indeed viewed Russia as a window of opportunity for Georgia to a certain degree, but it is also true that by that time for Georgians to seek independence from the Empire was unrealistic venture. But this does not mean that he did not want to see Georgia as an independent country. And his poetry and literature is clear evidence for that.¹¹² On July 29, 1860 Chavchavadze even dedicated the verse ‘*Mesmis, Mesmis*’ to the Giuseppe Garibaldi’s movement in Italy, where he wished for the similar developments in his country, in particular for a subversion of ‘slavery’. While on 1861 in his book ‘Travelers’ Note’ Ilia Chavchavadze declared that “we [Georgians] should belong to ourselves”¹¹³.

The debate about Ilia Chavchavadze’s intentions along with the discussions about the question whether Georgia was Europe or Asia constitute a very important part and even a pillar of the national political project. This pillar accompanied the project from its inception until 2004, which was reflected in the debate between intellectuals and public figures at national level. There was a group of intellectuals who supported approachment of Georgia to Europe (eg. Geronti Kikodze), a group that advocated Asian identity (eg. Vakhtang Kotetishvili), still another group that claimed a crossroad identity for Georgia (a type of identity which fuses western and eastern cultures) (eg. Grigol Robakidze)¹¹⁴. In general such discussions used to intensify before and during the period of independence in 1918-1921¹¹⁵ and also after 1991¹¹⁶, even though those supporting Asian identity considerably dwindled and even became invisible at political level. Nevertheless lack of agreement on the issue among political and intellectual elite at national level left the country in the state of hesitation and confusion about which way the country should take, what are the interests of the state, what is the future of Georgia, who are Georgians. These discussions reflect intellectuals’ journey in a search of finding Georgia’s niche to connect it with the world and claim its place at global level.

The National Political Project after Independence

After the collapse of the Russian Empire in 1917, Georgia declared an independence in 1918, which in 1921 was lost to the Red Army of the Soviet Union. During the Soviet occupation there were attempts to dump the

¹¹¹ Brisku, A. (2013) *Bittersweet Europe: Discourses on Europe, 1878 – 2008*, Berghahn pp.38.

¹¹² Chavchavadze, I. (1861) *mgzavris werilebi* [Traveler’s Notes] in Tsintsadze, G. (ed) (1988) *Txulebani* [Novels] Vol.2, Science, Soviet Georgia.

¹¹³ Chavchavadze, I. (1861) *mgzavris werilebi* [Traveler’s Notes] in Tsintsadze, G. (ed) (1988) *Txulebani* [Novels] Vol.2, Science, Soviet Georgia.

¹¹⁴ Leonidze State Museum of Literature (1997) *krebuli ww.1916-1924 saqarTvelo evropa Tu azia?* [A collection of essays from 1916 to 1924 ‘Georgia: Europe or Asia?’], Orjonikidze, I (ed), literaturuli maCne publishing house, Tbilisi.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Gamkrelidze, V. T. (2000) ‘Georgia: Europe or Asia?’, Parliament of Georgia Archives.

national project through Sovitization policy by attacking the pillars of fatherland, language, Christianity and history at different occasions, but the project had never lost its significance, due to unaccomplished mission – Georgia was still occupied. In 1987 the Georgian Orthodox Church canonized Ilia Chavchavadze as Saint Ilia Righteous, which reaffirmed his standing, contributing its share to eternity of his life and works in the Georgian history. Due to Chavchavadze's and Tergdaleulebi's unabating importance even after independence in 1991 the national project has retained its relevance. Both President Gamsakhurdia (1991-1992) and President Shevardnadze (1995-2003), however, made their contribution to revision of the project through introduction of new elements in it. The politics and the political of the two presidents were radically different from each other.

President Gamsakhurdia's Georgian was Christian, pan-Caucasian and resentful towards Russia. Jones argues that "Gamsakhurdia [...] made the church a public and highly politicized symbol of Georgianness"¹¹⁷. Zedania agrees by claiming that "at the beginning of the nineties it was the so-called National Movement which integrated elements of explicit religious content into their form of ethnic nationalism"¹¹⁸. Hence "the heritage of Orthodox Christianity was advanced as an essential factor for the formation of national self-awareness"¹¹⁹. Gamsakhurdia's stance on Europe and Europeanness of Georgia apparently changed over time. As Jones claims "Gamsakhurdia's early foreign policy was based on the assumption that the West would come to Georgia's rescue because international law (Georgia was illegally annexed in 1921) and the self-determination of nations were Western principles"¹²⁰. The West recognized Georgia's independence but did not sympathize with Gamsakhurdia's "anti-Russian rhetoric" and in general with "his regime", which seemingly resulted in the change of his discourse. Thus President Gamsakhurdia started promoting a concept of "a pan-Caucasian identity" by introducing an idea of Caucasian Home, which "was associated with a desire to strengthen native culture against Western influence"¹²¹. "Enemy figure" for the president who led the country to the independence from the Soviet Union had very clear image and that was Russia. Russia was officially proclaimed as an "occupying force" and hence a major reason for Georgia's all misfortunes. President Gamsakhurdia's discourse towards the Kremlin was radical and unfiltered. He was arguably "driven by an anti-

¹¹⁷ Jones, F. S. (2003) 'The role of cultural paradigms in Georgian foreign policy', *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 19:3, pp.89.

¹¹⁸ Zedania, G. (2011) 'The Rise of Religious Nationalism in Georgia', *Identity Studies*, Vol 3, pp. 124.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Jones, F. S. (2003) The role of cultural paradigms in Georgian foreign policy, *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 19:3, pp.103.

¹²¹ Ibid, pp. 94.

Russian ideology that ignored both the necessity of treating Russia cautiously and the legacy of Russia in Georgia's development and survival" as Jones insists¹²².

Apart from revision of existing pillars a new dimension, which was cultivated during the Soviet period, namely a blood kinship resurfaced with full strength during Gamsakhurdia's Presidency. Dmitry Gorenburg believes that "soviet nationalities policy unwittingly strengthened ethnic identity among minority populations in the Soviet Union"¹²³. With such policy the Soviet Union created an element as its legacy to the national project of Georgia. Although the accounts on an importance of blood bond dates back to 1920s "the emphasis on the racial component of nationhood appeared quite strong when the Georgian nationalism emerged from its state of hibernation under the Soviet rule"¹²⁴ in the late 1980s, which further accelerated its appeal in 1990s. This new feature to the national political project was held responsible for the territorial problems in Abkhazia and South Ossetia mostly by those who sought to benefit from labeling them as ethnic conflicts. Learning from the past experience about the danger this pillar carried through for the state and people of Georgia, pro-western tier of the Shevardnadze's government skillfully eliminated the pillar of blood kinship from the political project, by removing a section which cited a nationality of a card holder in an identity card.

In general Shevardnadze's politics was mainly focused on cultivation of "crossroad" identity. Presumably to stay on the safe side President Shevardnadze was willing to revive an idea of Georgia as a "crossroad" between Europe and Asia by advocating resumption of historic Silk Road route and thus emphasizing Georgia's geo-political importance for gas and oil pipeline projects from east to west¹²⁵. Despite such efforts to popularize "crossroad" identity the European project emerged during Shevardnadze's presidency. In 1997 "Shevardnadze declared in his state of the union address" willingness to join Europe and by doing so address "the centuries-old dream of our ancestors"¹²⁶. Later in 2002 the president announced a bid to join the NATO. However President Shevardnadze made no major attempt to institutionalize Europe as the only roadmap for development of the country. President Shevardnadze's politics was directed towards balancing between the West and Russia, because he was arguably cautious not to irritate the Kremlin with his clear-cut pro-European leaning. Therefore "Shevardnadze has doggedly repeated his description of Russia as Georgia's 'strategic

¹²² Ibid, pp. 95.

¹²³ Gorenburg, D. (2006) 'Soviet Nationalities Policy and Assimilation' in Ruble, B., Popson, N. and Arel, D. (eds), *Rebounding Identities: The Politics of Identity in Russia and Ukraine*, Cambridge University Press, pp. 273.

¹²⁴ Nodia, G (2009) 'Components of the Georgian National Idea: an Outline' *Identity Studies*, Vol. 1 pp. 92.

¹²⁵ Tevzadze, G (ed)(2009) 'saqarTvelo armosavleTis da dasavleTis gzagasayarze: dRevandeli saqarTvelos TviTwarmodgenis da TviTprezentaciis istoria' [Georgia at the Crossroad of West and East: History of Current Georgians' Self-understanding and Self-presentation] in *Five Essays about Contemporary Georgia*, Bakur Sulakauri Publishing House LTD. Tbilisi. pp 81-91.

¹²⁶ Ibid, pp. 91.

partner' despite Russia's support of the Abkhazian secessionists and other serious political tensions"¹²⁷. Jones claims that "Shevardnadze's 'pro-Russian' standpoint, which would not have been possible in the heady days of Gamsakhurdia's anti-communist revolution, reflects popular scepticism of the West's commitment, a longing for stability (although not a return to Soviet-style communism) and an acknowledgement that Russia will always play a role in Georgia's future"¹²⁸. Hence, even though by the end of Shevardnadze's presidency the Georgianness was defined as "Christian, European, and a warrior-martyr"¹²⁹, the pillar of Europeanness was constantly compromised for sake of peaceful co-existence and good neighborly relations with Russia. As a consequence the concept of Europe suffered from negligence and thus from lack of targeted articulation with national symbols and pillars of the national projects at political level which prevented reconstitution of the story about Europeanness of Georgia.

This was the national political project the UNM government inherited in 2004: dated and limited. In its current state the national political project was unable to address the challenges of that time, such as democracy and liberalism, equality and human rights, which Georgia was expected to handle if it wanted to become a fully-fledged functioning state in developed world. Even centuries-old issue related to sovereignty and Russian occupation never ceased to send troubling signals due to absence of an effective solution. Although the key mission of the national political project was accomplished: Georgia managed to regain its independence, an existential threat coming from the northern neighbor remained as the main irresolvable problem for peace, stability and even for functioning of Georgia. Therefore the project required certain degree of revitalization. The challenge was to reinvent Georgia and in particular the national political project which would be inclusive and appealing for the masses, but most importantly would address the challenges of internally broken country.

A new pillar to be included in the national project turned out to be Europe, which seemed to be promising in terms of resolution of internal and external problems in the country. On the one hand implementation of the *acquis communautaire*¹³⁰ and compliance with the Copenhagen Criteria¹³¹ was seen as a path to profound

¹²⁷ Ibid, pp.103.

¹²⁸ Ibid, pp. 96.

¹²⁹ Jones, S (2003) The role of cultural paradigms in Georgian foreign policy, *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 19:3, pp.91.

¹³⁰ "The EU's 'acquis' is the body of common rights and obligations that are binding on all EU countries, as EU Members [...]Applicant countries are required to accept the acquis before they can join the EU.", *EUR-Lex: Access to European Union Law*, accessed February 07, 2019, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/acquis.html>

¹³¹ "The Treaty on European Union sets out the conditions (Article 49) and principles (Article 6(1)) to which any country wishing to become an EU member must conform. These criteria (known as the Copenhagen criteria) were established by the Copenhagen European Council in 1993 and strengthened by the Madrid European Council in 1995.", *EUR-Lex: Access to European Union Law*, accessed February 07, 2019, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/summary/glossary/enlargement.html>

changes in Georgia's political, economic and social system. On the other deepening of European integration was meant to counterbalance and gradually usher Russia, which was an interested side in the conflicts in Georgia, by strengthening the ties and presence of the US and EU in the country.

By including Europe into the national political project the task of the Georgian government was arguably to retain that Georgian spirit of a warrior, but also imbue it with European flavor through redesigning principles of political association. European was not supposed to be a secondary or dominant identity, it was expected to be "an articulating principle that affects the different subject positions of the social agent, while allowing for a plurality of specific allegiances"¹³², it was arguably seen as "the ethico-political principles of the regime which provide the 'grammar' of the citizen's conduct"¹³³ through imposition of certain cognitive structure. The mission was to redefine/ codify / standardize ontological and normative notions within the country in line with liberal-democratic principles through institutionalization of European discourse. This was considered to contribute state building and identity formation purposes. But solely political interest would not mobilize the people around Europe. It required feelings and emotions to be invested in the concept which was to certain degree unknown, confusing and sometimes frightening for Georgian people. The challenge for President Saakashvili was to charge an image of Europe with passion which would become a driving force for people of Georgia to follow the dream of European future. The venue for investment of European sentiments was chosen to be national symbols and in general everything Georgian. As the venue was marked, the activities of reconstitution got started in full force from 2004.

¹³² Mouffe, C. (2005) *The Return of the Political*. London. Verso. pp.84.

¹³³ Ibid.

3. Georgia's Project of Europe

Since late 90s 'What is Europe?' has been one of the key political questions for national elites in Georgia. Europe has been values and principles of liberal democracy, but the main issue of debate and even heated argument among different political groups at national level has been how to interpret those values. The question was taken high on the state agenda after the Rose Revolution in 2003 when President Saakashvili declared to earn a membership into the Euro-Atlantic structures for the country. Even though, as said, the initiative was not new, it was first time when it gained boosted importance and overarching signification. Respectively the president's declaration was followed by the initiatives, negotiations, agreements, programs, which gradually evolved into the European project. The project was forged and elaborated jointly on the one hand by the president and the UNM government and on the other by the EU in cooperation with the western international organizations, which has given to the process of Europeanization a unique twist.

History: Georgia and the EU since Independence

Georgia's European project is not a new initiative. Its history keeps the accounts on Europe as a roadmap for development, but due to Soviet occupation the European alternative was never tangible. After independence the relation between Georgia and the European community was initiated but by that time post-soviet Georgia for the EU seemed distant, uninteresting and dangerous to engage with. The recognition of Georgia's independence by the European Community on March 23, 1992 marks the start of a political dialogue between the two parties which was followed by the establishment of the diplomatic relations on December 21, 1992¹³⁴. Georgian diplomatic mission has been active in Brussels since June 1993, while the EU opened its Delegation in Tbilisi on December 12, 1994¹³⁵. By that time issues for negotiation between Georgia and the EC was limited to Diplomatic and Contractual Relations, Trade, Assistance and Humanitarian Aid. The first significant step in the EU-Georgian relations was registered on April 22, 1996 in Luxembourg when the EU signed a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with Georgia and other South Caucasus countries¹³⁶. The agreement came into force on July 1, 1999 and remained the main legal framework for cooperation until the official start of the Association Agreement in 2014. Until 1999, the EU's relationship to the region was limited to the three EU initiated "assistance programs", which were: 1. the Technical Assistance to CIS (TACIS) program, 2.

¹³⁴ EU-Georgia Relations, Reference: MEMO/95/11, Event Date: 17/02/1995, accessed November 12, 2018, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-95-11_en.htm#PR_metaPressRelease_bottom

¹³⁵ EU-Georgia Relations, Reference: MEMO/96/70, Event Date: 10/07/1996, accessed November 12, 2018, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-96-70_en.htm

¹³⁶ Ibid.

Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Central Asia (TRACECA) and 3. INOGATE (Interstate Oil and Gas Transport to Europe)¹³⁷.

The relationship intensified between Georgia and the EU only after the Rose Revolution in 2003 by the decision of the UNM government to bring the country back to where it belonged, to Europe¹³⁸. President Saakashvili believed that Georgians “are and should remain a nation united in our historical destiny to join the European family of democratic nations, the family we should never have been separated from, our family”¹³⁹. To this end the UNM government with the leadership of the president not only institutionalized, but hegemonized the European project as a single political agenda for internal and external development of the country. In a response the EU “appointed a Special Representative for the South Caucasus, launched a European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP) mission, and employed the Commission’s Rapid Reaction Mechanism to support post “Rose Revolution” democratization processes”¹⁴⁰.

The first major accomplishment after the Rose Revolution in 2003 was inclusion of Georgia and other Eastern neighbors in the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2004. On November 14, 2006 the EU-Georgia Cooperation Council endorsed the ENP Action Plan for a period of five years. The ENP Action Plan was created to fulfill the provisions of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCA), because PCA was “the legal basis for the EU’s partnership” with the South Caucasian states¹⁴¹.

The EU external policy towards Georgia and other post-Soviet countries was further advanced by a Joint Declaration on Eastern Partnership which was signed by European leaders in Prague on May 7, 2009. The Eastern Partnership’s primary goals were: 1. to bring democratic reforms, trade liberalization and a visa facilitation process for the partner countries through bilateral and multilateral mechanisms; 2. to advance democracy, the rule of law, human rights, electoral legislative framework in EU’s Eastern neighbourhood; 3. last but not least, to upgrade bilateral relations between EU partner countries and facilitate negotiations on the Association Agreement (AA)¹⁴².

The negotiations on the Association Agreement started in 2010 after the EU Council adopted a Negotiation Directive on May 10, 2010. It mainly focused on the Georgian Government’s progress to undertake reforms,

¹³⁷ Baran, Z. (2002) ‘The Caucasus: Ten Years after Independence’ *The Washington Quarterly*, 25:1 pp. 228.

¹³⁸ Mikheil Saakashvili “Address by President Saakashvili at Independence Day Parade” (speech, May 26, 2006), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

¹³⁹ Mikheil Saakashvili “Address by the President of Georgia at the 68th session of the United Nations General Assembly”, (speech, September 25, 2013), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

¹⁴⁰ Conflict Resolution in South Caucasus: The EU’s Role; *ICG Europe Report N°173*, 20 March 2006.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Council of the European Union ‘Joint Declaration of the Prague eastern Partnership Summit’, Prague, 7 May 2009.

facilitate legal harmonization process, address commitments and comply with international standards. The Association Agreement was expected to have a positive political and economic impact on Georgia's sustainable development, because the goal was to further enhance the bilateral relationship between Georgia and the EU across all areas of cooperation facilitating the establishment of the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) and further deepening the Visa Liberalization dialogue.

Overview of the European Project

The UNM driven project is mainly referred both as a modernization and revolutionary project in a literature due to "its vast programme of propelling Georgia into modernity"¹⁴³ by "modernizing key bodies such as the traffic police, higher education and the security forces"¹⁴⁴ as well as "by pushing for radical social-economic reforms"¹⁴⁵. The programme was rather ambitious and arguably revolutionary because it envisaged "a rebirth of Georgia" which was "pre-modern and dominated by traditional values which contradicted modernity"¹⁴⁶. Even though the key defining word among scholars for the state-driven project is "modernization" there are couple of reasons which makes the UNM project European. First and foremost is that "becoming modern implies learning Western ways" because "the West represents the model of modernity"¹⁴⁷. Georgians, as Jones insists, rarely make "the differentiation between Europe and the West"¹⁴⁸. Ghia Nodia claims "these two terms – 'the West' and 'Europe' – have the most part been used interchangeably in Georgia"¹⁴⁹ Moreover, Ghia Nodia argues that Saakashvili's ambition was "making Georgia not just an ally of the West, but part of it"¹⁵⁰. Whereas Cheterian agrees that "for the Georgian elite the path to modernity has been through joining Western institutions such as NATO or the EU."¹⁵¹ Such conclusions were drawn from the official agenda of the

¹⁴³ Cheterian, V. (2008) 'Georgia's Rose Revolution: Change or Repetition? Tension between State-Building and Modernization Projects' *Nationalities Paper*. 36:4, pp 694.

¹⁴⁴ Broers, L. (2005) 'After the 'revolution': civil society and the challenges of consolidating democracy in Georgia', *Central Asian Survey*, 24:3. pp. 343.

¹⁴⁵ Cheterian, V. (2008) 'Georgia's Rose Revolution: Change or Repetition? Tension between State-Building and Modernization Projects' *Nationalities Paper*. 36:4, pp 692.

¹⁴⁶ Aprasidze, D. (2009) 'Lost in Democratization and Modernization: What Next in Georgia?', *Caucasus Analytical Digest* 02/09, Tbilisi.

¹⁴⁷ Nodia, G. (2013) 'The Record of the Rose Revolution: mixed but still impressive' in Cheterian, V. (ed.), *From Perestroika to Rainbow Revolutions: Reform and Revolution after Socialism*. Hurst and Co: London. pp. 95.

¹⁴⁸ Jones, S. (2003) 'The Role of Cultural Paradigms in Georgian Foreign Policy', *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 19:3, pp.91.

¹⁴⁹ Nodia, G. (1998) 'The Georgian Perception of the West' in Coppieters, B, Zverev, A., Trenin, D. (eds), *Commonwealth and Independence in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, London, Frank Cass Publishers, pp.13.

¹⁵⁰ Nodia, G. (2013) 'The Record of the Rose Revolution: mixed but still impressive' in Vichen Cheterian, ed., *From Perestroika to Rainbow Revolutions: Reform and Revolution after Socialism*. Hurst and Co: London. pp. 104.

¹⁵¹ Cheterian, V. (2008) 'Georgia's Rose Revolution: Change or Repetition? Tension between State-Building and Modernization Projects' *Nationalities Paper*. 36:4, pp 693.

Georgian state, which aimed at bringing the country back to its European roots from which it was forcefully separated centuries ago¹⁵². Hence the ultimate goal of the Georgian government was to transform the country into European standard, while the final destination for the country was Europe by earning a membership card to the Euro-Atlantic institutions.

Plans at national level coincided with the official goal of the ENP to act as a “reform anchor” and “motor of change”¹⁵³ in its neighborhood, however level of enthusiasm and gravity was not mutual, the EU seemed reserved. The EU had different agenda and visions about Georgia. Even though after inclusion of Georgia in the ENP in 2004 political and financial engagement of the EU dramatically increased, it still remained very reserved in its commitments. For simplification purposes Georgia was placed in one ENP basket with other very diverse countries from different regions. This is because the EU was experiencing difficulties in drafting a coherent policy towards Georgia and in general towards the region. Although the ENP objective clearly showed the interest of the EU to transform the South Caucasus into security buffer zone, officials seemed rather indecisive as to how to deal with the region, which is “distant, dangerous and crowded”¹⁵⁴ in a way that enables them to avoid being entangled in settling problems that may yield further, and potentially more serious problems; like angering Russia by interfering in its sphere of influence. Through the launch of the ENP in the South Caucasus, the EU was supposed to become a “hub” as well as “political hegemon”¹⁵⁵, as Aliboni claims, aiming at Europeanization of the region, however due to unwillingness or inability to enlarge ad infinitum the EU’s activities seemed quite moderate for a regional power in the Caucasus that intends to bring the states under its umbrella. For the EU the ENP was a policy document which aimed to create “the zone of prosperity, stability and security beyond” its borders¹⁵⁶ with no opportunity for a membership. Whereas “in the eyes of the partner countries these documents pave the high and hopeful road that leads on to Europe”¹⁵⁷.

Europeanization vs. the European Project

The process, which is known in literature as Europeanization, got started through the ENP, but most common definitions of Europeanization do not fully capture the processes which have taken place in Georgia. This is

¹⁵² Foreign Policy Strategy of Georgia 2006-2009.

¹⁵³ Ferrero-Waldner, B. (2006) 'The European Neighbourhood Policy: The EU's Newest Foreign Policy Instrument', *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 11:2, 139–142.

¹⁵⁴ Lynch, D (2006) “Why Georgia Matters?” Chaillot Paper no. 86, pp.7.

¹⁵⁵ Aliboni, Roberto “The Geopolitical Implications of the European Neighborhood Policy”, *European Foreign Affairs Review* 10: 1-16, 2005 , pp.13.

¹⁵⁶ Ferrero-Waldner, B. (2006) 'The European Neighbourhood Policy: The EU's Newest Foreign Policy Instrument', *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 11:2, pp. 139.

¹⁵⁷ Nodia, G. (2014) ‘External Influence and Democratization: The Revenge of Geopolitics’, *Journal of Democracy*, 25:4, pp. 146.

due to couple of reasons: 1. Apart from *acquis communautaire*, which entails approximation to the EU's legal foundation, and the Copenhagen Criteria – democratic governance, the EU had to focus its financial resources on a state-building activities in Georgia – “establishment of stateness, meaning efficient governance institutions” and “full control over the state's territory”¹⁵⁸; 2. The EU policies are not rigidly imposed on Georgia, the policy documents are negotiated with the government; 3. The project of Europe is an open-end, dynamic and complex process, which is continuously revised, adapted and devised according to challenges and shortcomings registered in the country during the implementation process; 4. The EU is not a sole international actor at the national level promoting democracy and rule of law, that is reason sometimes it relies on certain standards and guidelines produced by other international organizations instead of inventing and imposing new (eg. Council of Europe, ILO, US, NATO, World Bank, etc.), but obviously sometimes there are overlappings; 5. Membership conditionality is off the table, which is regarded as one of the strongest to stir Europeanization, as a:

“Process of a) construction, b) diffusion and c) institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, ‘ways of doing things’, and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the EU policy process and then incorporated in the logic of domestic (national and subnational) discourse, political structures and public choices”¹⁵⁹.

The EU bargaining power was still very strong vis-à-vis Georgia due to financial and political conditionality, but its effectiveness largely depended on 1. Low cost for cohesion to EU policy¹⁶⁰; 2. Preferential fit of government's agenda with EU policy¹⁶¹; 3. Institutional and policy fit¹⁶²; 4. Credible / high conditionality attached to a specific policy area ¹⁶³. That is reason in some areas compliance of the Georgian government to the EU policy was higher than in others, consequently Georgia has been continuously criticized for a selective compliance while “implementing the ENP AP, focusing on areas best corresponding to its interests”¹⁶⁴.

¹⁵⁸ Keil, S. (2013) ‘Europeanization, state-building and democratization in the Western Balkans’. *Nationalities Papers*, 41:3. pp. 343-353.

¹⁵⁹ Radeili, C. M. (2006) ‘Europeanization: Solution or Problem?’ In Cini, M. and Bourne, A., *Palgrave Advances in European Union Studies*, Basingstoke, Palgrave. pp 30.

¹⁶⁰ Schimmelfennig, F. & Sedelmeier, U. (2004) ‘Governance by conditionality: EU rule transfer to the candidate countries of Central and Eastern Europe’, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 11:4. pp. 661-79.

¹⁶¹ Ademmer, E. & Börzel, T. A. (2013) ‘Migration, Energy and Good Governance in the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood’, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 65:4.

¹⁶² Schimmelfennig, F. & Sedelmeier, U. (2004) ‘Governance by conditionality: EU rule transfer to the candidate countries of Central and Eastern Europe’. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 11:4. pp. 661-79.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ European Parliament (2008b) ‘Analysis of the EU Assistance to Georgia—Briefing Paper’, Policy Department External Policies (Brussels, European Parliament), accessed July 07, 2018: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2008/388969/EXPO-AFET_NT\(2008\)388969_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2008/388969/EXPO-AFET_NT(2008)388969_EN.pdf)

Arguably the most relevant explanation for such behavior has been two facts: 1. the government was given certain amount of leeway to maneuver while implementing the EU driven policy. “The adoption and implementation of [EU] promoted policies” have allowed for adjustment of “policies to national peculiarities” in the areas where “ENP requirements lack codification, and does not have to trigger convergence with EU rules”¹⁶⁵. 2. The Georgian government could use the EU as “as an opportunity structure” “to push their own political agenda”¹⁶⁶. As Ademmer and Börzel explain “the policy change requested by the EU can also assist the incumbent regime in gaining and consolidating its power, and may also correlate with the overall governmental agenda or correspond to the preferences of reform-minded governmental actors”¹⁶⁷. The government’s compliance to the EU driven anti-corruption policy is a very good example of Georgia’s selective compliance.

Non-compliance of the UNM government to the EU “market-shaping policies” as well as to certain areas of the EU legal framework yielded mixed conclusions among scholars. Donnacha Ó Beacháin & Frederik Coene believes that “instead of “Europeanization” it sometimes seemed more of an “Americanization” of Georgia”¹⁶⁸. For them the main indicators for “Americanization” are non-compliance to certain policies of the EU as well as adoption of “the US approach of zero-tolerance and long prison sentences”¹⁶⁹. They insist that “the reforms and economic thinking do not correspond with the approach of the EU, but rather with that of the USA. Thus, whereas the EU is producing regulations and guidelines on almost every conceivable product and practice, the Georgian government wished to deregulate as much as possible”¹⁷⁰. While Ademmer and Börzel claims that the reason for non-compliance was “the highly liberal agenda of the Saakashvili government, prioritising market-making over market-shaping measures”¹⁷¹ which aimed to attract more investment in order to improve economic situation in the country. Thus, there was a policy misfit and a high cost for adaptation to the EU market-shaping policy for the Georgian government. But this is not to diminish the role of the US in the Georgia’s project of Europe, vice versa it is to acknowledge that the US was indeed an actor in the European project driven by the president and the UNM government. However, instead of “Americanization” the US supported, directly and through NATO, Europeanization of Georgia. As it will be

¹⁶⁵ Ademmer, E. & Börzel, T. A. (2013) ‘Migration, Energy and Good Governance in the EU’s Eastern Neighbourhood’, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 65:4. pp.586.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. pp.583.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. pp.584.

¹⁶⁸ Donnacha Ó Beacháin & Frederik Coene (2014) ‘Go West: Georgia’s European identity and its role in domestic politics and foreign policy objectives’, *Nationalities Papers*, 42:6. pp. 932.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid

¹⁷⁰ Ibid

¹⁷¹ Ademmer, E. & Börzel, T. A. (2013) ‘Migration, Energy and Good Governance in the EU’s Eastern Neighbourhood’, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 65:4. pp.600.

explained later in the research, NATO - a “US-dominated alliance”¹⁷² – as a first step towards European integration was a major US-initiated project for westernization of Georgia. Given such circumstances the EU had to manage some processes and programs in parallel and some - in coordination with the US and other international organizations in Georgia.

The Project of Europe as a Roadmap

By 2004 Georgia was neither prospective candidate nor interesting or relevant partner for the EU. Initial draft of the ENP did not cover Georgia, because Georgia was regarded as a failed and dangerous state to engage with. Things have changed after the Rose Revolution in 2003. Allegedly it was President Saakashvili’s repeated request towards the EU officials to extend the ENP to Georgia. The official position of the EU is that “Georgia was included in the ENP only after the rose revolution in June 2004 (Council decision)” and “the inclusion was supported” “in March 2004 in Bratislava at the occasion of a Prime Minister’s conference on „Wider Europe”¹⁷³. Hence one of the main demands of the Rose Revolution - reapproachment to Europe - was given a motion at the European level which accelerated with years. Whereas at national level the project of Europe was institutionalized as a sole roadmap for the country. Even though, as Nodia claims, “It is a twentieth-century tradition that the project of Georgian statehood depends on linking Georgia to the West”¹⁷⁴, it was a first time when a foreign policy initiative to join Euro-Atlantic structures was upgraded to the logic of a state building and development through hegemonization of the project of Europe.

The project is an extensive guidebook for development of the country. It is not based on a single document, but on a set of various different agreements, initiatives, reports, recommendations, programs, instruments, etc. which have been initiated and institutionalized gradually over time. From the Georgian perspective, the goal of all those documents was the closest possible political association and the greatest possible economic integration between Georgia and the EU, which could only be achieved through consolidation of a state on the basis of liberal democratic principles. These documents regulated relations both between the EU and Georgia, within Georgia and to certain degree Georgia’s relation to the rest of the world. The European project for Georgia evolved over time: in the beginning there was only a general idea of the EU membership of Georgia, then it started to have a content of its own as well as mission, goals, strategy and instruments to

¹⁷² Duke, S. (2008) ‘The Future of EU-NATO Relations: a Case of Mutual Irrelevance Through Competition?’ *European Integration*, 30:1, pp. 30.

¹⁷³ Dr Günter Verheugen, European Commissioner for Enlargement in 1999 -2004: an open lecture 'European Union and Neighborhood: Challenges & Opportunities' on March 6, 2014 at Ilia State University, Tbilisi, Georgia.

¹⁷⁴ Nodia, G (2013) ‘The Record of the Rose Revolution: mixed but still impressive’ in Cheterian, V. (ed.), *From Perestroika to Rainbow Revolutions: Reform and Revolution after Socialism*. Hurst and Co: London. pp 103.

deliver on its objectives. Every actor in the project had its own role to play for the benefit of Georgia, the region and in general entire European community.

Hence in Georgia the project of Europe was being developed in parallel of implementation of all signed agreements with the EU. The project was unfolding in reaction to successes and failures achieved by the country in terms of the commitments taken by the Georgian authority. Official documents, instruments, projects, reports constituted the content and guidelines for the European integration, which put into action the activities and initiatives, but most importantly increased presence of Europe at domestic level as a player in internal politics. They permeated every aspects of political, economic and social life of Georgia through inclusion of Europe literally everywhere on the expense of exclusion of Soviet legacy and Russia as an internal actor.

Actors: the UNM Government, the EU, the US and Russia

The Georgian government was an architect, a major force and drive behind the progress towards European transformation. They were initiators and implementers of the European project in the country. Right after taking the office in 2004 President Saakashvili and the UNM government – the hegemons - institutionalized the project of Europe as a sole roadmap for development of the country, and since then they repeatedly pounded on the EU door asking and requesting for more and more Europe in Georgia. Even though support and assistance from the European institutions played an essential role in an implementation of the European project in Georgia, its success largely depended on the Georgian government to seize or even create opportunities in order to achieve the goal and thus bring the country to the European family. All of the countries in the region were offered the same framework agreements with the EU, but it was Georgia which stuck out among the ENP countries by being a frontrunner in a successful implementation of the institutional reforms that more or less conformed to the European standard.

Success was not due to fear of a “stick” or/and generous ‘incentive’ from the EU, the European project was undertaken for the sake of a state building and identity constitution purposes and targeted those obsolete values and political principles inherited from the Soviet past, which were putting brakes to the development of the country. The project seemed the best framework for the state and identity formation activities due to political and financial benefits, but also in terms of engagement and persuasion of people in the appropriateness of the UNM driven reforms, because pro-European sentiments were very popular among people after the Rose Revolution.

For people in Georgia Europe was an attractive and beautiful idea which radiated progress and prosperity, but things beyond this, which was the most crucial part for entrenching the project of Europe, was unknown. In fact this unknown part, which relates to rule of law and equality, turned out to be the most unattractive

and incompatible component for people in Georgia. Hence although there was a demand within people of Georgia to join Europe, the project was imposed from the top – political authority in power - on the state and nation. In this case Georgia was no exception, because, as Nodia notes, “in all catch-up modernizations, it has been young (therefore open to change) and Westernized (therefore properly socialized) elites that drove the process”¹⁷⁵. And it seems the way the project was hegemonized and pressed ahead by the president and the UNM government “without other actors being able to offer effective resistance”, further proves to Nodia that the government’s agenda was “to change Georgian society rather than to represent its current interests and demands”¹⁷⁶.

The project was supported not only by the EU but also by the US directly and through NATO. The US stance on Georgia’s Euro-Atlantic integration can be a logical continuation of its support and politico-historical line towards the European consolidation and the project in general after the World War II well depicted by Desmond Dinan¹⁷⁷. The NATO represented an integral part of the European project. According to the Article 10 of the North Atlantic Treaty, which stipulates an accession in the organization, only “any other European country”¹⁷⁸ is eligible to become a member of the Euro-Atlantic organization. A closer look at the NATO Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) and the ENP Action Plan for Georgia clearly shows similarities in terms of values, norms and rules. Both of them are driven by liberal democratic principles, thus requirements for deepening of cooperation with partner country are almost the same, sometimes even the wording of the documents is similar¹⁷⁹. In general, the application to the NATO membership was considered as the beginning of the road towards the European transformation. The experience of Central and Eastern Europe showed that the way towards the European integration passed through NATO. Therefore, the plan of the UNM government was arguably to follow the same path. It was supposed to be a peace project where stakeholders from Georgia and the EU, but also from the region could cooperate for mutual development and interests.

¹⁷⁵ Nodia, G. (2013) ‘The Record of the Rose Revolution: mixed but still impressive’ in Vichen Cheterian, ed., *From Perestroika to Rainbow Revolutions: Reform and Revolution after Socialism*. Hurst and Co: London. pp. 95.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, 106-107.

¹⁷⁷ Dinan, D. (2005) *Ever Closer Union: An Introduction to European Integration* 3rd Edition, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder London.

¹⁷⁸ The North Atlantic Treaty, Washington D.C. – 4 April 1949, accessed January 5, 2017, http://www.nato.int/cps/sk/natohq/official_texts_17120.htm

¹⁷⁹ The wording of the two documents is sometimes similar, especially those which are related to a transition to democracy and market economy, protection of human rights and fighting corruption; for instance IPAP says that, within the framework of the plan, ‘Georgia will continue to harmonise its legislation with the EU and Council of Europe standards’ (IPAP 2004) while AP reads ‘Implementation of the Action Plan will significantly advance the approximation of Georgian legislation, norms and standards to those of the European Union’ (ENP AC for Georgia 2006).

Similarly to Europe, Russia was part of both internal and external dimension of Georgian politics, first of all because of its role in the conflicts on Georgian territory, and also due to its influence on politics at national level and because of the legacy of the Soviet Union. In the framework of its European project the Georgian government not only wanted to change the balance of external powers in favor of Europe, but also to diminish Russian influence on the internal developments through making the countries institutions and processes more European. And the method to accomplish these tasks was progress and modernization of Georgia, which was the key objective of the European project.¹⁸⁰

Instruments and Evaluation Mechanism

The ENP has become a main political instrument for transformation by reward in the neighborhood. The EU launched it as a foreign relations instrument with the partner countries. The goal of the ENP was the expansion of “the zone of prosperity, stability and security beyond”¹⁸¹ its borders; through encouraging reforms the EU hoped to handle its “citizens most pressing concerns, like energy supplies, migration, security, and stability”¹⁸². In general, “the ENP Action Plans follow the broad Copenhagen criteria stipulating conditions”¹⁸³ that target promotion of reforms in justice system as well as political and market-oriented economic reforms. Moreover, the ENP encourages cooperation on “key foreign policy objectives such as counter-terrorism and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction”¹⁸⁴. In exchange, the EU pledges financial assistance and increased role in tackling security issues related to the territorial conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Through this incentive the ENP opened up the opportunity for the south Caucasian states to cooperate within the context of CFSP/ESDP¹⁸⁵.

Political engagement was strengthened by the financial instruments. One of the main sources for funding was the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) which supported implementation of the European Neighborhood Policy in 2007-2013¹⁸⁶. Later in 2014 this mechanism was replaced by the European Neighborhood Instrument (ENI). The money from the ENPI was distributed through bilateral cooperation and regional programs. Bilateral cooperation targeted the objectives of the Eastern Partnership, while regional

¹⁸⁰ Mikheil Saakashvili and Catherine Ashton made joint statements for the media (speech, November 16, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

¹⁸¹ Ferrero-Waldner, B. (2006) ‘The European Neighborhood Policy: The EU’s Newest Foreign Policy Instrument’, *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 11:2, pp 139.

¹⁸² Ibid pp 140.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Aliboni, R. (2005) ‘The Geopolitical Implications of the European Neighborhood Policy’ *European Foreign Affairs Review* 10: 1-16.

¹⁸⁶ EU Neighborhood Policy – Georgia, accessed September 20, 2015, https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/neighbourhood/countries/georgia_en

programs comprised of Erasmus+, TAIEX, SIGMA, and the Neighbourhood Investment Facility (NIF). Apart from this Georgia received funding from the thematic programmes such as the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights and Instrument contributing to Stability. The ENPI funding for bilateral assistance in Georgia amounted to 452.1 million EUR. While within the framework of the Eastern Partnership integration and cooperation (EaPIC) programme Georgia received 49 million EUR in 2011-2013.¹⁸⁷

Evaluation mechanism was the main tool for allocation of the money. The EU regulates its contractual relations with the ENP countries, more specifically, it decides about increase of financial assistance or, in extreme cases, suspension of cooperation, based on a performance of a partner country¹⁸⁸. “Within these Action Plans that the EU is negotiating with Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, the EU sets concrete benchmarks for progress in a range of areas”¹⁸⁹. Whereas “indicator of achievements” stipulated by ENPI’s National Indicative Programme for 2007–2010 and 2011 -2013 define expected results of reforms. A progress in implementation of the EU conditions outlined in the Action Plan is acknowledged through a boost of incentive and benefit package. Such benefits are a closer relationship with the EU, more specifically access to its internal market, “involvement in EU programmes and cooperation in transport and energy networks”¹⁹⁰. Achievements and shortcomings registered by Georgia have been assessed and published in annual progress reports by the European Commission within the framework of the ENP process¹⁹¹. Based on the reports Georgia receive recommendations which sectors and issues it is expected to tackle next reporting year. Apart from the European Commission, the EU heads of state regularly advise the Georgian government on possible future actions and criticize on drawbacks.

Dimensions: Internal and External

The project has had internal and external dimensions. Most of the authors emphasize importance of the external component. A foreign policy dimension entails “joining Western-dominated international or regional

¹⁸⁷ European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument 2007-2013: Overview of Activities and Results, European Union 2014

¹⁸⁸ EU Neighbors Policy, accessed September 20, 2015: <http://www.euneighbours.eu/en/policy>

¹⁸⁹ EU – South Caucasus, Human Rights Watch 2005, accessed May 24, 2011, https://www.hrw.org/eu_south_caucasus/eng

¹⁹⁰ Ferrero-Waldner, B. (2006) ‘The European Neighborhood Policy: The EU’s Newest Foreign Policy Instrument’, *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 11:2, pp 140.

¹⁹¹ ENP –Georgia: annual progress reports 2004-2015, accessed September 20, 2015, http://www.eeas.europa.eu/archives/delegations/georgia/eu_georgia/political_relations/political_framework/enp_georgia_news/index_en.htm

organizations”¹⁹² and normalization of relations with Russia. Ghia Nodia believes that state-driven linkage between Georgia and the West “implies two interconnected dimensions: Georgia should be recognized as part of the West civilizationally, and obtain support and protection from it”¹⁹³. Guarantee for “Georgian national independence and prosperity” is a primary goal of external dimension¹⁹⁴. Whereas internal dimension of the project focuses on modernization of Georgia, in particular on handling corruption, institutional problems, budget deficit, territorial conflicts, social division and in general all internal issues which hinders development and the EU integration of the country¹⁹⁵. During implementation the list of the threats for the European project further increased. By 2008, due to the August War in South Ossetia between Georgia and Russia, Russia was proclaimed as a primary antagonist, or enemy, of the European project and this way of the statehood of Georgia. Incompatibility and hostility towards the objectives and value system of the project was the main reason for such decision.

By tackling internal issues, in particular hostile factors and actors, the UNM intended to bring the country up “to the level of the West”, as “the modernization aspect has sometimes been a prerequisite to joining certain international organizations”¹⁹⁶. Hence these two components are tightly intertwined with each other, because European integration without modernization of the country is simply impossible. But there was more than just a willingness to upgrade the state to the European standard in order to ensure membership into the European institutions. The goal was to make Europe a dimension of Georgian state and nation. The president’s discourse and initiatives targeted not only bringing Georgia to Europe but also bringing Europe to Georgia through “nationalization” of concept of Europe, specifically through making Europe an indigenous part of Georgia. Such endeavors were particularly important as the main challenge and to certain degree setback was an absence of experience to live with Europe and in European way in the country, despite the fact that Georgia’s self-identification with Europe was rather positive.

¹⁹² Cheterian, V. (2008) ‘Georgia’s Rose Revolution: Change or Repetition? Tension between State-Building and Modernization Projects’ *Nationalities Paper*. 36:4, pp 694.

¹⁹³ Nodia, G. (2013) ‘The Record of the Rose Revolution: mixed but still impressive’ in Vichen Cheterian, ed., *From Perestroika to Rainbow Revolutions: Reform and Revolution after Socialism*. Hurst and Co: London. 2013. Pp. 103

¹⁹⁴ Cheterian, V. (2008) ‘Georgia’s Rose Revolution: Change or Repetition? Tension between State-Building and Modernization Projects’ *Nationalities Paper*. 36:4, pp 694.

¹⁹⁵ EU/GEORGIA Action Plan, accessed September 20, 2015, http://eeas.europa.eu/archives/docs/enp/pdf/pdf/action_plans/georgia_enp_ap_final_en.pdf

¹⁹⁶ Cheterian, V. (2008) ‘Georgia’s Rose Revolution: Change or Repetition? Tension between State-Building and Modernization Projects’ *Nationalities Paper*. 36:4, pp 694.

Deficiencies of the European Project

The European Union's (EU) ability to diffuse its standards, rules and norms to the ENP signatory countries has been questioned time and over again. The root cause of the EU's failure is unanimously recognized to be an absence of the main powerful tool for transformation - membership conditionality in the ENP documents. However, this conclusion underestimates the major impediments that have frustrated the success of the ENP to certain degree. The primary detrimental factor, as usual, is the wait-and-see approach of the EU, which is determined by internal division among the member states, but also by the political, economic and social challenges of a region notorious for its problems in functioning of state institutions, territorial conflicts, pandemic corruption, constant struggle for power and last but not least for Russian domination.

According to Wong, "the problem with the EU of course, is that it is not a unified state actor, nor does it have clear and consistent external objectives"¹⁹⁷. Considering that "the EU is not a single unified actor, "EU foreign policy" is usually understood and analyzed as the sum and interaction of the "three strands" of Europe's "external relation system", comprising of (a) the national foreign policies of the member states; (b) EC external trade relations and development policy; and (c) the Common Foreign and Security Policy of the EU"¹⁹⁸. This is the reason why "cohesion" within the EU on the foreign policy approach is always a hard task for its officials. Basically, when it comes to the "big international issues" EU member states get engaged in the fierce discussions because each of them have different visions on the problems, and consequently alternative solutions to them. As a result, the EU's response is "either is missing or it is 'fragmented'"¹⁹⁹.

Division and hesitation within the EU over Georgia and in general over the South Caucasus was reflected on the Georgia's European project. The project's main political instrument for transformation - the ENP - has been criticized for lack of coherence and clarity of a strategy, weakness and vagueness of incentives, ineffectiveness of evaluation and the enforcement mechanisms to drive change.

Even though the ENP opened up the opportunity to the south Caucasian states to cooperate within the context of CFSP/ESDP²⁰⁰, for Wallace it is unclear how CFSP/ESDP aspects could complement ENP goals when "a CFSP did not have at its core a coherent strategy towards the EU's immediate neighbors"²⁰¹. Moreover,

¹⁹⁷ Wong, R. (2008) 'Foreign Policy' in Vink, M. P. and Graziano, P., *Europeanization: New Research Agendas*; Palgrave MacMillan. pp. 321

¹⁹⁸ Ibid. pp.322

¹⁹⁹ Duke, S. (2008) 'The Future of EU-NATO Relations: a Case of Mutual Irrelevance Through Competition?' *European Integration*, 30:1, pp. 36

²⁰⁰ Aliboni, R. (2005) 'The Geopolitical Implications of the European Neighborhood Policy', *European Foreign Affairs Review* 10: 1-16.

²⁰¹ Wallace, W. (2003) 'Looking after Neighborhood: Responsibilities for EU-25', Policy Paper No. 4, Notre Europe.

while committing itself to a participation in conflict prevention and crisis management in the South Caucasus within the framework of the ENP, it seems the EU overlooked the geopolitical implication of this aspect and the possible clash of interests with Russia in the region. Respectively this incentive was dismissed as invalid from the very beginning due to some EU members' unwillingness and/or reluctance to anger Russia.

In addition, the ENP incentive package has been reported as weak because it does not envisage a proper mechanism for punishment or persuasion such as a 'membership'. Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier are certain that success of an incentive fully depends on the target countries' rational cost-benefit calculation. The EU is likely to pursue an ENP signatory country to undertake a reform only if the partner country's benefit gained from launch of reform outweighs the risks. Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier believe that the partner country is most likely to reject EU driven reform if the public resonance towards that reform is negative at national level. Whereas Sasse argues that the primary reason of weakness of the EU incentive is the vagueness of conditionality. "The defining elements of conditionality – clear incentive and enforcement structures – are vaguer for both the EU and the ENP countries". She also criticizes the wording of the EU conditions, which according to her are "phrased in very general terms"²⁰². As a result the ENP countries are not certain what is at stake while addressing an EU supported reform. Arguably neither the EU nor ENP signatory countries are clear where ENP ends, what the end result is, or what might follow. Given circumstances leaves the ENP countries uncertain about stakes and risks of the EU driven reforms, which most likely discourages them to follow through the ENP plans.

Criticism has been further extended to the effectiveness of EU's progress assessment mechanism. Sasse argues that "the benchmarks for judging progress are not always clear, for example in the area of institutional and administrative capacity"²⁰³. Moreover, the "specific time frames" are missing, and measures to be taken in order to address conditions are usually unclear²⁰⁴.

²⁰² Sasse, G. (2009) 'The ENP Process and the EU's Eastern Neighbors: 'Conditionality-lite', Socialization and 'Procedural Entrapment'' *Global Europe Papers*, pp 9.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

4. Operationalization of the UNM's Hegemonic Discourse

Since the Rose Revolution in 2003 President Saakashvili and United National Movement (UNM) government have been in the spotlight of research community. The main subject of scrutiny has been the UNM driven reforms, initiatives and activities from the period of 2004-2012. Most of the scientific papers starts with the words of praise towards President Saakashvili for a peaceful revolution and certain achievements in the state building activities, but gradually the admiration for the success is replaced with criticism for cracking down on democratic institutions. Near its apex a story about Saakashvili's presidency is eventually complemented with another wave of praise for peaceful transfer of power to the opponent which set a positive precedent in Georgian history. The legacy of the UNM government is very much contested, at national level the feelings are strong for subjecting people of Georgia to the "revolutionary" social project they were not prepared for, while internationally the president is evaluated against the benchmarks of liberal democracy. The findings of such analysis are mixed. Some areas were affected more than others. The changes were more robust in ontological notions than in normative principles, which was targeted selectively by the UNM. This is because some normative notions such as pluralism were compromising a political space which was closed for alternative projects.

Discourse on Europeanness in Post-Soviet Georgia

A New Story about European Georgia

The debate on Europeanness of Georgian people started after the collapse of the Soviet Union from which Georgia emerged as an independent state, and intensified as the relationship between Georgia and the EU became even tighter. The politics of 1991-2003's was relatively balanced in terms of the European Union, as President Shevardnadze seemed rather cautious not to anger the Kremlin with its pro-European leaning. Moreover, by that time the EU still seemed rather distant. Zurab Zhvania, then-Parliamentary chairman, is regarded to be one of the first who appealed for Georgia's European identity. In his 1999 historic speech at the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Session, after the accession of Georgia as a member of the council, Mr. Zhvania proudly proclaimed first in Georgian and then in English: "I am Georgian and therefore I am European".

The Rose Revolution in 2003 in Tbilisi gave a new boost to Georgian's appeal to European Identity. Ever since it became the UNM government's primary strategy to convince both local population and the external community that Georgian people are the ancient Europeans, having purely European identity. For this purpose President Saakashvili with the UNM government institutionalized the European project. The project was not presented as a new initiative for building and development of the state, but rather as a "Georgian

nation-building project begun over 150 years ago” by “the Tergdaleulni”²⁰⁵, “a radical group of intelligentsia activists seeking an end to the humiliation of colonial dependence”²⁰⁶. Jones claims that “central to polemics of the late 19th century were themes of democracy, self-government, economic growth, relations with Europe and Russia, national education and the creation of national consciousness”²⁰⁷. Hence, he insists that “the ideas of the *tergdaleulni* and their social democratic successors, with their emphasis on Georgia’s European heritage, modernisation, entrepreneurship, anti-colonialism and the rule of law, provided the emotional underpinnings of debates leading up to 2003”²⁰⁸. Moreover, based on Mikheil Saakashvili’s speeches Jones concludes that the third president consciously echoed the themes, such as “greater community between ruler and ruled, the creation of a modern economy, the introduction of European institutions, and national unity based on a newly ‘cultured’ public”²⁰⁹. Indeed, the president quite often claimed that the UNM inherited European project from their “ancestors”, therefore Europe, as he noted, “is not only today’s choice, our ancestors chose Europe from ancient times and defined it, as our orienteer. [thus] Georgia’s return to Europe is not only the way out today, but our most fundamental and oldest historic orienteer.”²¹⁰ But even through the European alternative was not a new initiative, the UNM driven European project with its content, description, objectives, was totally new interpretation of Europeanness of Georgia.

Europeanization started with hegemonization of the European project. The first thing that was ensured at political level was primacy of the European project over other alternatives for development of Georgia. All other alternative projects were officially declared as unsuitable for development of Georgia. The president believed that “there cannot be ambiguity and uncertainty on where our country should go between Asia and Europe; there cannot be an uncertainty, ambiguity and ambivalence between the past and the future; there cannot be uncertainly, ambiguity and ambivalence between freedom and slavery!”²¹¹. He was convinced that for Georgia “there is no alternative, there is no hesitation and in my region there is no other name. There is

²⁰⁵ Jones, S (2006) ‘The Rose Revolution: A Revolution without Revolutionaries?’ *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 19:1, pp. 37.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia made a statement before his departure to Bucharest”, (speech, April 4, 2008), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

²¹¹ Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia addressed the public gathered at the Poti port”, (speech, August 8, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

the way of future and that is called Europe”²¹². Hence, Europe became a major inspiration to take after and emulate.

Narrative

In 2004 there was more or less an agreement among political elite in power that Georgian political identity was in crises due to civil war, political and economic turmoil. Hence the main challenge for the UNM and the president was to define “what it means to be Georgian”²¹³. They were, in particular, puzzled by how to define “the Georgian identity that would be inclusive enough to unite and unify our so often and so deeply divided nation, a definition that would be progressive enough to allow us to join back inevitably the European family of free nations, our family”²¹⁴. The European project arguably was a solution to the rather difficult situation, specifically “to all the problems” in the country²¹⁵. For the success of the project it was of utmost importance to build up an image of Europe, which would give a sense of relativity and affinity with Europe. This task was a rather challenging, because “the country’s social and historical experience with “Westernness”” was minimal²¹⁶.

The UNM driven European project responded all the essential questions of a project such as *why, what, how*. It had its background story, the story about European Georgia. The official plot of the story was that Georgians were ancient Europeans, whereas Georgia was a constitutive part of Europe, from which it was forcefully separated through and due to centuries of occupation by the Northern neighbor. The president insisted that Georgia “was part of the European culture for millennia”²¹⁷ fully sharing “European liberal values”²¹⁸, and even though centuries of separation and “walls erected by Empires” had its negative effects on the development of the country turning “Europe into a faraway mirage,” Georgian “people never ceased to feel deeply Europeans”²¹⁹. And because Georgia’s “European vocation” was “so deeply enshrined in our national

²¹² Mikheil Saakashvili “The address of the President of Georgia at the Forum “European Development Days” , (speech, December 15, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

²¹³ Mikheil Saakashvili “President of Georgia Addressed to the Georgian Society”, (speech, October 28, 2013), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili met with representatives of small and medium businesses”, (speech, December 11, 2008), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

²¹⁶ Nodia, G. (2005) ‘Georgia: Dimensions of Insecurity’ in Coppieters, B & Legvod, R (eds), *Statehood and Security; Georgia after the Rose Revolution*, London: MIT Press, pp.31.

²¹⁷ Mikheil Saakashvili “Address by the President of Georgia during the self-governance session in Strasbourg”, 12/17/2012 (speech, December 17, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

²¹⁸ Foreign Policy Strategy of Georgia 2006-2009. pp.21.

²¹⁹ Mikheil Saakashvili “President of Georgia's Address to European Parliament Members”, (speech, November 23, 2010), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

identity and history”²²⁰, as the story claimed, 2004 was a right time to bring back Georgia to its “righteous place”, “our European home”²²¹ among other European states through launching and implementing major modernization project – the project of Europe, which would speed up country’s transformation and approximation to European standard. By doing so the UNM intended to honor heroes’ and ancestors’ will, Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani's, Ilia Chavchavazde’s and Noe Jordania’s quest to see Georgia rejoining its historical, cultural, political and geographical place of dislocation – Europe²²². The story further insisted, that the bonds with Europe was so strong, hence “European and Georgian civilizations are so intertwined that it is difficult to determine whether Europe is our roots or on the contrary”²²³, which left Georgia “forever yoked to Europe.”²²⁴

The story was articulated and then rearticulated in the period of 2004-2012 over and time gain. As Daniel Kahneman claims “a reliable way to make people believe in falsehoods is frequent repetition, because familiarity is not easily distinguished from truth”²²⁵. Frequent articulation of the story about “European Georgia”, hence, endowed the country with Europeanness, as it was made an endogenous, the old-forgotten feature of Georgian state and identity. The story was not narrated as a myth, anecdotal evidence being the only source of information for proving Europeanness of Georgia. In addition to anecdotal data the president constantly substantiated the story with arguments based on facts from history and official documents.

Why question of the project focused on the main reasons for deepening European integration in Georgia. The reasons varied from political and economic to historic and cultural affinity with Europe. On political note joining the EU in the future was considered as “a real geopolitical breakthrough for Georgia and a historic chance”²²⁶, a chance to leave Russian sphere of influence and ensure security and prosperity within its border. Because the European Union was “the greatest political success of recent decades”²²⁷ approximation to

²²⁰ Mikheil Saakashvili “Remarks by H.E. Mikheil Saakashvili at the 62nd Session of the United Nations”, (remarks, September 27, 2007), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

²²¹ Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia and the President of the European Council made joint statement”, (statement, July 4, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

²²² Foreign Policy Strategy of Georgia 2006-2009. pp.21.

²²³ Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia made a statement before his departure to Bucharest”, (speech, April 1, 2008), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

²²⁴ Mikheil Saakashvili “Remarks To the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe - Strasbourg, France”, (remarks, January 24, 2008), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

²²⁵ Kahneman, D (2011) *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. New York, Daniel Kahneman, pp. 46.

²²⁶ Mikheil Saakashvili “Joint statements by Mikheil Saakashvili and Stefan Fule”, (statement, February 12, 2013), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

²²⁷ Mikheil Saakashvili “Address by the President of Georgia at the 68th session of the United Nations General Assembly”, (speech, September 25, 2013), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

European model became “the major driving force of social, economic and political transformation in Georgia”²²⁸, whereas the EU membership - as a highest acknowledgement by prosperous European countries for achieving higher European standard. Due to economic difficulties Georgia needed “help from Europe”, in this case a financial support in order to keep Georgia “moving towards Europe and approximating with European institutions.”²²⁹ Historical and cultural objectives played no less importance in the UNM agenda to reapproach Europe. At several occasions the president claimed that Georgians “should remain a nation united in our historical destiny to join the European family of democratic nations, the family we should never have been separated from, our family”²³⁰. However, the main reason for pursuing the European project and European dream was the nature of the EU in contrast to other projects. The EU, as the president insisted, “does not seek to absorb us (while the other one is dreaming about it) - that the choice should be obvious”²³¹. Moreover, other key values within the EU was described as a main attracting factor, and mainly the fact that “meritocracy prevails over nepotism, tolerance is a fundament of public life, current opponents are the future ministers and not the prisoners to be or the enemies to beat”²³².

How question mainly explained the methods and strategies to implement the European project and hence “to achieve our European destiny”²³³. The UNM’s one of the main methods was constantly “knocking on the doors of the European Union”²³⁴, addressing the EU demands and complying to the EU criteria through initiation and implementation of reforms, investing “a lot of time” and “tremendous efforts” in activities that target European integration, coherently and consistently handling the EU recommendations, last but not least sustaining “continuous transformation and progressive integration in the European and Euro-atlantic structures”²³⁵. Being open and inclusive of the EU values was yet another important way to beef up European

²²⁸ Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia made a speech at Paris Institute of Political Science”, (speech, June 9, 2010), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

²²⁹ Mikheil Saakashvili “Joint statements by Mikheil Saakashvili and Stefan Fule”, (statement, February 12, 2013), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

²³⁰ Mikheil Saakashvili “Address by the President of Georgia at the 68th session of the United Nations General Assembly”, (speech, September 25, 2013), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Mikheil Saakashvili “President of Georgia's Address to European Parliament Members”, (speech, November 23, 2010), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

²³⁴ Mikheil Saakashvili “Address by the President of Georgia at the 68th session of the United Nations General Assembly”, (speech, September 25, 2013), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

²³⁵ Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia made a speech at the international conference held in Kiev” , (speech, November 27, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

integration in Georgia. Hence, modernization through approximation to the EU standard was a key driving force behind the UNM driven efforts.

Persuasion of Georgian people was also among the strategies due to concerns about euro-skepticism in the country. *How* question quite often entailed explanatory narrative why this or that reform/activity was needed, because implementation of the reforms used to be very painful for some group of people directly affected by the reforms. The president believed that some people might think that his government was “pursuing a mirage” because “the promises seem so far away”, while “the threats become so strong, the pressures so direct”²³⁶. He tried to convince those still in doubt that “there is no alternative to making a Herculean effort and meeting exact criteria - because such principles are precisely what create the Union.”²³⁷

Explanatory narrative also targeted European community as it was of utmost importance to keep the EU informed about Georgia’s progress in cohesion to European standard. The state narrative about Georgia’s progress had to be substantiated by real-time continuous acknowledgement from the EU’s side. This was expected to play a positive role in strengthening the claims on Europeanness of Georgia. Moreover, dedicated engagement of the EU in Georgia, particularly bringing Georgia to the EU agenda and taking the country to higher level of association with the EU structures was still another challenge, as the history of Europe’s negligence was arguably troubling and thus the issue of concern for the UNM and the president. Georgian history keeps the accounts of Georgia “asking for assistance and some sort of contract of alliance” to Europe, also the accounts on a failed “attempt [...] to integrate Georgia into international system and receive guarantees of international defense”²³⁸, which is no less important. “At that time Europe left Georgia alone”²³⁹, since then the country was “forgotten and neglected for many centuries”²⁴⁰ by Europe, but to avoid nihilism towards the EU in current time the visibility of the EU’s engagement was important to proceed with the European project. At national level for the narrative about Europeanness to be valid, political and financial engagement of Europe in long neglected Georgia was not only necessary but instrumental.

²³⁶ Mikheil Saakashvili “Address by the President of Georgia at the 68th session of the United Nations General Assembly”, (speech, September 25, 2013), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

²³⁷ Ibid

²³⁸ Mikheil Saakashvili “President of Georgia held a conference regarding the signing of Charter between Georgia and the United States”, (speech, January 11, 2009), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

²³⁹ Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia met the representatives of EU countries”, (speech, December 5, 2008), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

²⁴⁰ Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia addressed the international conference of experts on the Caucasus”, (speech, December 7, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

What question detailed outcomes and output of the European project. Even though the state official narrative claimed that Georgians were “European nation” and “Georgia is the oldest European country”²⁴¹, the UNM driven “major battle” targeted establishment of Georgia “as a European state” because it was “isolated for centuries and Europe managed, to a large extent, to forget our country.”²⁴² Hence the UNM “major attempt” zeroed in on creation of “a modern, European, democratic, successful state in Caucasus”²⁴³, which was able to deliver for its citizens “freedom, democracy, free and fair elections, a non-corrupt environment and separation of money and politics; a political process based on people’s trust instead of bribery, threats and other ways of manipulation”²⁴⁴.

In the long term the impact of the project was expected to be a membership of Georgia into the Euro-Atlantic structures, to the one of the most prestigious European clubs of advanced countries. While In short term the UNM prioritized deepening and widening of political and economic integration with the EU, which would translate into the closest possible political partnership and the greatest possible degree of economic association with the EU. To achieve such goal long, complex and multi-dimensional process of Europeanization was started through inclusion of Georgia in various policy documents, platforms, forums, driven and supported by the EU. The ENP and Eastern partnership and later a start of negotiations on the Association Agreement (AA) are very important outcomes of such efforts by the UNM government. According to the president’s discourse the list of most wanted outcomes of the European project entailed - building the bridges towards Europe, prosperity, security, political acknowledgment and stability of Georgia, increased importance through various communication (eg. railway, seaport) and regional energy projects, boosted the EU financial assistance. Whereas as outputs of the project the UNM targeted to deliver cities and town upgraded to European level, “hospitals and roads that equals to European”²⁴⁵, “European style schools”,

²⁴¹ Mikheil Saakashvili “Address by President Saakashvili at the Georgian Security forum”, (speech, February 18, 2006), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

²⁴² Mikheil Saakashvili “President Saakashvili visits Zurab Zhvania School of Public Administration in Kutaisi”, (speech, May 3, 2006), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

²⁴³ Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili’s speech delivered at the ceremony dedicated to Russia-Georgian war anniversary”, (speech, August 7, 2009), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

²⁴⁴ Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia and the President of the European Council made joint statements”, (speech, July 4, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

²⁴⁵ Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia delivered a speech for the newly accredited diplomats in Georgia”, (speech, April 24, 2008), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

“European standard water supply and sewage systems”²⁴⁶, “European-level healthcare system”²⁴⁷, “European-standard prison”²⁴⁸, “European standard dorm”²⁴⁹, “new technologies, high level of education, development”²⁵⁰. The idea behind the project was to expose to the power of European integration everything and everyone in the country and thus advance towards EU integration.

Documents and Symbols

In parallel to narrative, number of different reforms and activities were initiated and carried out within the framework of European project. The UNM introduced different initiatives in order to “promote its [Georgia’s] European Identity”²⁵¹. The president arguably was well informed where to aim, what to target and which literature refer to in order to prove Europeanness of Georgia. There is vast literature and large number of authors defining criteria for being European, however “French writer Paul Valerie’s criteria of being a European” turned out Saakashvili’s favorite, who allegedly claims that being European is “first, being a relative of the Greek civilization. Second, the Christian religion [...]. And the third criterion is a democratic system”²⁵². Based on this criteria Georgia was on its way to becoming European, as democracy was still in making in the country. While indicators of first two criteria had to be pulled out from the history, national project and science, for display for local and international community. In most of the cases such indicators required reimagining and repackaging to make them more easily visible and understandable. For that the president and the UNM launched and undertook number of various activities in the country.

Right after the revolution the president initiated the flag with five red heraldic crosses. The flag itself was not new, it used to appear during the national independence movement in 1990s. However it was during Saakashvili’s presidency the flag was charged with the symbols which conveyed the Europeanness of the country. The president claimed that new Georgian flag “is the flag of Europe as well, our historical five-cross-

²⁴⁶ Mikheil Saakashvili “President Saakashvili meets with regional TV companies’ journalists”, (speech, April 8, 2006), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

²⁴⁷ Mikheil Saakashvili “President Saakashvili focuses on education and healthcare programs”, (speech, January 18, 2006), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

²⁴⁸ Mikheil Saakashvili “President Saakashvili signs legislation on organized crime and racketeering”, (speech, December 29, 2005), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

²⁴⁹ Mikheil Saakashvili “President Saakashvili unveils Zurab Zhvania School of Public Administration in Kutaisi”, (speech, December 9, 2005), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

²⁵⁰ Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia addressed the personnel of the Military-Scientific Technical Center “Delta”, (speech, November 4, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

²⁵¹ Foreign Policy Strategy 2006-2009, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, pp.19.

²⁵² Mikheil Saakashvili “President Saakashvili holds press conference at the State Chancellery”, (speech, April 1, 2005), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

flag, [...] is the symbol of freedom, firmness and unity today”²⁵³. According to the Georgian president’s official web-site, the new flag, which reportedly used to mark Georgia in the medieval European maps, is known as “Joffrois De Bullion’s Coat of Arms (Cross bearer in 1099), Jerusalem’s Coat of Arms and as a Holy Sign”. Moreover, President Saakashvili insisted that, the flag “reflects our traditions. It is based on Christian symbolics, and [...] It has some symbolic traditional value for Georgians. It also clearly underlines our European identity, and Georgia belongs to Europe”²⁵⁴.

The flag along with other initiatives was a part of broader campaign of the Georgian president directed towards boosting presence of Europe in the country. For the same purpose the monuments of Medea and Golden Fleece were erected in Batumi, and the monument of Prometheus - in Borjomi. The monuments were made to remind and entrench the idea that “this is the country, where the hero of Greek mythology Prometheus was chained to one of our peaks”²⁵⁵ and that “Georgia is the country, in which there was the Golden Fleece, which was the symbol of wealth and success for the world's prosperity and for antique European world”²⁵⁶. By putting on the pedestal characters from Greek mythology Saakashvili emphasized on antiquity of the country and thus claimed a place for Georgia in Greek civilization, which represents a “cradle” of modern Europe and its civilization. Saakashvili seemed to be well aware that “the strongest dimension of Europe’s identity is undoubtedly its history”²⁵⁷ and “a common historical and cultural heritage”²⁵⁸. That is the reason he rather often used to draw on history in order to claim Europeanness of Georgia. In “common past” he seemed to see an opportunity to build common European future. For this purpose he arguably revived the myth in the national political discourse as well. In 2007 President Saakashvili in his annual report to the parliament claimed that the Greek myths on *Cochis* proved that historically both Georgia and Europe aspired to come together, because Georgia was European state, and thus it must return to its place.²⁵⁹

Institutional framework was harmonized along the lines of the state narrative about Europe. To step up efforts towards European integration the State ministry for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration was established

²⁵³ Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili addressed the participants of live-chain from Freedom Square”, (speech, September 1, 2008), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

²⁵⁴ Georgian National Flag. *President of Georgia.*, accessed October 22, 2008, <http://president.gov.ge/?l=E&m=7&sm=1>

²⁵⁵ The President of Georgia Michael Saakashvili Visited Presentation of the Building of the “Haiate” Hotel (2006) *President of Georgia.*, accessed October 14, 2008, <http://www.president.gov.ge/?l=E&m=0&sm=3&st=780&id=1977>

²⁵⁶ Ibid,

²⁵⁷ Wolton, D. (1993), *La dernière utopie. Naissance de l’Europe démocratique*, Flammarion, Paris. pp.13.

²⁵⁸ Couloubaritsis, L., Leeuw, de M., Noël, E., Sterckx, C. (1993), *The Origins of European Identity*, European Interuniversity Press, Brussels,

²⁵⁹ “Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili delivers annual address to parliament (2007)”, *President of Georgia.*, accessed June 20, 2016, <http://www.parliament.ge/en/media/axali-ambebi/georgian-president-mikheil-saakashvili-delivers-annual-address-to-parliament-12947.page>

in 2004. The idea on Europe has become the main issue of the state Foreign Policy Strategy 2006-2009 and National Security Concept as well in order to reaffirm that Georgia is an “integral part of the European political, economic and cultural area, whose fundamental national values are rooted in European values and traditions.”²⁶⁰ For visibility of Europe in Georgia but also to show where the UNM was “aiming to take Georgia with the reforms” the EU flag, which is also a flag of the Council of Europe, was fixed “besides every Georgian flag” on and in every state and governmental buildings²⁶¹. These activities were directed towards institutionalization of Europe in Georgia, which zeroed in on crowding every aspect, area and sector at domestic level with Europe in general and in particular with European policy, symbol, value and norm.

Behavior

Saakashvili with the UNM government managed to tighten the relationship between Georgia and the EU. In 2004 Georgia-EU relations moved to a new phase of cooperation²⁶². The EU launched the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) as a foreign relations instrument with Georgia and other Eastern neighbours²⁶³. On November 14, 2006 the EU-Georgia Cooperation Council endorsed the ENP Action Plan for a period of five years. The relations further advanced by a Joint Declaration on Eastern Partnership signed in Prague on May 7, 2009. Later in 2010 the negotiations on the Association Agreement started which was successfully finalized by signature of the agreement on June 27, 2014.

Official commitments stipulated by the agreements with the EU were reinforced by measurable outcomes in European transformation. From year to year, but in particular within the 3 years after the revolution Georgia had been scoring progress in addressing the ENP Action Plan provisions. The UNM government was particularly successful in institutional reforms. By 2012 Georgian Government was praised for strengthening “the freedom of expression and opinion”; continued “reform in the justice system and advanced sectoral reforms and regulatory approximation to the EU acquis”²⁶⁴. As a part of the process regulatory framework

²⁶⁰ Parliament of Georgia, National Security Concept of Georgia, 2005, accessed November 10, 2016, http://www.parliament.ge/files/292_880_927746_concept_en.pdf

²⁶¹ Mikheil Saakashvili “President of Georgia’s Address to European Parliament Members”, (speech, November 23, 2010), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

²⁶² Initially the ENP plan did not cover South Caucasus, only few months after the Rose Revolution in 2003 the EC decided to include three South Caucasian states in the ENP plans. Presumably the EU made such decision due to U-turn in Georgian politics towards Europe. During an open lecture ‘European Union and Neighborhood: Challenges & Opportunities’ on March 6, 2014 at Ilia State University, Dr Günter Verheugen, European Commissioner for Enlargement in 1999 -2004, said that ‘It is true, that Georgia was included in the ENP only after the rose revolution in June 2004 (Council decision). I have met Mr. Saakashvili in March 2004 in Bratislava at the occasion of a Prime Minister’s conference on „Wider Europe“, where the inclusion of Georgia was supported’.

²⁶³ Missiroli, A (2007) ‘The ENP three years on: where from – and where next?’ Policy Brief, European Policy Center, accessed June 23, 2016, http://www.epc.eu/documents/uploads/1003848642_ENP%20three%20years%20on.pdf

²⁶⁴ ENP Country Progress Report 2012 –Georgia, MEMO/13/246, Brussels, 20 March 2013.

was being regularly amended, though selectively, by the Georgian government in accordance to European standard. Such amendments had particular importance because “norms are not static entities, but incorporated and interpreted features of existence that are sustained by the idealizations furnished by fantasy”.²⁶⁵ Amended legal framework were intended to change cognition and behavior of people. Furthermore, it was expected to be an indivisible part of the daily routine through regulating certain aspects of life in Georgia. With time these aspects were increasing symmetrically with more and more amendments being made for legal approximation purposes. Gradually but solidly Europe was taking control over unregulated and under-regulated areas and thus establishing itself in the country.

The UNM and the president’s activities, which will be further discussed in the next section, did not always comply with European standard. There were number of shortcomings which were compromising progress towards European integration to certain degree. The problem was selective compliance to democratic reforms. The key points of contentions between the EU and Georgia were accumulation of power in the president, control over main TV stations through ownership, abuse of administrative resources prior to elections, limited political dialogue with opponents and last but not least mass wiretapping of public and private domains. The EU’s criticism and recommendations were further extended to: shortcomings in the electoral law, the justice and the penitentiary system; but also to lack of the comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, transparent and impartial criminal prosecutions, the accountability and democratic oversight of law enforcement agencies²⁶⁶. Obviously such behavior was neither in line with the European project nor norms and principles of Europe which was not only putting under question dedication of the president and the UNM government to the values of liberal democracy, but also jeopardizing the project itself.

Impact of the European Project on the National Political Project

Approximation of Georgian to European identity was definitely a key issue on the agenda of Saakashvili’s presidency and his project. For this purpose the president targeted the national project and its pillars on regular basis. Among other pillars Christianity used to be in the center of the UNM discussions. On several occasions the president claimed that “Georgia is the oldest Christian country. Some conservative Europeans think that Christianity is one of the criteria for being a European”²⁶⁷. Even though there are diversity of opinions on European identity, many agree that Christianity along with antiquity and Enlightenment is a main pillar which played a significant role in its constitution. Christianity “represented a fundamental revolution in

²⁶⁵ Butler, J (2000) ‘Competing Universalities’ in Butler, J., Laclau, E. and Zizek, S., *Universality Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*, London: Verso. pp. 152.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Mikheil Saakashvili “Address by President Saakashvili at the Georgian Security forum”, (speech, February 18, 2006), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

the formation of European man” because of its role in development of morality and sense of community in Europe²⁶⁸. Discussions among academic circles mainly revolve around Protestantism and to certain degree Catholicism, but this did not hinder Saakashvili from declaring Georgian Orthodox Christianity, which is “a part of the identity of Georgia”, as the country’s “passport to Europe, to the civilized world”²⁶⁹. This move was particularly important considering the history of Georgia, which defines Christianity as a guardian of Georgian people and state on the one hand, and on the other the popularity of the Georgian Orthodox Church, which amounted to 97%²⁷⁰. By projecting Christian Europe he made it accessible and thus easier for Georgians to imagine themselves as Europeans.²⁷¹

The European project even added its own touch to the founder of the popular national project. Within the context of Europeanization in post-soviet Georgia Ilia Chavchavadze acquired the role of a modern-day reformer of the 21st century whose ideas was still appealing because they were feeding on liberal European values. It is therefore obvious that if the founder was a European style leader preaching for liberal values, then the national political project outlined by him should have been invested with European values. Moreover, if his project envisaged Georgian state and identity formation, it most likely envisioned a construction of European style nation state out of Georgia. The key aspect in revitalizing Ilia Chavchavadze is that the national project and in general his teachings have been a mandatory component for every Georgians to study and analyze at Georgian literature and history class at schools. Ilia Chavchavadze’s, as of “the most universally revered hero”²⁷² in the country, presence and influence is significant. Therefore, Europeanness of Ilia Chavchavadze should have been engaging particularly for those, who were frightened by losing Georgianness through an introduction of the European project. President Saakashvili declared that:

Six years ago we chose exactly this way - the way of Ilia Chavchavadze, and now in six years Georgia is on 11th place in doing business according to World Bank’s information²⁷³.

²⁶⁸ Couloubaritsis, L., Leeuw, de M., Noël, E., Sterckx, C. (1993), *The Origins of European Identity*, European Interuniversity Press, Brussels. pp.66.

²⁶⁹ Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia congratulated the Georgian nation on the launch of construction of a new cathedral on Makhata Mountain”, (speech, 17 April, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

²⁷⁰ “Political Attitudes in Georgia: Result of an August 2012 Survey” By The Caucasus Research Resource Center (CRRC) for National Democratic Institute (NDI). accessed January 1, 2013, <http://www.ndi.org/node/19283>

²⁷¹ Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia congratulated the Georgian nation on the launch of construction of a new cathedral on Makhata Mountain”, (speech, 17 April, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

²⁷² Kinzer, S (1998) ‘Saguramo Journal; On the Tallest Pedestals, a Man for All Georgian’, accessed November 20, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/1998/05/07/world/saguramo-journal-on-the-tallest-pedestal-a-man-for-all-georgians.html>

²⁷³ Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili presented economic package to the Parliament of Georgia”, (speech, 06 October, 2009), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

The European project unveiled in 2004 as the single roadmap for a development of Georgia was in its nascent stage. After the revolution it accelerated its significance but the content and an action plan of the project was regularly in the making. The project was a dynamic and open-ended plan for transformation of a country. It seems there was no coherent plan which cognitive notions to target, what activities to undertake for Europeanization purposes; the decisions were made on the spot according to an unfolding situation. Therefore it is difficult to claim whether President Saakashvili first Europeanized certain national symbols/pillars and then listed Europe as one of the main dimension of the national political project, or the other way around. Here the key is that he declared Europe as one of the main pillars of the national project on which the whole national edifice depended. Introduction of Europe was not the only novelty, he recreated the entire national project by listing “simple” but at the same time key “principles” without which the European project would go to no avail. The president insisted that:

This national project, my fellow citizens, is based on simple principles that are shared by all of us in this room: independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, democracy, prosperity and Europe. All these principles are inter-connected. In the absence of even one of them, the whole edifice can crumble. Undermine our sovereignty and there is no democracy possible: how can we build a democracy in a nation that does not fully control its own fate? Take out Europe and we lose sovereignty. The very moment we slow down our European and Euro-Atlantic integration, our independence and our sovereignty will be hungrily swallowed by a former Empire.²⁷⁴

Georgia’s geographic location was arguably the weakest and to certain degree failing point for claiming Europeanness of Georgia. The president seemed informed about contestedness of Europeanness of Georgia’s geographic location. Arguably he was aware that even the major international organizations cannot come to an agreement whether Georgia is Europe or Asia. According to the UN, Georgia is western Asia²⁷⁵; almost the same standpoint is adopted by the CIA World Factbook - Southwestern Asia²⁷⁶; for the EU Georgia is Caucasus, while the NATO has acknowledge Georgia as European²⁷⁷. Hence geography was a point he seemingly preferred not to ponder upon too much, nevertheless he did not leave the critics without a response by

²⁷⁴ Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia: “I was planning to go to the Parliament to offer them cooperation”, (speech, 02 August 2013), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

²⁷⁵ UN – Georgia, accessed on December 20, 2018, <http://data.un.org/en/iso/ge.html>

²⁷⁶ Central Intelligence Agency – Georgia, accessed on December 20, 2018, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/gg.html>

²⁷⁷ A membership to the NATO is limited solely to European countries, therefore by granting a status of “an aspirant country” to Georgia at the Bucharest Summit in 2008 the NATO recognized Europeanness of Georgia.

claiming that “geography is being fully revised”²⁷⁸. For him the main indicator of Europeanness of Georgia was science and in this case archeology which proved that “the oldest Europeans, the Georgians”, whose skulls “are kept in the museum” in Tbilisi, migrated from Africa to Europe through Georgia²⁷⁹.

Within the framework of the European project every initiated novelty by the UNM government was presented as something taken from dusty shelves of Georgian history and breathed in a new life which had European colouring. Every such marriage – articulation - between national and European was supported with a narrative which seemed to have its roots in history. The main target in this regard was national symbols such as flag, myth, culture and even a founder of the national popular project himself, arguably every national aspect should have been permeated with the Europeanness as per the state agenda. The president could readily merge different national and European elements with each other. There was no limit to his imagination and projection, the issues – elements to be articulated - could range from Georgia’s geopolitical importance to agriculture and rich culture of the country. The aim of the state driven campaign was to entrench the story about Europeanness of Georgia as an objective reality irreversibly²⁸⁰.

The Hegemonic Project in Practice: State-building, Democratization & Political Contestation

The Legacy of President Saakashvili and UNM Government is contested. There is hardly any paper without criticism. There is almost overall agreement among scholars that during Saakashvili’s presidency democracy deteriorated in Georgia on the one hand, but on the other the state and its institutions started to function properly, which saved the country from further failure. But there are still some who think that “because of absence of democracy state building achievements were compromised”²⁸¹. Before analyzing the UNM driven European project it is important to depict a legacy President Saakashvili inherited from his predecessor, late President Shevardnadze, in 2004.

By 2004 Georgia was considered as a “failing” state, because, as Mitchel observes, “during the late Shevardnadze years, the Georgian state had, to a substantial extent, simply ceased to function”²⁸². Broers

²⁷⁸ Mikheil Saakashvili “Address by President Saakashvili at the Georgian Security forum”, (speech, February 18, 2006), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

²⁸⁰ The President of Georgia Michael Saakashvili Visited Presentation of the Building of the “Haiate” Hotel (2006) President of Georgia, October 14, 2008, <http://www.president.gov.ge/?l=E&m=0&sm=3&st=780&id=1977>

²⁸¹ Mitchell, L. A. (2009) ‘Compromising Democracy: State Building in Saakashvili’s Georgia’, *Central Asian Survey*, 28: 2.

²⁸² Broers, L. (2005) ‘After the ‘revolution’: civil society and the challenges of consolidating democracy in Georgia’, *Central Asian Survey*, 24:3. pp. 339.

claims that state's "wide-ranging atrophy" was "discernible at multiple levels"²⁸³. Due to weak and dysfunctional state institutions the government was simply unable to "provide basic amenities or guarantees of social welfare" and "enact or even elaborate policies that could generate resources other than those provided by external donors"²⁸⁴. Broers believes that during last years of Shevardnadze's presidency Georgia eventually evolved in a country where "notions of public accountability, constitutional review and normative rules and standards of government played little role"²⁸⁵. In addition to this, widespread corruption, territorial problems and vested interest of certain groups from political elite to keep the country in the state of despair was gradually exhausting the country and hence sliding it into an ultimate failure.

Corruption "ate into almost every sphere of political and social life and significantly reduced state revenue"²⁸⁶. The most corrupted public sectors were energy, "higher education, law enforcement agencies, particularly the transport and traffic police, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs"²⁸⁷. Moreover, lack of full control over the state's territory kept the country in constant crises and political turbulence. Three regions: Abkhazia, Tskhinvali and Adjara "were no longer under the control of the central government in Tbilisi. Instead, all three were led by local politicians, and/or warlords, who were strongly supported by Moscow"²⁸⁸. Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions, which were a hotspot of regular military tensions as well as human and arms trafficking, "achieved a form of de facto independence through violent conflicts in the early 1990s supported by Russia"²⁸⁹. Whereas Adjara region "never tried to formally secede, but in practice was ruled by a local dictator, Aslan Abashidze, who did not allow any infringements upon his almost unlimited control"²⁹⁰.

Apart from and because of the state failure to fulfill its functions, democracy was gradually deteriorating in the country. In general Shevardnadze's presidency was labeled as a "hybrid regime" due to "a mixture of autocratic and democratic elements"²⁹¹. Influential and "vibrant civil society", in particular well-developed non-governmental sector and independent media outlets, was "regarded as evidence of Georgia's democratic

²⁸³ Ibid, pp.335.

²⁸⁴ Ibid.

²⁸⁵ Ibid, pp. 334.

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Ibid.

²⁸⁸ Mitchell, L. A. (2009) 'Compromising Democracy: State Building in Saakashvili's Georgia', *Central Asian Survey*, 28:2. pp.173.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Nodia, G. (2013) 'The Record of the Rose Revolution: mixed but still impressive' in Vichen Cheterian, ed., *From Perestroika to Rainbow Revolutions: Reform and Revolution after Socialism*. Hurst and Co: London. pp. 99.

²⁹¹ Ibid, pp. 86.

credentials”²⁹², while a misconduct of elections and poorly developed political party system contained corrosive signs of autocracy. The main reason for underdevelopment of a party system in Georgia was actors’ differentiated access and capacity to mobilize financial resources. “The progressive decline in the standards of Georgian elections since the early 1990s”²⁹³ was one of the main problems that was eroding democracy in the country, which eventually resulted in the 2003 parliamentary elections marred with massive irregularities. In general attitude towards democracy among personalities surrounding Shevardnadze, as Broers observes, was very cynical²⁹⁴. Respectively the opening of democracy in the areas of media and NGO sector, was arguably by a default rather than by a design of Shevadnadze’s government.

These were the problems President Saakashvili had to tackle in order to keep the country up and running. Institutionalization of the project of Europe was a response to the existing situation in the country. Most of the authors, described elsewhere in the paper, emphasize two main mission of the modernization project driven by the president and the UNM government, namely state-building and liberal democracy (eg. Nodia, Cheterian, Zedania). But there was still another key challenge related to maintaining a hegemony of the European project in the country in order to ensure at least implementation of the project which was constantly under threat by the alternative Russian project since its injection. Hence apart from undertaking state-building and democracy-strengthening activities, the president with his team had to deal with political contestation and advances made by an alternative project at national level.

State-building

“Laying the ground for stateness”²⁹⁵ was a top priority of President Saakashvili and the UNM government. This envisaged modernization of the state institutions and resumption of full control on Georgian territories. Activities directed towards reformation of the key state institutions were complex, wide-ranging and profound. Out of problems widespread corruption was considered as a malaise which was debilitating the country from inside out since independence. On the one hand it was converting infected state institutions dysfunctional, on the other it was increasing gap between the state and its people due to lack of trust among general public towards corrupted state institutions and officials. To reverse the situation the Georgian government adopted very principled approach towards fight against corruption. It undertook number of measures in order to sweep away corruption from the key public sectors in particular from police, military

²⁹² Broers, L. (2005) ‘After the ‘revolution’: civil society and the challenges of consolidating democracy in Georgia’, *Central Asian Survey*, 24:3. pp. 337.

²⁹³ Ibid, pp. 335.

²⁹⁴ Ibid, pp.337.

²⁹⁵ Nodia, G. (2013) ‘The Record of the Rose Revolution: mixed but still impressive’ in Vichen Cheterian, ed., *From Perestroika to Rainbow Revolutions: Reform and Revolution after Socialism*. Hurst and Co: London. pp. 86.

and higher education institutions. Changes mainly entailed 1. legislative amendments, 2. institutional revamp and 3. technological upgrade.

The UNM government used “draconian methods” in order to radically reform traffic police²⁹⁶. The government completely dismantled the structure, “which had been considered to be one of the most corrupt institutions in the country”²⁹⁷, instead introduced a patrol police. It made considerable investment in modernization of infrastructure and equipment for police, which ranged from uniform, cars and electronic devices to new buildings made of glass. Glass buildings signified transparency of once close and grim structure. In the process of reformation majority of old staff were fired and new personnel was recruited as a new DNA for the agency. Recruits were trained in the newly established Police Academy, where they had to pass mandatory exams²⁹⁸. “To attract capable staff” as well as prevent future bribe-taking or any type of malfeasances, salaries were increased roughly from 25USD to 600USD per month, which is well above an average salary in Georgia²⁹⁹. In addition, “full package of benefits” was introduced to enable police officers live well on their own remuneration³⁰⁰. At the same time “policy of zero tolerance” was upheld against offenders. The UNM government imposed “draconian fines for minor offences”, while “petty corruption was upgraded as a serious crime, warranting several years of imprisonment”³⁰¹. Light is convinced that “the reforms have eliminated many forms of corruption and have transformed what was a criminalised and dysfunctional police force into the most disciplined and service-oriented law enforcement agency in the post-Soviet region”³⁰². With the police reform the UNM government among other objectives partially implemented the EU’s anti-corruption policy, which is included in the ENP Action Plan³⁰³. Partially because corruption in higher levels of political elite remained as a main issue of concern for the EU.

Higher Education institutions were another most corrupted sector in the country. “All levels of higher education institutions, including admissions, grading, financing, and hiring/firing practices” were infected

²⁹⁶ Light, M. (2014) ‘Police reforms in the Republic of Georgia: the convergence of domestic and foreign policy in an anti-corruption drive’, *Policing and Society*, 24:3, pp.337.

²⁹⁷ Ademmer, E. & Börzel, T. A. (2013) ‘Migration, Energy and Good Governance in the EU’s Eastern Neighbourhood’, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 65: 4. pp.589.

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ Light, L. (2014) ‘Police reforms in the Republic of Georgia: the convergence of domestic and foreign policy in an anti-corruption drive’, *Policing and Society*, 24:3, pp.325.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Ademmer, E. & Börzel, T. A. (2013) ‘Migration, Energy and Good Governance in the EU’s Eastern Neighbourhood’, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 65:4. pp. 589.

³⁰² Matthew Light (2014) Police reforms in the Republic of Georgia: the convergence of domestic and foreign policy in an anti-corruption drive, *Policing and Society*, 24:3, pp.318.

³⁰³ Ademmer, E. & Börzel, T. A. (2013) ‘Migration, Energy and Good Governance in the EU’s Eastern Neighbourhood’, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 65: 4. pp. 589.

with the malpractice³⁰⁴. To root out corruption and streamline management and financing system as a first step the UNM government adopted a new law on Higher Education in 2004. As a result influential higher education leadership were dismissed from state universities. Instead of old, soviet-period, bureaucracy “temporary managers as rectors”³⁰⁵ were appointed, who on their part recruited temporary deans. For the purpose of check and balances two independent bodies were established. Such bodies were the Academic Council, “the highest representative organ of academics, with the rectors serving as its chairman”, and the Senate, “the highest organ of students and professors, with the speaker serving as its chairman”³⁰⁶. The reform continued with the introduction of “the first centralized university entrance examinations” in July 2005, which replaced one of the most corrupted system of admission to universities administered by higher education institutions and its professors³⁰⁷. To this end the UNM government “created a new, independent institution, the National Examination Center, which creates and administers exams for all institutions at 14 centers around Georgia”³⁰⁸. Moreover, with the aim “to eliminate low-quality institutions of higher education” “an ambitious institutional accreditation process” was enforced which left 194 universities behind the threshold³⁰⁹. Despite drawbacks in a system of transparency and accountability at universities Rostiashvili still believes that “the 2004 education reform law was rather revolutionary”³¹⁰. She claims that the Bologna process provisions were “one of the most powerful instruments driving the implementation of such systemic reforms”³¹¹.

The major drive behind the reform in military sector was an integration into the NATO, which was considered as a first step towards “return to Europe”. President Saakashvili’s goal was to upgrade ministry of defense – civilian staff- and military personnel, which was suffering from underfunding, mismanagement, absence of coherent policy and mistrust, to the NATO standard in order to ensure “the interoperability of Georgian forces with NATO”³¹². As a first thing the budget for defense was increased from “about \$90m in 2004 to over \$500m in 2007”³¹³. The money was spend on acquisition of modern military equipment but also on repair of “tanks,

³⁰⁴ Rostiashvili, K. (2011) Higher Education in Transition, *European Education*, 43:4, pp. 27.

³⁰⁵ Ibid, pp. 32.

³⁰⁶ Ibid, pp.33.

³⁰⁷ World Bank (2012) Fighting Corruption in Public Services—Chronicling Georgia’s Reforms (Washington DC, World Bank Publications), pp.77.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Ibid, pp. 79.

³¹⁰ Rostiashvili, K. (2011) Higher Education in Transition, *European Education*, 43:4, pp. 34.

³¹¹ Ibid, pp.31.

³¹² Darchiashvili, D (2005) ‘Georgian Defense Policy and Military Reform’ in Coppieters, B & Legvod, R (eds), *Statehood and Security; Georgia after the Rose Revolution*, London: MIT Press, pp 147.

³¹³ International Institute for Strategic Studies (2008) Georgia and NATO: Membership Quest in the Balance, 14:1.

armored vehicles, helicopters, and other military hardware that had badly deteriorated by the end of 2003”³¹⁴. Like in other sectors President Saakashvili and the UNM government “retired many of the generals who either resisted reforms or lacked the knowledge and skill to carry them out”³¹⁵. Instead they opted for young and western-educated civil servants and military officers. Certain tasks were outsourced. For instance, “Cubic, a private U.S. consulting firm hired by the Pentagon”, and a team from the British Ministry of Defense were commissioned to reorganize the ministry and delineate “functions between its civilian and military staffs”³¹⁶. In four years, from 2004-2007, the reform “converted a poorly trained, organised and managed army into one that is capable of being deployed to serve alongside Western partners. Modernisation has improved training, equipment and morale”³¹⁷. Even though a mutiny in the Mukhrovani battalion in 2009 “made a dent in the new image of the Georgian army”, for Nodia an indicator of qualitative progress was a rapid neutralization of the mutiny and arrest of the perpetrators, who in 2001 got away with impunity for the same offence³¹⁸.

The most controversial in terms of the EU cohesion was deregulation of business. Even though in 2007 World Bank declared Georgia as a ‘Top Reformer in Doing Business’, the reform did not sit well with the EU officials, because deregulation is “at the antipodes of the European regulatory model”³¹⁹, which is prone towards codification, standardization and regulation of each and every field and area. For the UNM reformers deregulation turned out to be the best solution to fight corruption and revive business environment in the country. In 2005, the parliament passed a law, which “clearly defined all types of activities that required a license or permit, slashing their numbers by 84 percent”, from 909 to 137, “removing vast well-exploited opportunities for corruption along the way”³²⁰. In addition entire agencies in charge of inspections, which showed neither capacity nor purpose to exist, were abolished. Instead one-stop shops were created within “each issuing ministry”, which were authorized to accept documents from citizens and collect “relevant information from other government agencies”³²¹. The system was fully computerized which required limited

³¹⁴ Darchiashvili, D. (2005) ‘Georgian Defense Policy and Military Reform’ in Coppieters, B & Legvod, R (eds), *Statehood and Security; Georgia after the Rose Revolution*, London: MIT Press, pp 146.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Ibid.

³¹⁷ International Institute for Strategic Studies (2008) Georgia and NATO: Membership Quest in the Balance, 14:1.

³¹⁸ Nodia, G (2013) ‘The Record of the Rose Revolution: mixed but still impressive’ in Vichen Cheterian, ed., *From Perestroika to Rainbow Revolutions: Reform and Revolution after Socialism*. Hurst and Co: London. pp. 98.

³¹⁹ Puppo L. Di (2010) Between Hesitation and Commitment: The EU and Georgia After the 2008 War. Silk Road Paper, Washington: Central Asia–Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program.

³²⁰ World Bank (2012) Fighting Corruption in Public Services—Chronicling Georgia’s Reforms (Washington DC, World Bank Publications), pp.55.

³²¹ Ibid. pp.56.

involvement of officials, while procedures were defined in the guidelines and payment of service fee was sanctioned only through banks, therefore agencies or/ and officials had no access to money. Apart from this, “regulatory outsourcing” was approved in the country, which entailed cohesion to European standard. Through introduction of regulatory outsourcing “all standards or codes adopted in EU, other OECD, or Commonwealth of Independent States countries have been adopted in Georgia in parallel with local standards and codes”³²². Moreover, a financial institution and consumer goods including food certified by any OECD country as well as pharmaceutical products licensed in the European Union (EU) were exempted from any further certification and/or licenses issued from Georgian authority. The rationale behind the “aggressive reform” was to get rid of hotbeds of corruption and “simplify procedures to make Georgia attractive to local and foreign investors”³²³.

In parallel to business deregulation the UNM government resumed a long-debilitated function of tax collection to the state. “Phantom revenues”, tax evasion, illegal tax credits, and outright theft of tax revenues” depleted the country financially and continuously distorted operability of the state³²⁴. In this case corrupted officials were not sacked immediately, because of absence of relevant staff, instead they were replaced gradually in two years period. But “to leave no doubt” in the minds of old staff “that the rules of the game had changed”, perpetrators were arrested and sentenced according to the policy of zero tolerance. Moreover, “cameras were installed in tax offices to deter corruption”³²⁵.

The list of successful reforms included creation of the self-financing National Agency of Public Registry (NAPR), reformation of power sector and customs agency and last but not least decentralization of municipal services. In general, almost all ministries underwent some kind of restructuration. Obviously not every reform was equally successful, the problems in penitentiary and justice system was continuously criticized. Moreover, lack of transparency and impartiality in criminal prosecutions as well as absence of the accountability and democratic oversight of law enforcement agencies was reported in the ENP report along with other problems related to democratic governance³²⁶. But still, the reformative efforts were not lost on the country, the results were impressive. With the implementation of the reforms the objective reality, as Nodia calls “qualitative situation”³²⁷, completely changed in the country. The country started to function, it literary started to carry out its responsibilities, which upgraded the country from failing, unhopeful Caucasian country to “one of the

³²² Ibid. pp.59.

³²³ Ibid. pp. 54.

³²⁴ Ibid. pp. 25.

³²⁵ Ibid. pp. 28.

³²⁶ ENP Country Progress Report 2012 –Georgia, MEMO/13/246, Brussels, 20 March 2013.

³²⁷ Nodia, G (2013) “The Record of the Rose Revolution: mixed but still impressive” in Vichen Cheterian, ed., *From Perestroika to Rainbow Revolutions: Reform and Revolution after Socialism*. Hurst and Co: London. pp. 98.

best candidates towards European integration” according to Philip Dimitrov, Head of Delegation of the European Union to Georgia in 2010 -2014³²⁸. Through “systemic revolution” or modernization of the state institutions President Saakashvili and the UNM government managed to institutionalize European standard in the country more than less, and hence gradually hegemonized the European project. They brought Europe in Georgia and entrenched it as a dimension of a Georgian state and nation, which was a new phenomenon in the history of Georgia.

Democracy and Legal Amendments

Strengthening of democratic governance, as a maker of European identity, along with institutional reforms was part of the UNM driven European project. Whereas progress in state-building is strong side of the story created in the period of 2004-2012, democracy is a weak point of President Saakashvili and the UNM government. Arguably within the framework of the European project state-building activities were prioritized over strengthening democratic institutions. This is because, as Aprasidze believes, “many, and not only in Georgia, see societal transformation and a sound economic foundation as preconditions for democratic rule”³²⁹. The Georgian government was ready “to sacrifice democratic standards for the sake of effectiveness”³³⁰. Respectively, as Mitchell insists, “beginning in 2004, Saakashvili’s government consistently compromised democracy in the name of state building.”³³¹ For this the president with the UNM government was repeatedly criticized, because by joining the ENP action plan and Eastern Partnership they took commitment to ensure democratic progress in the country. Obviously strong state institutions are key for success, but as Nodia claims “in the age when democracy is the only widely recognized legitimating principle— stable political order can only be consolidated around democratic rules of the game”³³². Main issues of contention between the Georgian government and the EU were division of power, elections, civil society, media and political party system.

³²⁸ ‘filip dimitrovi antidiskriminaciuli kakonis miRebas miesalmeba’ [Philip Dimitrov hails adoption of an anti-discrimination law] *NewPosts* 2014 May 05, accessed 7 August 2016, <http://www.newposts.ge/?l=G&id=38315>

³²⁹ Aprasidze, D (2009) ‘Lost in Democratization and Modernization: What Next in Georgia?’, *Caucasus Analytical Digest* 02/09, Tbilisi.

³³⁰ Bertelsmann Transformation Index: Georgia Country Report 2008, accessed July 09, 2017, https://www.bti-project.org/fileadmin/files/BTI/Downloads/Reports/2008/pdf/BTI_2008_Georgia.pdf

³³¹ Mitchell, L. A. (2009) ‘Compromising Democracy: State Building in Saakashvili’s Georgia’, *Central Asian Survey*, 28:2. pp.179.

³³² Nodia, G. (2013) ‘The Record of the Rose Revolution: mixed but still impressive’ in Vichen Cheterian, ed., *From Perestroika to Rainbow Revolutions: Reform and Revolution after Socialism*. Hurst and Co: London. pp. 90.

The very first wave of criticism “for insufficient separation of power”³³³ was followed to the constitutional reform in the beginning of 2004. The intention of amendments in the constitution were to bring “Georgia closer to the usual European practice” by replicating the French model of division of power³³⁴. In practice the changes replaced purely presidential system with a semi-presidential system through reintroduction of a prime minister’s position, which left the country with two executives. The amendments strengthened president’s and government’s power vis-à-vis parliament. “Stronger powers for the president” was retained, “enabling him to appoint a Government never approved by Parliament or to keep a Government other than in a caretaker function although Parliament has expressed its lack of confidence in the Government”³³⁵. Moreover, president was empowered to dissolve parliament twice within one presidential term. Among other privileges president was entitled to sack three power ministers: Internal Affairs, Defence and State Security, the same privilege was further extended to the minister of justice according to the 2008 amendments. While due to pressure from the Venice Commission the changes from 2004 “to appoint and dismiss judges” was reversed in 2006 by limiting this power for president, this did not change overall picture of power asymmetry in the country. Accumulation of power in the president vis-à-vis reduction of the parliament’s influence weakened institutions’ capability to ensure president’s and government’s accountability. Moreover, it gave a leeway to the president to make decisions quickly without much “deliberation or contestation, even from elected members of the president’s own party”³³⁶.

The whole reworkings of the constitution from 2004 was reversed in 2010, which swirled another wave of criticism. According to new amendments Georgia was expected to transform from a semi-presidential to a parliamentary system by transferring president’s certain powers to the Prime Minister, who were selected and approved by majority in the parliamentary. The changes were ruled to take effect after presidential elections in 2013. The amendments were translated as President Saakshvili’s attempt to stay in power in a role of a prime minister of the country, which did not happen. The president and the UNM peacefully transferred power to the opponents after losing the elections in 2012 and 2013. By doing so the president set a positive precedent in Georgian history which reinforced credibility of democratic institutions in the country.

³³³ European Parliament (2008b) ‘Analysis of the EU Assistance to Georgia—Briefing Paper’, Policy Department External Policies (Brussels, European Parliament), accessed July 07, 2017,

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2008/388969/EXPO-AFET_NT\(2008\)388969_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2008/388969/EXPO-AFET_NT(2008)388969_EN.pdf)

³³⁴ European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), ‘Opinion on the draft Amendments to the constitution of Georgia’, Strasbourg, 15 March 2004.

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ Mitchell, L. A. (2009) ‘Compromising Democracy: State Building in Saakashvili’s Georgia’, *Central Asian Survey*, 28:2. pp.179.

Elections since 2003 significantly improved and in general met “OSCE and Council of Europe commitments and standards for democratic elections”³³⁷ in 2004-2012. From election in 2008 to election in 2012 international observation missions reported “substantive changes to the election system”³³⁸ and progress towards addressing OSCE/ODIHR and the Council of Europe’s recommendations but the same reports repeatedly highlighted problems which invited criticism from international community. The main issue of concern, which persisted throughout the period of 2004-2012, was separate incidents of intimidation, harassment and pressure exerted by some UNM activists in order to secure wide support for UNM candidate, misuse of administrative resources and biased media coverage which “created an unequal playing field in favour of the ruling party”³³⁹. In addition, isolated instances of different type of election-day fraud as well as post-election challenges used to be confirmed by the OSCE/ODHIR. Even though all enlisted problems were serious, repression of political opponents was not a systemic practice employed by the UNM government. The most problematic out of the issues were control over broadcast media and an abuse of state resources.

In the run-up of the parliamentary and the snap presidential elections in 2008, the 2010 municipal elections as well as the parliamentary elections in 2012 unbudgeted welfare projects were launched and social benefit vouchers were distributed either by UNM candidates or/and activists along with public servants for campaign purposes, whereas “no such vouchers were issued in [nonelectoral] 2007 or 2009”³⁴⁰. Moreover “unlimited campaigning by certain public officials” blurred distinction between state and political party activities³⁴¹. Because elections are essential part of democratic governance, the EU along with other international organization continuously pressured on the Georgian government to address the shortcomings and comply with the standards, but the problems remained throughout 9 years of the UNM’s term. Given such circumstances the EU jointly with the Council of Europe developed the “Facility Project to support Free and Fair Elections” in 2011 with the aim “to build better compliance with electoral standards” in Georgia³⁴².

³³⁷ European Parliament, OSCE, NATO and Council of Europe (2008) ‘International Election Observation Mission, Georgia—Parliamentary Elections, 21 May 2008. Preliminary Findings and Conclusions’, accessed December 09, 2017, <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/grenada/32016>

³³⁸ OSCE (2008) ‘Parliamentary Elections 21 May 2008, OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission—Final Report’, accessed December 09, 2017, <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/georgia/33301>

³³⁹ OSCE (2008) ‘Extraordinary Presidential Elections 5 January 2008, OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission—Final Report’, accessed December 09, 2017, <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/georgia/30959>

³⁴⁰ Transparency International Georgia (2010) ‘Use of Administrative Resources for Election Campaign. Local Elections 2010—1st report’, 29 March, Tbilisi, accessed November 23, 2017, http://www.transparency.ge/sites/default/files/post_attachments/First%20Report%20on%20Misuse%20of%20Administrative%20Resources_0.pdf

³⁴¹ OSCE (2010) ‘Municipal Elections Georgia, 30 May 2010, OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission— Final Report’, accessed December 09, 2017, <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/71280>

³⁴² Eastern Partnership Facility Project’, Council of Europe/European Union, accessed October 20, 2017, http://www.coe.int/t/dgap/eap-facility/elections_en.asp

Asymmetric and biased coverage of the elections and in particular of opposition candidates by broadcast media was a part of bigger problem which was a control and in certain cases ownership of majority broadcast TV stations by pro-governmental businessmen. “Print media, radio and online outlets generally operate freely in Georgia”, thus these sectors and their content is “diverse and pluralistic” but their capacity to reach wider audience is limited³⁴³. Whereas “television is by far the most popular and influential type of media”³⁴⁴ in Georgia, hence the main target for the UNM was TV stations. The UNM government neither imposed restrictive legal framework and benchmarks nor “resorted to censorship but is generally understood as to have established control over the country’s most influential TV stations through their acquisition by government-friendly businessmen, forcing journalists employed by these stations to self-censorship”³⁴⁵. Out of seven three TV stations such as the Georgian Public Broadcaster (GPB) and two privately owned channels: Rustavi 2 and Imedi provided national-wide coverage of news, the rest were either limited to the capital city - Tbilisi (eg. Mze, Maestro and Kavkasia) or to the region (eg. Adjara).

The GPB was believed to be under the government’s control through the supervisory board. Even though four of the nine board members were nominated by opposition parties, the president was in charge of pre-selection of candidates, while the parliament approved the supervisory board. The rest two channels were kept under a tight leash through acquisition of companies’ controlling shares. Ownership of Rustavi 2, strictly pro-governmental television channel, remained ambiguous until 2011 when the parliament adopted a law which “banned offshore ownership of TV and radio stations” in the country³⁴⁶. But until that “Rustavi 2 changed owners approximately 20 times, often in controversial deals that had a political flavor, involving people with close links to President Mikheil Saakashvili and to officials of the United National Movement-led government”³⁴⁷. Whereas Imedi TV, after the infamous November crackdown by the Special Forces, “was forced off the air in late 2007 during a period of social unrest”³⁴⁸. It “resumed broadcasting in September [2008] under a new owner” who “maintained a strong pro-government line”³⁴⁹. After that the content of “the three major TV stations” became homogenous, while political talk shows were discontinued³⁵⁰.

³⁴³ Urushadze, E. (2011) ‘National Integrity System—Georgia’, Transparency International Georgia, Tbilisi. pp.159.

³⁴⁴ Ibid. pp.160.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.pp.159.

³⁴⁶ ‘The TV station of ‘victorious people’: The story of Rustavi 2’, Transparency International Georgia, 02 August, 2013, accessed December 12.2017, <http://www.transparency.ge/en/blog/tv-station-%E2%80%98victorious-people-story-rustavi-2>

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁸ Freedom House (2009) ‘Freedom of the Press 2009, accessed December 20. 2017, <https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FOTP%202009%20Final%20Full%20Report.pdf>

³⁴⁹ Ibid, pp.103.

³⁵⁰ Urushadze, E. (2011) ‘National Integrity System—Georgia’, Transparency International Georgia, Tbilisi. pp.174.

The UNM actions towards broadcast media did not reflect the commitments they had taken in order to advance towards the European integration. Instead of addressing the EU conditions through fulfillment of the ENP Action Plan and “indicators of achievements” of ENPI’s National Indicative Programme for 2007–2010, in particular by ensuring “fully sustained levels of freedom of expression and media freedom”³⁵¹, the UNM government continuously ignored the EU criticism related to deficiencies in freedom of media. First such criticism appeared after November crackdown on Imedi TV in 2007, when the European Parliament expressed deep concern about disrespect of the principles of freedom of expression and freedom of the media. Later in 2009 the Council of the EU further reminded that “freedom of expression and freedom of the media are essential elements in the bilateral dialogue with Georgia”³⁵². But in light of November developments the EP came to the conclusion that it was time to change tactics in allocation of money for Georgia. “Most of the EU assistance allocated to Georgia during the first year of ENPI implementation” focused “on administrative and institutional capacity building” while democracy promotion suffered from lack of sufficient funding³⁵³. Hence the EP recommended to couple state capacity-building “with stronger efforts to institutionalize democratic power-sharing, promote decentralization, strengthen mechanisms of representation, and enhance dialogue with the civil society”³⁵⁴. In these endeavors the EP advised to enhance “support to NGO capacity building, advocacy and networking activities” for them to “effectively monitor the government’s performance on democracy, human rights, and the rule of law”³⁵⁵.

The recommendation to support Georgian NGOs was timely, not because of restrictive legal framework or the government’s infringement on the right of association or operation of NGOs. In fact the existing legal framework is sound and even progressive to certain degree due to “simple registration and operation procedures” guaranteed by the Civil Code, but also because of a freedom of association enshrined in the constitution³⁵⁶. Moreover, the government did not impose any obstacles to hinder free operation of NGOs to uphold their rights to criticize government and carry out advocacy activities. NGO sector was constrained “by internal weaknesses, including shortages of capable professionals and lack of broad social base, as well as

³⁵¹ ‘Georgia—National Indicative Programme 2007–2010’, European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, , accessed May 06, 2017, http://eeas.europa.eu/enp/pdf/financing-the-enp/georgia_national_indicative_programme_2007-2010_en.pdf

³⁵² Council of the EU (2009) ‘EU–Georgia Cooperation Council, Tenth Meeting, Luxembourg’, 26 October, accessed January 07, 2018, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/er/110768.pdf

³⁵³ European Parliament (2008) ‘Analysis of the EU Assistance to Georgia—Briefing Paper’, Policy Department External Policies (Brussels, European Parliament), accessed July 07, 2017, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2008/388969/EXPO-AFET_NT\(2008\)388969_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2008/388969/EXPO-AFET_NT(2008)388969_EN.pdf)

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ Ibid.

³⁵⁶ Urushadze, E. (2011) ‘National Integrity System—Georgia’, *Transparency International Georgia*, Tbilisi. pp.148.

general political environment in which they operate”, thus it was unable “to hold the government accountable and to influence the formulation of its policy”³⁵⁷. As Broers claims “one of the consequences of the Revolution was the ‘decapitation’ of civil society due to the shift of a significant number of its most experienced activists into government office”³⁵⁸. Mobility of former NGO leaders into the new UNM administration resulted into “the loss of leadership and accumulated experience” from the NGO sector, but also into a self-restriction within home organizations to criticize their former colleagues and “to maintain an appropriate distance” from the UNM government³⁵⁹. Internal weakness was further strengthened by financial. “Georgian Civil Society Organizations (CSO) rely almost entirely on foreign donations, lacking financial support” from local businesses, membership base and the government which did not encourage philanthropic donations³⁶⁰.

The financial problem persisted within political parties as well, which yielded “an extremely uneven distribution of resources between the ruling party and the opposition” that subsequently undermined “effective political competition.”³⁶¹ Competition was further taunted by separate cases of “intimidation and violence against opposition candidates”³⁶², even though in general the government did not interfere into political groups’ activities nor infringed on the Georgian legislation which safeguards “free establishment and operation of political parties”³⁶³. The main problem was internal weakness in particular lack of “effective procedures for internal democratic governance” and inability “to aggregate and represent social interests”³⁶⁴. Oppositional political groups were so weak and approval rate was so low after the Rose Revolution that they almost disappeared from the political scene and this was not because of the governmental pressure. As Boers claims the Rose Revolution “led to the scattering of political opposition and the establishment of virtual single party rule”³⁶⁵. The winners of the revolution enjoyed high credibility and popularity within population.

Despite rather serious shortcomings “sufficient progress in democracy, rule of law and human rights” was still registered by the Council of the EU³⁶⁶. Moreover, the EC progress reports highlighted achievements in certain

³⁵⁷ Ibid, pp.148-149.

³⁵⁸ Broers, L (2005) ‘After the ‘revolution’: civil society and the challenges of consolidating democracy in Georgia’, *Central Asian Survey*, 24: 3. pp. 345.

³⁵⁹ Ibid, pp. 333-345.

³⁶⁰ Urushadze, E. (2011) ‘National Integrity System—Georgia’, *Transparency International Georgia*, Tbilisi. pp.148.

³⁶¹ Ibid, pp.137.

³⁶² OSCE (2010) ‘Municipal Elections Georgia, 30 May 2010, OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission— Final Report’, accessed December 09. 2017. <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/71280>, pp.55.

³⁶³ Urushadze, E. (2011) ‘National Integrity System—Georgia’, *Transparency International Georgia*, Tbilisi. pp.137.

³⁶⁴ Ibid, pp.137.

³⁶⁵ Broers, L. (2005) ‘After the ‘revolution’: civil society and the challenges of consolidating democracy in Georgia’, *Central Asian Survey*, 24: 3. pp. 333.

³⁶⁶ Council of the EU (2009) ‘EU–Georgia Cooperation Council, Tenth Meeting, Luxembourg’, 26 October, accessed January 07. 2018, http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/er/110768.pdf

areas³⁶⁷. Nevertheless, concentration of power in the president and the problems within three branches of the civil society left much to be desired, as they hindered proper imposition of checks and balances on the UNM government and the president.

Political Contestation

In 2004-2012 President Saakashvili enjoyed unparalleled power, while the UNM controlled both parliament and government. Together they evolved into a hegemony which was in charge of constitution of the political situation in the country. They were acting and implementing the European project the way they deemed appropriate without much deliberation and consultations, “believing that it represented the team most capable of implementing needed reforms and taking a dim view of the rest of Georgia’s political forces”³⁶⁸. After freewheeling for almost four years they had to face opposition: parliamentary and non-parliamentary that appeared to voice its concerns about the UNM’s style of ruling more frequently after the local elections in 2006 which significantly accelerated by. There were certain differences between parliamentary and non-parliamentary groups, but “what they have in common is limited financial and human resources, poorly developed structures outside the capital, and no access to the major media”³⁶⁹.

The main defining character of parliamentary opposition was an engagement with the UNM regime as well as absence of radical demands such as resignation of the president and power change. Engagement seemed to entail a constant dialogue and consultations with the ruling party in the parliament with the aim to make the government fulfill opposition’s demands. The platform for engagement was initiated by President Saakashvili “through the establishment of a multiparty “anti-crisis council,” a part of the Charter of Politicians outlining points of consensus among ruling and opposition parties (although only the parliamentary opposition and two other small parties signed it)”³⁷⁰. The council was tasked to oversee expenditure of foreign aids received after August war in 2008, moreover it had to promote democratization, in particular electoral and media reforms, but also support internal institutional reforms and political dialogue. Engagement, however, does not seem to translate into significant changes. Even though there were instances of disobedience and instances of withdrawal of separate individuals from a dialogue with the UNM government, parliamentary opposition earned for itself a status of a “pocket opposition” or “cautious opposition”. As Marek Matusiak claims “formally a parliamentary opposition group, the Christian Democratic Movement is

³⁶⁷ ENP Country Progress Report 2012 –Georgia, MEMO/13/246, Brussels, 20 March 2013.

³⁶⁸ Welt, C. (2009) ‘Still staging democracy: Contestation and conciliation in postwar Georgia’. *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization*, 17:3, pp. 198.

³⁶⁹ Matusiak, M. (2012) ‘Georgian dilemmas. Between a strong state and democracy’. *Point of View* No. 29, pp. 24.

³⁷⁰ Welt, C. (2009) ‘Still staging democracy: Contestation and conciliation in postwar Georgia’. *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization*, 17:3, pp. 211.

commonly regarded as a 'systemic' opposition which does not question the presidential camp's monopoly on power"³⁷¹. Moreover, Christian Democratic Movement's leader's Giorgi Targamadze's professional credentials were continuously questioned, as "he had had a political career in the neo-Soviet Revival party led by regional strongman Aslan Abashidze before the Rose Revolution—casting some doubt as to the legitimacy of his role as a member of the democratic opposition"³⁷².

Non-parliamentary opposition conversely was distinguished with its distance from the UNM regime. Engagement for the non-parliamentary opposition was off the table because one of the main priorities were a change of the UNM regime and a resignation of the president, a step the opposition "insisted was necessary for Georgia's further democratization and security"³⁷³. Along these lines opposition can be roughly divided into two: those who wanted to achieve a regime change through street protests, and those who insisted on constitutional change through elections. The non-parliamentary opposition's main criticism was "the authoritarian traits of the Saakashvili camp's rule and the poor economic situation of the general public"³⁷⁴. They were particularly concerned by "the repressive behaviour of the security apparatus, the arrogance of power and its disconnection from the realities of Georgian life" and "the random and superficial nature of many actions"³⁷⁵. Although there was diversity within the opposition in terms of demands towards the UNM, in general they used to converge on the primary concerns which made the UNM government unacceptable to engage with and hence main reason to seek regime change. Throughout 9 years non-parliamentary opposition had four main momentum when they made major efforts to change a regime. First three of them were wasted but the fourth turned out to be a game-changer.

First wave of street protests started on November 2, 2007 after arguably "politically motivated" arrest of ex-Defence Minister Irakli Okruashvili in September. The arrest was not the main reason, but it galvanized ten estranged opposition parties to unite into coalition of "National Council of Unified Public Movement". Hence "various strands of disenchantment and discontent came together in late 2007 to shape Georgia's first substantial opposition movement since the Rose Revolution"³⁷⁶. Badri Patarkatsishvili, billionaire who made his fortune in Russia, is said to be bankrolling the coalition, which jointly launched demonstrations in front of

³⁷¹ Matusiak, M. (2012) 'Georgian dilemmas. Between a strong state and democracy'. *Point of View* No. 29, pp. 23.

³⁷² Welt, C. (2009) 'Still staging democracy: Contestation and conciliation in postwar Georgia'. *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization*, 17:3, pp. 201.

³⁷³ *Ibid*, pp. 196.

³⁷⁴ Matusiak, M. (2012) 'Georgian dilemmas. Between a strong state and democracy'. *Point of View* No. 29, pp. 23

³⁷⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 23.

³⁷⁶ Welt, C. (2009) 'Still staging democracy: Contestation and conciliation in postwar Georgia'. *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization*, 17:3, pp. 198.

the parliament. “At least 50,000 demonstrators gathered on the streets of Tbilisi in protest”³⁷⁷, as Berglund claims, “under a diverse set of demands ranging from socioeconomic improvements to fair elections to Saakashvili’s resignation”³⁷⁸. Berglund seems to believe that initially motives for discontent were legitimate but later they were compromised when ex-Defence Minister Irakli Okruashvili and Badri Patarkatsishvili joined the ranks of opposition with the murky intentions³⁷⁹. On the sixth day of protest police cracked down on dwindling number of demonstrators and later stormed Imedi TV owned by Patarkatsishvili. Moreover, President Saakashvili accused Patarkatsishvili in plotting a coup, froze his assets and declared state of emergency in order to restrict further re-grouping of demonstrators. Due to criticism from the international community and in particular from the EU about use of excessive force against protesters and infringement on freedom of expression and assembly he retracted state of emergency and called for snap presidential elections in January 2008. In the elections a joint candidate of the National Council Levan Gachechiladze, although distanced himself from Patarkatsishvili, lost to Saakashvili. Even though the opposition continued to occasionally protest, the coalition gradually disintegrated after the parliamentary elections in 2008.

In 2009 the non-parliamentary opposition to the UNM government managed once again to close ranks with the aim to force Saakashvili resign and call for early presidential and parliamentary elections. The opposition accused the UNM regime of stalled democratization and volatile security situation in the country. The first demonstration after the war in 2008, which brought together “almost all major opposition members” and some 10,000–15,000 protesters, was organized on the anniversary of the November 7 crackdown³⁸⁰. This time the ranks of opposition at the elite level emerged somehow bolstered due to “the “defection” of a number” of high-profile officials from the government to the opposition³⁸¹. In January, 2009 twelve opposition parties signed joint declaration. On April 9 a thirteen-party non-parliamentary opposition launched protest movement which drew considerable amount of people, “estimates of the crowd ranged between 50,000–60,000” demonstrators in front of the parliament building³⁸². Next day parallel but smaller in size rallies were organized nearby the Georgian Public Broadcaster’s office and the Presidential Palace. On April 15-23 tents as a makeshift prison-cells were set up gradually in all three locations plus in Liberty Square turning Tbilisi into

³⁷⁷ Cornell, S. E., Popjanevski, J., Nilsson, N. (2007) ‘Learning from Georgia’s Crisis: Implications and Recommendations’, Policy Paper, Washington: Central Asia–Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program.

³⁷⁸ Berglund, C. (2013) ‘Georgia’, in Berglund, S., Ekman, J., Deegan-Krause, K. & Knutsen, T. (eds) *Handbook of Political Change in Eastern Europe*. Cheltenham, Edward Elgar. pp.18.

³⁷⁹ Ibid.

³⁸⁰ Welt, C. (2009) ‘Still staging democracy: Contestation and conciliation in postwar Georgia’. *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization*, 17:3, pp. 203.

³⁸¹ Ibid, pp.202.

³⁸² ‘Georgia Braced For New Protests’, [BBC Europe](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7993167.stm), 10 April 2009, accessed August 04. 2017, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7993167.stm>

a tent city. The demonstrations lasted for good three months even though turnout in and between first and last mass rallies were rather poor. The last major rally took place on Georgia's Independence Day, May 26 in a Dynamo stadium which brought about 50 000 protesters. After that the protest fizzled out without achieving any significant result. Some tents were dismantled by organizers themselves, some by police without any resistance. Cory welt enlists three reasons for the failure to translate "social discontent into regime change": 1. the opposition's internal divisions; 2. Failure to translate social discontent into broader public support for the opposition 3. The government's ability to represent itself "as an alternative engine of democratization"³⁸³.

The first two waves of demonstration did not raise a question about the validity of the European project for Georgia even though some forces within the opposition were anti-western (eg. Labour Party, Nino Burjanadze). Whereas third string of demonstrations in 2011 emerged in order to squeeze out Europe from the country through introduction of an alternative project from Russia. Even though it did not result into mass demonstrations, it still caused disorder and even death of two protesters. Nino Burjanadze, former speaker of the parliament and close ally of President Saakashvili until 2008, was an initiator and organizer of rallies, which were sanctioned by the city authorities from May 21 until midnight May 25 in the downtown Tbilisi. The time for demonstrations was limited because for May 26 the government planned "a military parade to mark Georgia's Independence Day" in the same area³⁸⁴. However, Burjanadze with her allies refused to either disperse or to move to a suggested alternative location after the allotted time expired. Hence the police cracked down on the rally using tear gas, rubber bullets and batons in order to clean the location for military parade. On May 26 and May 27 "the Interior Ministry released series of secretly recorded video footage and audio tapes" as an evidence that some organizers including Burjanadze with her son intended "to change the government through violence and public disorders"³⁸⁵. The scenario allegedly also entailed involvement of "the GRU [Russian military intelligence] special task force" in case of shootings from the Kojori battalion³⁸⁶. The allegations Burjanadze continuously denied. Although she supported "closer ties with both Russia and other allies in the West"³⁸⁷ her frequent visited destination for seeking allies and financial support was Russia and the Kremlin.

³⁸³ Welt, C. (2009) 'Still staging democracy: Contestation and conciliation in postwar Georgia'. *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization*, 17:3, pp. 198.

³⁸⁴ Jozwiak, R. (2011) 'Stop The Dictatorship' -- An Interview With Georgian Opposition Figure Nino Burjanadze', Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, accessed July 07, 2017, https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia_nino_burjanadze_/24258110.html

³⁸⁵ "Audio, Video Recordings Implicate Protest Leaders to 'Plotting Violence'", Civil Georgia, Tbilisi 27 May 2011, accessed July 07, 2017, <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=23537&search>

³⁸⁶ Ibid.

³⁸⁷ Jozwiak, R. (2011) 'Stop The Dictatorship' -- An Interview With Georgian Opposition Figure Nino Burjanadze', Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, accessed July 07, 2017, https://www.rferl.org/a/georgia_nino_burjanadze_/24258110.html

Fourth wave of rallies, which changed political landscape in the country, started shortly before the parliamentary elections, scheduled for October 1, when a former police officer exposed video recordings revealing the regimes' mass wiretapping and inhuman treatment of inmates in pre-trial detention and prison cells by the regime. This stirred public outrage and galvanize anti-governmental rally in the central part of Tbilisi on September 19, 2012. Even though the protest was organized by citizens and civil society representatives spontaneously without involvement of the opposition, billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili is believed to be behind the release of recordings on September 18. In October 2011 the billionaire "dramatically and unexpectedly entered politics, challenging the country's President Mikheil Saakashvili in a battle that has become increasingly nasty and personal"³⁸⁸. He managed to unite the non-parliamentary opposition with certain exceptions under his newly established political party Georgian Dream. In spite of robust election campaign and support from public figures in particular from cultural sphere due to his charity activities, according to NDI public opinion poll by June 2012 his party ratings amounted to 18% whereas UNM was in the lead with 36% among respondents³⁸⁹. The video recordings are sure to impact on the parliamentary election outcome through tarnishing the president's and the UNM public credentials once and for all. Hence, on October 1, 2012 Georgian Dream defeated the UNM in the elections by garnering 54.97% of voter support thus securing majority in the parliament.

Unfinished project and contested content?

The unit has tried to explore an extent to which the UNM government impacted cognitive notions embedded within Georgian political identity – a political project - through the project of Europe. To measure degree of an impact the paper looked into three dimensions of a discourse – speeches, writing and actions – which yielded very mixed results. There are variations within second and third dimensions, whereas President Saakashvili's narrative - first dimension- is in line with the pro-European commitments of Georgia. In fact, the president was using his speeches rather effectively in order to project a story about European Georgia. He rearticulated with Europe almost every pillar of national political project and thus created a new story, a new objective reality in which Georgia was presented as an ancient European country which was forcefully separated from its roots. But rhetoric would not have had an effect if it were not complemented by political elite's actions – third dimension of a discourse - which were riddled by mistakes. Whereas second dimension was handled selectively by continuously prioritizing institution-building to democratic reforms

³⁸⁸ Harding, L (2012) 'Bidzina Ivanishvili: the eccentric billionaire chasing Georgia's leadership', *The Guardian*, Tbilisi, accessed July 03, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/oct/01/bidzina-ivanishvili-profile-georgia.html>

³⁸⁹ National Democratic Institute (NDI) '*Political Attitudes in Georgia*: Results of a June 2012 survey carried out for NDI by CRRC', accessed October 25, 2017, <https://www.scribd.com/document/100188912/NDI-June-2012-Survey-Political-Ratings-ENG>

President Saakashvili and his government undertook number of different measures in order to entrench European project in the country, but one of the important among them was that the project of Europe was hegemonized in Georgia in 2004-2012. With such move the president and his government ended the speculation and hesitation at political level whether Georgia was Europe or Asia. By institutionalizing Europe as a sole roadmap for development the UNM government reaffirmed that there was only one destination for Georgia and that was Europe. At political level in 2004-2012 the debate whether Georgia was Europe or Asia was taken off the agenda, because the age-old puzzle was solved, Georgia was Europe, period. The key question and task for Saakashvili was how to project an image of European Georgia, what symbols, principles, values, norms, rules and initiatives it should internalize and institute in order to officially become a member of the European Union, which was regarded as a prestigious club of prosperous European countries. The official membership would mean an acknowledgement of high European standard but not in a way an affirmation of Europeanness of Georgia. The official position of the president narrated that Georgia as a European state was forcefully separated from its historic roots and the mission was to return through the project of Europe. And because Georgia was European the Georgian government took the commitment to undertake the same road of development as the big enlargement countries from Central and Eastern Europe.

In the road towards European transformation the UNM government registered successes and shortcomings. The success was mostly due to very principled position of President Saakashvili and its government towards the European project and European future of Georgia. In fact, the choice for European future had never been questioned ever since the Rose Revolution. Even though the expectations for the EU integration was narrow, which used to stir disillusionment and bewilderment towards the EU, Euro-skeptic groups in the country voicing their concerns remained uninfluential. This type of groups varied on the continuum from being Pro-Russian and therefore totally anti-European to being neutral due to security concerns coming from the northern neighbor. None of them managed to mobilize substantial support around anti-European sentiments and ideology. Moreover, their political visibility and lifespan was shortlived. The president with his team created such an environment in Georgia where to be European was politically more beneficial and even fashionable especially in the beginning of Saakashvili's presidency.

The main mission ahead of the UNM government was an instrumentalization of the European project at national level. And it seems the priority was given to revision of ontological and normative principles embedded in the political self-understanding of Georgia. For ontological purposes the president targeted national symbols, history, the founder of the national project through redefining their semantic content and imbuing them with European flavor. He 'nationalized' European by making it an indigenous part of Georgian. By doing so Saakashvili breathed in the image of Europe passions and feelings which aimed to stir positive

emotions towards the concept among the people of Georgia. This way he recreated the myth about Georgia in which Europe was projected as a dimension of the almost every aspect of the national political project of Georgia and thus of its political identity, despite the odds that “never in its history has Georgia been in close contact with the West”³⁹⁰. President Saakshvili seemed to be willing to set “the frames within which men and women see themselves as Europeans”, which is a main feature of European identity.³⁹¹

The premises for normative principles was equality and rule of law, which mainly concerned state institutions, rules and norms. In this endeavor the government experienced challenges, shortcomings and victories, which was reflected in the annual progress report of the EU. But one of the most important challenges, which put under the question compatibility of the European project with the national project, was rights on sexual minority and gender equality. The situation was further complicated by the fact that the major opponent to accept such rights was the Georgian Orthodox Church. Due to very rigid stance of the church the key state officials were prudent stressing only on the legal aspects of the issue, usually circumventing discussions on the values. On the one hand the UNM government could not ignore such concerns given the popularity of the church, but on the other, they could not give up on its European plan either. Therefore, in spite of the insistence of the church to keep a status quo, in 2010 a law on gender equality was adopted by the Georgian Parliament. The law was criticized due to lack of “compliance of its provisions with the international standards” as well as absence of enforcement mechanism ³⁹², but an adoption of such set of norms was already a victory, because it is “a powerful and forceful conceptual practice, that sublimates, disguises and extends its own power play through recourse to tropes of normative universality” as Butler believes.³⁹³ By codifying an issue of gender equality, the government provided its community with a cognitive and more specifically normative manual to reality, where gender equality is a standard which should be complied to. This was a general approach of the UNM government – hegemon - towards implementation of the project of Europe; through codification and/or standardization of ontological and normative principles, they created a guidebook for its people to new objective reality, to European Georgia. But not all parts of the *acquis* were treated in the same way.

³⁹⁰ Nodia, G. (2005) ‘Georgia: Dimensions of Insecurity’ in Coppieters, B & Legvod, R (eds), *Statehood and Security; Georgia after the Rose Revolution*, London: MIT Press, pp.31.

³⁹¹ Garcia, S. (ed) (1993), *European Identity and the Search for Legitimacy*, the Royal Institute of International Affairs, London.

³⁹² Arjevanidze, N (2012) ‘Gender Equality - An overview of Georgian and International Legislation’, Center for Social Sciences, Tbilisi, March 28, 2016, http://css.ge/files/Papers/Nargiza_Arjevanidze,_Gender_Equality_-_legislation,_August_2012_Eng.pdf

³⁹³ Butler, J. (1992) ‘Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of “Post-Modernism”’, in Butler, J. and Scott, J. (eds) *Feminism Theorize the Political*, London, pp.7.

The UNM government's actions fell short to fully tackle an approximation to the *acquis*. On the one hand the government was crowding European institutions to get the best possible terms and conditions of cooperation agreements, on the other hand implementations of those agreements was full of instances of non-compliance, cherry picking of certain norms and dragging of a cohesion processes³⁹⁴. After analyzing the ENP progress reports Ketevan Bolkvadze concludes that the UNM government's "compliance with EU conditionality was often partial and varied significantly across different policy domains"³⁹⁵. In the "areas such as trade and market liberalisation, border management, public service, and social policy" the government made efforts to harmonise "in line with the EU *acquis*" whereas "in domains such as political dialogue, electoral reform, media freedom, and the rule of law" it registered shortcomings³⁹⁶. Ketevan Bolkvadze claims that hybrid regimes like Georgia "are compelled to dodge conditionality in those very policy areas that are crucial to the preservation of an uneven political field" conversely they are more prone "to embrace conditionality in policy domains capable of raising popular support"³⁹⁷.

Apart from setbacks in implementation of the project, the actions undertaken by the president and its government sometimes failed to adhere to the principles of liberal democracy. They used to make mistakes while handling certain internal problems in the country. One of the main mistakes was lack of pluralism and policy of zero tolerance during Saakashvili's presidency. There was general intolerance among the UNM government towards criticism directed at state officials and their activities. Critical opinion used to be interpreted as a treacherous act against the state. Thus, instead of making European project and itself a glue for the divided nation through engaging in the discussion with opponents and creating space for critical opinion, they constructed "us – reformers" and "them – retrogrades" dubbed as a "flushed down" layer of a society within the country. Initially President Saakashvili used the term "flushed down" in reference to representatives of Soviet elite who did not approve his policy but later the term was extended to every critical person of the regime. This created lots of "losers" of the regime. Of course a political decision to install certain values "already excludes from the dialogue those who believe that different values should be the organizing ones of the political order"³⁹⁸. But it is also true that the role of the state is to practice politics which "aims at the creation of unity in a context of conflict and diversity"³⁹⁹, because it "has a founding role as far as the

³⁹⁴ Bolkvadze, K. (2016) 'Cherry Picking EU Conditionality: Selective Compliance in Georgia's Hybrid Regime', *Europe-Asia Studies*, 68:3, pp. 409-440.

³⁹⁵ Ibid.

³⁹⁶ Ibid.

³⁹⁷ Ibid.

³⁹⁸ Mouffe, C. (2013) *Agonistics: Thinking World Politically*. London: Verso.

³⁹⁹ Mouffe, C. (2009) *The Democratic Paradox*. London. Verso. pp. 101.

instauration of the social bond is concerned”⁴⁰⁰. And the UNM government was twice more obliged to do so, because the main pivot of the liberal democracy, they were swearing on to bring in the country, is pluralism and search for a consensus. But instead of thriving on those values, Saakashvili’s government in its last years of the tenure totally evacuated itself from critical view. Being surrounded only by fellow “reformers”, which constituted small group of individuals, the government did not even bother to communicate the rationale for their political choice to the electorate. This way criticism as well as number of individuals discontent with the regime increased making the gap even more irresolvable. It is difficult to measure the degree of damage such dissonance in discourse and in particular such actions might have caused to the project of Europe, but most likely it had detrimental impact on the Europeanization of the national political project. Incoherence in interpretation and implementation – main function of the third dimension of discourse - of the European project most probably negatively affected all pro-European processes and in particular the goal of the project, which aimed at bringing Georgia back to Europe.

Study of the second dimension of the discourse - official documents, agreements, rules – revealed that certain parts of the discourse, specifically official documents and agreements with the EU followed pro-European line of the state agenda, while regulatory framework of the country still fell short of European standard. At official level, European integration was included in almost all governmental agendas, such as Foreign Policy Strategy, National Security Concept and modernization plan. Georgia managed to get the best possible terms of cooperation with the EU in the region and thus benefited the most from the EU funds⁴⁰¹. Incompatibility of legislation was a major setback for European integration. As already mentioned elsewhere in the paper, shortcomings within the regulatory structure is connected with the third dimension of the discourse – actions/behavior of the political elite in charge of interpretation and implementation of the project – , particularly with reluctance and inability of the Georgian government to take actions to harmonize it with *acquis*, which played negative role in transformation of cognitive notions and hence in implementation of the project of Europe.

⁴⁰⁰ Laclau, E. (2007) *On Populist Reason*. London: Verso. pp. 57.

⁴⁰¹ European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument 2007-2013: Overview of Activities and Results, European Union 2014.

5. Russia as the “Other” in the European Project of Georgia

The decision to institute the European project as the sole roadmap for development was founded on peaceful premises. It entailed a peaceful coexistence with its neighbors and in particular with Russia which in its turn envisaged a skillful combination of inclusion and exclusion of the northern neighbor from the European project. Through inclusion-exclusion politics the UNM intended to exclude the Kremlin as a domestic actor in parallel to engagement with it as a partner on foreign policy initiatives. However in 2008 the project became a major reason for the war between Russia and Georgia which further reinforced incompatibility and thus of “Otherness” of Russia resulting in thorough exclusion of the Northern neighbor.

Russia: Strategic Partner in 2003-2006

The European project unveiled in 2004 as a single roadmap for development of Georgia was in its nascent stage. After the revolution it accelerated its significance but the content was still in making, hence it used to cause misunderstanding. In contrast to the content, the objectives were clear. Besides the plan to integrate the country into the Euro-Atlantic structures, the European project was founded on peaceful premises, it prioritized good partnership relations with its neighbors and in particular with Russia. Georgia's challenge was “to work cooperatively with all our partners to advance lasting security and stability”⁴⁰². Out of neighbors, Russia was special for many different reasons, but first of all due to Russian interest towards, influence and grip on Georgia, which was de facto accepted by the international community. For the Georgian government it was clear that it had to walk a fine line between not angering the Kremlin, consolidating its territories and becoming a member of European family. The task was challenging, but this was the only way for Georgia to be in charge of its own fate.

Building good neighborly relations with Russia entailed cooperation with the Kremlin as of with an external partner – neighbor, not as an actor in the internal politics. By that time Russia had a status of an antagonist due to its continued cling of tooth and nail on Georgia and this had to be changed. For that it was important to engage with the Kremlin to solve two main internal issues: withdrawal of Russian military bases from Georgia and restoration of territorial integrity of the country. In other words the UNM government wanted inclusion of Russia in two main issues of the project in order to exclude it from internal dimension of the politics for good. This was supposed to be a skillful combination of inclusion- exclusion politics towards the Kremlin, which zeroed in on a transformation of a role and image of Russia and thus of an objective reality in Georgia. A role allocated to Russia was of a strategic partner, which was expected to play a positive role in

⁴⁰² Mikheil Saakashvili “Speech delivered by Mikheil Saakashvili at John Hopkins University” (speech, February 4, 2004), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

the development of country because prosperous Georgia was in the best interest of the Kremlin. Saakashvili believed that “peace on its borders is a source of stability for peace in Russia itself”⁴⁰³. This mission was riddled with difficulties as it aimed to persuade Russia to give up on its hegemonic ambitions towards Georgia and engage in its development and respectively in the project of Europe. But Saakashvili seemed determined to follow down the plan which envisaged normalization of relations with Russia, as he claimed:

While I have no illusions that our relationship will be transformed overnight, I do see that the door is open for new and more positive relations⁴⁰⁴.

The opportunity – of an inclusion - was seized by President Saakashvili and the UNM government through initiating a certain actions towards Russia. As the first step, Saakashvili paid his first official visit as the president to Moscow in order to convince the Kremlin in good intentions of his politics. The official purpose of the visit was “to stretch out a hand of friendship”.

Here I want to emphasize how important it is for Georgia to restore good relations with our neighbors - in particular with Russia. Russia is a special case due to our historic ties and the last decade of less than perfect relations. Russia is a special case because of its vast markets and the role that Russia can play in promoting or reducing regional stability [...] After my trip to Moscow I have hope that a new era in our relations is emerging - one that is based on pragmatism and the mutual recognition of shared common interests. [...] I intend to continue down the path of new and improved relations with Moscow⁴⁰⁵.

The improved relations seemed to entail boosted engagement of and with Russia, which was key for the success of the European project. The engagement on its turn envisaged inclusion of Russia in special policy areas for the sake of exclusion of the Kremlin from internal politics. Cooperation and agreement with the Kremlin on certain internal issues was of utmost importance for successful resolution of the internal problems due to its role and stakes in the country as well as the region. Withdrawal of Russian military bases from two Georgian regions and restoration of territorial integrity of the country were the main venues for engagement with the Kremlin. For Georgian government timely deal on these issues – timely exclusion of Russia from Georgian territories - were the main condition for cordial relationship with the Kremlin. The official position stated that:

⁴⁰³ Mikheil Saakashvili “Remarks - H.E President Mikheil Saakashvili to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe” (speech, January 26, 2005), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

⁴⁰⁴ Mikheil Saakashvili “Speech delivered by Mikheil Saakashvili at John Hopkins University” (speech, February 4, 2004), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid

Georgia is ready to cooperate with Russia and is ready to meet the Russians halfway on many issues. Just as Georgia has legitimate interests in the region - so too does Russia (i.e. border security, fighting terrorism, economic growth). As long as Russia remembers and respects our national sovereignty. As long as Russia abides by its international commitments to remove its bases. As long as Russia realizes that we cannot and will not become a battlefield between two super powers. I am ready for a new era.⁴⁰⁶

Those conditions so as the politics of inclusion-exclusion were controversial because it aimed to tackle the legacy of the Soviet past and Russian domination at the same time. The state as inherited by the UNM government in 2004, was fragile and divided with two self-proclaimed regions supported by Russia since and in “violent conflicts in the early 1990s” – Abkhazia and South Ossetia , one “almost de facto” independent region achieved “through the threat of conflict with Tbilisi”⁴⁰⁷– Adjara and still another region sending troubling signals of tensions to the center - Samtskhe-Javakheti. All four of them had direct contacts with Russian political and military elites. The support they received from the Kremlin varied in its form, type and degree from region to region. But one of the common and important features all four of them shared was a presence of the Russian military bases and troops. Hence in order to regulate relationship with and in those regions participation of Russia was of key importance. The enthusiasm and expectation among Georgian authority was on the rise because Russia seemed ready to cooperate by staying away from meddling into Georgian internal affairs. During the crisis in Adjara in May 2004 Russia restrained from using its military bases and personnel stationed in Gonio to support Aslan Abashidze, a local strongman and close ally of Russia, when he blew out the bridges connecting the region with the rest of Georgia. Instead the Kremlin sent National Security Council chief, Igor Ivanov who defused the crisis by taking Abashidze to Russia. This way Aslan Abashidze was manoeuvred into peaceful ending of “his thirteen-year control of Ajara in May 2004”⁴⁰⁸ by President Saakashvili. Success in Adjara seemed to generate false confidence and impressions among the UNM government and the president that Georgia’s politics of persuasion towards Russia was effective and that “through a skilful mix of threatened force and imaginative diplomacy”⁴⁰⁹ it was possible to regain control over Abkhazia and Tskhinvali and most importantly usher out Russia.

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁰⁷ Mitchell, L. A. (2009) ‘Compromising democracy: state building in Saakashvili's Georgia’, *Central Asian Survey*, 28:2, pp. 171-183.

⁴⁰⁸ Saakashvili's Ajara Success: Repeatable Elsewhere in Georgia?; *ICG Europe Briefing N°34*, 18 August 2004, accessed May 05. 2010, <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/saakashvili-s-ajara-success-repeatable-elsewhere-in-georgia.pdf>

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid.

Yet another significant success was scored in 2005, which further strengthened the confidence of the Georgian government. Russia agreed to pull out its military bases from Georgia in 3 years period, which was one of the main conditions for improvement of relations with Russia. For the UNM government it was of utmost importance to get Russian military bases and personnel withdrawn from Georgian territories as soon as possible. Georgian government focused on a closure of the GRVZ headquarter (a Group of Russian Troops in the Trans Caucasus) stationed in Tbilisi as well as two military bases located in Akhalkalaki (Samtskhe-Javakheti region and Gonio (Adjara). Moreover, Georgia insisted on a regular international monitoring of the military base in Gudaita, located in the breakaway region of Abkhazia⁴¹⁰ which is beyond its control. Even though in 2001 Russia reported closure of the military base in Gudauta, Georgian Government was concerned that “it had not been withdrawn and has continued functioning for years afterwards in violation of the international obligations undertaken by Russia”.⁴¹¹

Georgian Government was concerned about Russia’s initial reluctance to withdraw its military bases. “Since 2000, when Russia claimed the first two bases closed [in Vaziani and Gudauta], talks have dragged on. Russia requested 11 years to pull out the others, while Georgia insisted that it should do so in three”⁴¹². Negotiations on a timetable of withdrawal of the bases from Georgia envisaged by Istanbul agreement 1999⁴¹³ was continuously delayed. But in 2005 in spite of many difficulties, the US and EU engagement in the issue⁴¹⁴ on the one hand, and meetings and negotiations at different political and military level on the other, yielded the result; Russia agreed to disband and pull out its military bases and personnel from Tbilisi, Samtskhe-Javakheti and Adjara by the end of 2007. This event was much celebrated within the country as a victory of the UNM policies. Saakashvili stated that:

What happened in Moscow today is a very important political event. It is a historic event for our country. This has been one of the two main painful issues between Georgia and Russia. One issue is the former Soviet, Russian military bases and the other is the settlement of conflicts. One of these two issues is being resolved by this agreement and the start of its implementation. For many years

⁴¹⁰ Moscow Comments on Gudauta Base in Abkhazia; Civil Georgia, 3 May 2006, accessed July 09, 2011, <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=12472>

⁴¹¹ Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia on the treaty on the creation of a joint military base in Gudauta signed between Russia and the so-called republic of Abkhazia, 17 February 2010, accessed May 10, 2016, http://belgium.mfa.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=595&info_id=6054

⁴¹² Freizer, S. (2005) ‘It's dangerous to tease a bear’, accessed March 20, 2016, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/caucasus/georgia/its-dangerous-tease-bear>

⁴¹³ Istanbul Document 1999: Istanbul Summit 1999 - Organization For Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)

⁴¹⁴ Torbakov, I. (2004) ‘Moscow Views Military Withdrawal Issue as Litmus Test for Georgian-Russian Relations’; accessed May 05, 2010, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav012804.shtml>

this is the first precedent of serious talks being a success. I am sure that this is a success for both sides because I believe that this treaty is also in Russia's interest. This is the first precedent of such a diplomatic outcome being achieved⁴¹⁵.

By reaching the agreement the exclusion-inclusion politics triumphed. Through dialogue and inclusion the government managed to address one of the most crucial issues for Georgia and Georgians, after two hundred years of presence Russia finally agreed to pull out its bases and troops. This implied elimination of leverage which the Kremlin could use to disintegrate the country further⁴¹⁶. President Saakashvili and his government were well aware of the importance and implications of the agreement for the country and the people. The deal solved the historic problem, as it put an end – excluded - to Russian military presence on the territories controlled by the Georgian government.

From the Georgian position, the politics of inclusion-exclusion brought about new reality. After signature of the agreement President Saakashvili took the momentum and celebrated the victory of his politics, by introducing the beginning of a new stage in the relationships with Russia, in which an old enemy of Georgia re-emerged as a constructive partner. According to this new reality both Russia and Georgia were transformed: Russia turned into a cooperative state, while Georgia came closer to becoming a European country. The deal was seen as a break with the history of occupation, which supposedly allowed the both countries to cooperate on a par without mindset and overcome grievances of the past. Even though President Saakashvili was taking the credit for himself for achieving withdrawal and architecting the new stage in the relationship, he marked the event by the acknowledgement and appreciation of Russian political establishment's contribution. He graciously praised President Putin and Russian political leadership for the constructive role in withdrawal of the military bases from Georgia. By doing so the president was seemingly reinforcing the image of Russia as of a strategic partner. According to President Saakashvili:

President Putin has shown courage, great political instinct, common sense and made a brave political step, and I cannot but appreciate it. I would also like to note that our recent telephone conversations have been extremely constructive⁴¹⁷.

⁴¹⁵ Mikheil Saakashvili "President Saakashvili hails" (speech, May 31, 2005), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library.

⁴¹⁶ Georgia: The Javakheti Region's Integration Challenges; IGC Europe Briefing N°63, 23 May 2011, accessed March 21, 2016, <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/b63-georgia-the-javakheti-region-s-integration-challenges.pdf>

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

A completely new stage starts in our relationship. I must especially underline the Russian political courage and political intuition. Frankly speaking, there was a very big pressure to leave this issue unresolved, but the Russia's leadership still took the decision⁴¹⁸.

The foundation of a new era was antagonistic because it was achieved through exclusion of Russia from the internal dimension of Georgian politics which had caused tensions between the two countries. The process leading to the effective restoration of control in Adjara and the agreement on military bases was emotionally rather tense and confrontational. There was fear that President Saakashvili might provoke a bear with his style of politics. In 2005 Saakashvili refused to attend the 60th anniversary of the victory over Nazism in Moscow; this way the Georgian president expressed his discontent about Russia's initial rejection to withdraw its bases in the three years period. Sabine Freizer believes that President Vladimir Putin was "sure to be infuriated by the boycott of a celebration aimed to show Russia's continued importance on the global stage"⁴¹⁹. Apart from the bases, Georgian government was irritated by "Russian meddling in its internal affairs through the provision of aid to Georgia's two breakaway regions", Abkhazia and South Ossetia.⁴²⁰The concerns about escalation of tension were valid, but this was part of the political antagonism characteristic for Russian-Georgian relations since independence. The positive side of the situation was that in spite of tensions, channels for political dialogue were open and President Saakashvili was using those channels to accomplish Georgia's national goals. Moreover, he seemed determined to seize the momentum to consolidate the country through resumption of territorial integrity. The task ahead of Saakashvili's politics was very demanding and dangerous, as he had to convince the Kremlin to act like 'a strategic partner' and at the same time stay out of the issues in which the latter could have had vested interests.

In early 2008, Russia finalized withdrawal of its military bases as per agreement. But unfortunately this did not neutralize the Kremlin, which became even more obvious in connection to another national goal, the resumption of central government's control over South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Summer 2004 can be regarded as the beginning of implementation of that goal, when the fight between Georgia and Russia erupted in Tskhinvali and surrounding areas. The situation severely escalated and resulted into skirmishes between the sides, which left 27 civilians and 17 soldiers dead⁴²¹. Despite the failure of the first attempt, hopes and

⁴¹⁸ Mikheil Saakashvili "Remarks by President Saakashvili at the CIS Summit in Tbilisi" (speech, June 3, 2005), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library.

⁴¹⁹ Freizer, S. (2005) 'It's dangerous to tease a bear', accessed March 20, 2016, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/europe-central-asia/caucasus/georgia/its-dangerous-tease-bear>

⁴²⁰ Ibid

⁴²¹ Mikheil Saakashvili "The address of the President of Georgia in the David the Builder National Defense Academy" (speech, August 7, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library.

expectations were high that the central government would reinforce its authority over the region through politics of persuasion and inclusion.

Russia as an Antagonist: 2006-2012

The relations between Georgia and Russia were never easy, but during the period from 2004 until 2006 the two parties managed to maintain a dialogue with each other which led to certain improvements. The first signs of tension, which significantly damaged the relationship, was observed in the beginning of 2006. On January 22, 2006 Mozdok –Tbilisi gas pipeline was exploded in North Ossetia, which stirred energy crisis between Russia and Georgia. Later in March 2006 the Russian State Consumer Agency imposed a ban on an import of Georgian and Moldovan wines. This move was met with criticism and harsh rhetoric from Georgian side⁴²². On September 27, 2006 the situation further escalated when the Georgian authorities arrested four Russian officers on espionage charges. Later in 2007 multiple air space violations by Russian helicopters, one of which was downed by Georgia's anti-aircraft system on August 21, were reported. Tensions in South Ossetia and Abkhazia were part of daily routine in these regions. In such circumstances President Saakashvili changed his politics by focusing solely on smoothening the conflictual situation and resumption of a dialogue with Russia. Although exclusive part of the inclusion-exclusion politics dramatically increased, Saakashvili still wanted to engage with the Kremlin. Hence despite confrontations and embargo in 2007 he continued to praise his counterpart Vladimir Putin by calling him an "historic figure" in order to have "good-neighbourly and principled relations with Russia" as well as to maintain "improvements in Georgian-Russian relations"⁴²³ - new stage. Official position of the president was that:

[Georgia] want it all to be decided in such a manner that we would be able to resolve all the problems with Russia. In reality, we have no fundamental differences with Russia⁴²⁴.

President Saakashvili tried to deescalate the situation through continued inclusion of Russia in negotiations and "talks formally and informally". Furthermore, on several occasions he explained that foundation of the UNM political order was not anti-Russian, it was anti-Soviet. But there was apparent contradiction in his discourse, because Russia as a legal successor of the Soviet Union "was synonymous with the Soviet past, with

⁴²² Defense Minister Okruashvili's remark was particularly non-diplomatic on April 20, 2006, when he said that "even if you export – excuse me for this expression – feces to Russia it can be sold there." After that incident the Russian Foreign Ministry summoned the Georgia's Ambassador to Moscow on April 26 and expressed protest over Okruashvili's comment.

⁴²³ Mikheil Saakashvili "Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili's news conference at Tbilisi City Hall on 23 February" (speech, February 23, 2007), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library.

⁴²⁴ Ibid.

failure, with all that Georgia wanted to leave behind and move forward”⁴²⁵. That is reason after opening of the Occupation Museum in Tbilisi in 2006 on Independence Day of Georgia he had to clarify that “Tbilisi museum is about Soviet, not Russian, occupation”. Further on he stated that:

I would like to underline that this is a museum of the Soviet occupation, not of a Russian occupation of Georgia. I truly believe that this was a Soviet occupation [...] Therefore this is a museum about our country's history to ensure that it never happens again. It is not directed against anyone. If someone, somewhere, at some level, takes this personally, that is their problem and not ours. We are well-disposed towards everyone. I believe that truly applies to all of Georgia's neighbours⁴²⁶.

The UNM politics to ease the tensions with the Kremlin proved unavailing due to absence of a direct conversation with Russia, which is the key for workings of politics. The channels for political dialogue was already closed by 2007 which left the politics paralyzed to take action. Moreover, the events, that unfolded in 2006-2008 one after another, added to the tensions between Georgia and Russia which eventually culminated into the open military conflict between two countries over Tskhinvali region in 2008 damaging the relations and the channels of political dialogue irreversibly. As a result the image of Russia dramatically changed, it re-emerged as a dreadful threat – “Other” - for the very existence of Georgia. The president believed that:

[Russian] their objective was to completely conquer Georgia - they wanted to take Tbilisi and reverse Georgia's foreign political course by 180 degrees. Much like in 1921, they were waiting in the Kremlin for the news of victory, for the message that the Russian flag waves again over Tbilisi⁴²⁷.

Official position made a U-turn towards Russia. Northern neighbor was declared as an enemy of Georgia and its people by depicting it as an antithesis of everything what Georgia wanted to achieve since independence. Apart from the Georgian sovereignty Russia allegedly carried a threat to: 1. the progress in a state building; 2. Euro-Atlantic integration of the country; and 3. The Georgian political leadership and in particular against the president of Georgia. There was clearly defined official line of arguments, which was not very different from major opinion among academics and experts at home and broad, about Russia's motivation to attack Georgia. According to the official narrative Georgia incarnated a successful journey of a failed state which

⁴²⁵ Cheterian, V (2008) 'Georgia's Rose Revolution: Change or Repetition? Tension between State-Building and Modernization Projects' *Nationalities Paper*. 36:4, pp 693.

⁴²⁶ Mikheil Saakashvili "Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili's news conference at Tbilisi City Hall on 23 February" (speech, February 23, 2007), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library.

⁴²⁷ Mikheil Saakashvili "The address of the President of Georgia in the David the Builder National Defense Academy" (speech, August 7, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library.

overcame all the odds and blossomed into a “beacon of democracy” by regional standards. Saakashvili believed that “this was ideologically dangerous project”⁴²⁸ for Russia, as it was the first time in the region throughout the history that a Caucasian country managed to transform into “an efficient nation State”⁴²⁹. Saakashvili was certain that President Putin saw the threat in Georgia because the progress in his country could have a spill-over effect on other countries in the region. It could inspire and mobilize other countries in the post-soviet space to undertake the same reforms which could result in leaving Russian sphere of influence and “move towards Europe”⁴³⁰. That is the reason the Kremlin could not let Georgia set such a precedent. In order to avoid such scenario in the region Russia allegedly used all possible measures against Georgia such as “an embargo, a war, an invasion, and an occupation”⁴³¹. With those hostile activities Russia aimed to reverse Georgia’s progress achieved in pursuing the European project. President Saakashvili was convinced that “the reforms had to be crushed before they would bear all their fruits”⁴³², that is reason “the efforts to roll back the advances of the EU and NATO in our region – progress based on the will of our people” - were becoming ever more intense⁴³³. Saakashvili insisted that Russia’s “objective was to stop our Euro integration”⁴³⁴ and by doing so the Kremlin targeted architects of the European project in Georgia, the UNM government and the president. Saakashvili used to quote Russia’s foreign minister Lavrov, who allegedly said that “the Post-Soviet Space is one big spiritual sphere, with only one anomaly - the Georgian government”⁴³⁵. The Kremlin’s attitude towards Georgia was caused by its decision to depart from Russia and instead bring in the region NATO and the EU, which would bear its consequences in the region in long-term perspective. According to President Saakashvili:

Vladimir Putin was loathing the Georgian experience throughout this last decade[...] The Georgian experience of successful reforms and the creation of a functioning state was therefore considered to be a virus --- a virus that could and would contaminate the whole post-Soviet region – we became the least corrupt country in Europe, the world’s number one reformer according to the World Bank, one

⁴²⁸ Mikheil Saakashvili “Address by the President of Georgia at the 68th session of the United Nations General Assembly”, (speech, September 25, 2013), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

⁴²⁹ Ibid.

⁴³⁰ Mikheil Saakashvili “Address by the President of Georgia at the 68th session of the United Nations General Assembly”, (speech, September 25, 2013), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

⁴³¹ Ibid.

⁴³² Ibid.

⁴³³ Ibid.

⁴³⁴ Mikheil Saakashvili “The address of the President of Georgia in the David the Builder National Defense Academy” (speech, August 7, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

⁴³⁵ Mikheil Saakashvili gave a lecture “Georgian Democratic Transformation: A Test Case for the Post-Soviet World” at the Princeton University (speech, May 18, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

of the top places to do business, the least criminalized country in Europe, after being one of the most criminalized one --- and that was the virus that should be eliminated, by every means possible⁴³⁶.

The image of Russia in 2006-2012 is the complete opposite of the image created 2004-2006. “Constructive partner”⁴³⁷ willing to have peace at its borders turned into “the Russian aggressor”⁴³⁸ with “the imperial fantasies” which should be fought against through “common struggle” by ‘we’. If in 2006 the official narrative associated Russia neither with occupation nor with the Soviet Union, this was reversed in 2008. Russia was repositioned from a strategic partner to an antagonist which did nothing but threatened a statehood of Georgia and most importantly hindered realization of the European project and the plan for European future. For Georgia Russia became a ‘constitutive outside’, the enemy of the European project, which could not be included in it, because the very essence of Russia signified an opposition to the European idea. The Kremlin evolved into a culprit responsible for almost all misfortunes in the country, because its alleged goal to regain an influence over post-Soviet Union countries contradicted very idea of Georgian state to be independent and be free in its choices. Based on the official narrative:

An old Empire is trying to reclaim its bygone borders. And “borders” is actually not the right word, since this Empire – be it the Russian Empire, the Soviet Union, the Russian Federation, or the Eurasian Union – never had borders. It only had margins. [...] Unlike most nations, the Russian Federation has no interest in having stable states around it. Neighboring countries in constant turmoil is what the Kremlin is seeking. It rejects the very idea of strong governments in Georgia, Ukraine, or Moldova, even ones that try to be friendly to its interests⁴³⁹.

Transformation of the image resulted from still another change of the politics towards Russia. If in 2006-2007 it was directed towards re-engagement with Russia in spite of rising tensions, after the war in 2008 all channels of direct contact between Georgia and Russia were shut down, therefore Georgian politics zeroed in on blaming and shaming of the Kremlin for the continued aggression and thus for disrespect of the international order. The UNM government was concerned by the “creeping occupation” of Georgian territories in the vicinity of South Ossetia and Abkhazia which proceeded through the process of “borderization”. In other words Russia was grabbing the territories without staging a war by fixing the fences

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ Mikheil Saakashvili “Remarks - H.E President Mikheil Saakashvili to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe” (speech, January 26, 2005), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

⁴³⁸ Mikheil Saakashvili “The address of the President of Georgia in the David the Builder National Defense Academy” (speech, August 7, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

⁴³⁹ Mikheil Saakashvili “Address by the President of Georgia at the 68th session of the United Nations General Assembly”, (speech, September 25, 2013), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

and thus demarcating additional Georgian territories for itself. Due to such circumstances the narrative became rather radical and unfiltered at times. "Saakashvili is said to have mocked Mr Putin as 'Lili-Putin' as a reference to his height"⁴⁴⁰. This allegation was never confirmed but its existence indicated that there was no chance for the resumption of a dialogue between the parties, as personal relations with "the old guard" defined "the current state of ties between Russia and Georgia". Aggravated tension and mutual antagonism was a major defining feature of their relations, whereas politics of Europeanization served not as a remedy but as an instigator of the tension.

The politics to deal with an enemy underwent further changes. Due to absence of political dialogue with the Kremlin, the president initiated public diplomacy to "restore relations with Russia"⁴⁴¹ through engagement with the Russian people. The visa regime was lifted for Russian citizens in order to make it easy for them to visit Georgia. This way Georgia intended to contradict Russian information campaign against Georgia. By bringing Russians into Georgia, Saakashvili expected them to "learn truth about Georgia"⁴⁴², its "reconstruction" and then "spread the word about it in their country"⁴⁴³. This way the UNM government wanted to expose Russian lies and "smear" campaign against Georgia. However, with high level of support for President Putin's policies, Saakashvili's public diplomacy was unlikely to live up to the expectations. The increase of tourists from Russia did not influence political situation between countries.

2006-2012 tensions between Georgia and Russia had a terrible impact on the two countries' relations. By 2012 the image of Russia was all time worse in independent Georgia. Even though at national level there has been an ongoing debate on a detrimental role of Russia in Georgian state building since its independence, it was for the first time that the Georgian government officially declared Russia to be "the state exercising the military occupation"⁴⁴⁴ of Georgian territories by adopting the law on 'Occupied Territories' on October 23, 2008⁴⁴⁵. This way Russia was proclaimed a number one enemy of Georgia and Georgians at political level, the goal of which was to destroy the freedom loving country completely by taking its territories slice by slice.

⁴⁴⁰ Levy, C. J. (2009) 'The Georgian and Putin: A Hate Story', The New York Times, accessed May 02, 2017: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/04/19/weekinreview/19levy.html?mcubz=3>

⁴⁴¹ Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia addressed the population in Gori" (speech, August 22, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library.

⁴⁴² Mikheil Saakashvili "Speech of the President of Georgia delivered at the international conference of the World Tourism Organization" (speech, May 9, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library.

⁴⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁴ Georgian Law on 'Occupied Territories' on 28.10.2008.

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid.

Unintended Consequence of Intended Decision?

The European project institutionalized by the Georgian government in 2004 changed in 2006 due to escalating tensions with Russia. In the initial project the main threat, so called “an antagonist”, for the government of Georgia was corruption, big bureaucracy, red tape and territorial problems, while Russia was among the challenges. Russia was portrayed as an actor full of potentials to support Georgia if the latter built its policies correctly. President Saakashvili did not seem to maintain any illusion about Russia’s interest and ambitions towards Georgia due to “the last decade of less than perfect relations”⁴⁴⁶, but still, there was the plan to cooperate with the Kremlin. Through inclusion-exclusion politics the UNM government wanted engagement of Russia in the issues of common interest such as “fight against terrorism and movement of armed groups on the borders”⁴⁴⁷ as an external player in the long-term perspective on the one hand, on the other - inclusion of the Kremlin in the internal issues of national interest in the short-term with the aim to solve them through exclusion of Russia from decision-making over those issues once and for all. Therefore for Saakashvili there was no alternative to a constructive dialogue, that is reason the project had initially allocated to Russia a role of a “constructive partner”. But in 2006 the plan got out of hand which eventually stripped Russia that role, labeling it as a number one enemy of the country. The August War in 2008 became the turning point. But what went wrong with regards to Russia? The reason of such twist can be miscalculations and mistakes which made Georgian politics unavailing in certain areas.

There were certain contradictions in the discourse of President Saakashvili on Russia. Until escalation of tensions with Russia in 2006 Saakashvili emphasized constantly about the need and importance “to forget many of the grievances of the past and pursue forward-looking policies that reflect the interests of both peoples”⁴⁴⁸. He wanted to ensure “very close, friendly relations with Russia”⁴⁴⁹. But at the same time Saakashvili, inevitably or deliberately, used to depict Russia as an unreliable partner ready to manipulate with its energy resources⁴⁵⁰ by cutting off power to Georgia. He also highlighted backwardness as well as absence of democracy and freedom of speech in Russia, while praised the progress towards European transformation of Georgia. Saakashvili seemed particularly angry about the Russian media which allegedly portrayed him in

⁴⁴⁶ Mikheil Saakashvili “Speech delivered by Mikheil Saakashvili at John Hopkins University” (speech, February 4, 2004), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

⁴⁴⁷ Mikheil Saakashvili “Speech delivered by the President Saakashvili at the meeting with members of Supreme Council of Abkhazia (speech, September 10, 2004), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

⁴⁴⁸ Mikheil Saakashvili “President Saakashvili hails” (speech, May 31, 2005), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

⁴⁴⁹ Mikheil Saakashvili “President Saakashvili holds annual summing up briefing” (speech, May 26, 2005), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

⁴⁵⁰ See for instance the speech of Saakashvili “when I came to office, power from Russia was cut off. It is possible this might happen this year. Pray it does not happen, but it could. We need our own generating capacity” on 26.05.2004 while he was holding annual briefing.

a bad light. He used to adorn with negative epithets Russian politicians⁴⁵¹ who expressed the criticism and mistrust towards him. Such instances in the discourse were relatively rare and restrained until 2006, which later accelerated over time reaching completely different level and degree of non-diplomatic language.

Along with incoherence of the official discourse about Russia, there were certain mismatches between the objectives of the European project. The project of Europe, which was the main framework to build and modernize the country, was institutionalized in order to ensure “the peace and prosperity” in Georgia as it did within the EU. And the method to achieve peace and prosperity was Europeanization of the country. Europeanization in Georgia targeted the legacy of the Soviet Union, which was hindering the development of the country. The goal was to reimagine European Georgia through “the implementation of democratic reforms”, “strengthening the market economy and security of the country”⁴⁵² but most importantly through establishing stateness by resolving problems with Russia and consolidating the state. This implied dramatic increase of the role of Europe at domestic level at the same time decreasing the Russian influence. Therefore, even though European project prioritized peaceful co-existence with neighbors and in particular with Russia, it was jeopardizing Russian interest in Georgia and in the region in general by taking the country out of the Russian sphere of influence politically, socially, economically and ideologically.

The European project appeared ill-prepared to tackle certain internal and external problems in Georgia. More specifically, the project was effective to target institutional problems, but was weak to handle territorial problems, in which the main player was Russia. Even though the EU committed itself to conflict prevention and crisis management in the South Caucasus within the framework of the ENP, the EU governments failed to have a principled and united position towards Russia on this issue. Thus, President Saakashvili’s campaign to engage the EU in a negotiation and peacekeeping in both Abkhazia and Tskhinvali in order “to replace Russia’s domination”⁴⁵³ was defeated, because it was instigating geopolitical tensions and the European Union avoided getting involved in any kind of geopolitical competition. Thus, although the European Parliament was concerned by “the direct involvement of the Russian Federation” in South Ossetia and

⁴⁵¹ Mikheil Saakashvili “Speech delivered by the President Saakashvili at the meeting with members of Supreme Council of Abkhazia (speech, September 10, 2004), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library, where he calls Zhirinovskiy ‘clown’.

⁴⁵² Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia on 8 April 2008, accessed February 02, 2017, www.mfa.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=36 &info_id=6280

⁴⁵³ Nilsson, N. (2009) ‘Georgia’s Rose Revolution: The Break with the Past’ in Cornell, S. E. & S. Star, F. (eds.), *The Guns of August 2008: Russia’s War in Georgia*. M.E.Sharpe, Armonk, New York.

Abkhazia, because of its negative impact on “Georgia’s state-building and reform processes”⁴⁵⁴, the EU did not have coherent and clear politics towards breakaway regions. The EU governments seemed reluctant and incapable to take proactive measures to resolve the conflicts where Russia was an interested player. There was no elaborated and agreed-upon answer to the question of “how to tackle Russia’s geopolitical concerns?”.

By 2003 when Saakashvili came to power Russian image in Georgia was of an aggressor which posed an existential threat to Georgia by constantly grabbing and expropriating Georgian territories. He tried to redefine the image of Russia and hence put an end to its meddling in Georgian internal affairs through politics of engagement. This implied ushering Russian troops from Georgian territories and establishing Georgian authority over the breakaway regions. The politics to convince the Kremlin to meet Georgia halfway through its plans was combination of persuasion and pressure from international community and in particular from the US and the EU. Hopes were high because of Baltic countries’ experience. The hope was further strengthened when Russia agreed to withdraw its military basis. Moreover, Russian role in peaceful finalization of Adjarian revolution in May 2004 also added to the growing enthusiasm on effectiveness of the UNM politics. Apart from this, overall atmosphere in the country was rather positive. The period after the Rose Revolution was full of excitement and expectations for better future. The popularity of Saakashvili and the UNM government was rather high. There was strong support from the US and the EU, even though it was conditioned with certain requirements. Saakashvili’s government was trying to meet some of those requirements⁴⁵⁵, which used to be reflected in different reports and statements made by high profile politicians from US and Europe. In such situation the only issue lingering on the agenda of the government was problems in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, which were plagued by regular tension and instability. The UNM government was confident about politics of Europeanization, about its ability to establish constructive relations with Russia and thus resolve the problems related to the breakaway regions. The key question to be asked at that time was whether Russia could be convinced anyhow to relinquish its effective control over Abkhazia and Tskhinvali? Saakashvili and its government seemed to believe in a resolution of the territorial problems through a combination of pressure, advocacy and persuasion, but August 2008 revealed that it was wrong to assume that Russia would “allow any inroad in the region that it already considered its own”⁴⁵⁶.

⁴⁵⁴ European Parliament (2008) ‘Analysis of the EU Assistance to Georgia—Briefing Paper’, Policy Department External Policies (Brussels, European Parliament), accessed , February 03, 2017, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2008/388969/EXPO-AFET_NT\(2008\)388969_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/note/join/2008/388969/EXPO-AFET_NT(2008)388969_EN.pdf)

⁴⁵⁵ Bolkvadze, K. (2016) ‘Cherry Picking EU Conditionality: Selective Compliance in Georgia’s Hybrid Regime’, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 68:3, pp. 409-440.

⁴⁵⁶ Nodia, G. (2013) ‘The Record of the Rose Revolution: mixed but still impressive’ in Vichen Cheterian, ed., *From Perestroika to Rainbow Revolutions: Reform and Revolution after Socialism*. Hurst and Co: London. pp 100.

Skirmishes between Russian and Georgian forces in summer 2004 over Tskhinvali region should have been an indicator for the Georgian government that Russia was there to stay not as a “strategic partner” but as an antagonist, “limit” to territorial integrity of Georgia as well as to the European integration.

President Saakashvili with his government put a lot of trust in the politics of transformation of ‘the enemy’ into ‘a partner’ for purpose of building a new reality. Even though the president managed to score some successes in this, his efforts to address territorial problems failed. “In his pre-election campaigns in 2004 and 2008, he pledged to solve those problems during his term in office. Following the war with Russia in August 2008, the solution looks even more distant than before”⁴⁵⁷. Moreover, instead of restoration of territorial control over breakaway regions in 2008 Georgia lost to Russia some more territories within these regions.

The failure of the inclusion-exclusion politics to endure the pressure and ease tensions between Georgia and Russia affected the project of Europe. It was mistake to believe that it was possible to include the Kremlin into the European project while at the same time aiming to exclude Russia from Georgia’s internal politics for good. These politics of expulsion failed to transform Russia from an antagonistic into an agonistic power. Therefore the list of antagonists –“constitutive outside” - was expanded by adding Russia next to corruption and Soviet legacy in 2008 after the war, but this was the only reason. The thing is that successes in battling corruption and Soviet legacy negatively affected relations with Russia. For the Georgian government the European project and Russia proved to be two irreconcilable alternatives, which could not co-exist. Such turn of the events, which seemed to be overlooked, impacted initial status of “a strategic partner” allocated to Russia, because the UNM government decided to prioritize the continued implementation of the European project’s other priorities over establishing good neighborly relations with Russia. Hence due to the failure to reconcile the priorities of the project, the Georgian government failed to transform Russia into “a partner”. It could not convince the Kremlin that Georgia’s Europeanization was not a threat to itself. The fact that the politics of Europeanization did not entail geopolitics should have made the project more engaging, but other aspects of the politics, in particular those related to breakaway regions, progress in institutional reforms, social transformation, the NATO as well as the role of the US in the consolidation of Europe most likely played detrimental role in the politics of inclusion of Russia as a partner. Therefore, instead of bringing peace and stability in the country, the UNM’s choice for the project of Europe further aggravated the tension between Georgia and Russia which resulted into re-emergence and subsequent institutionalization of Russia as an enemy of European Georgia, and of “we” community. This was most strongly expressed in the law on “Occupied Territories”.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid pp.99.

6. The State vs. The Church

At political level President Saakashvili and his fellow reformers did not have a major opposition, they controlled all the branches of power throughout the country. The only institution the government was cautious of was the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC), because of increasing religiosity of people and also immense popularity of GOC⁴⁵⁸ in the country. Soon after institutionalization of the European project reports about tensions and conflicts between the government and the church started to appear on regular basis. The disagreements between the two prompted discussions among academics, who concluded that patriarch and the GOC was carrying out its own project – Religious Nationalism, which was undermining implementation of the state-driven project of Europe. Even though the patriarch used to express his concern about separate values, in particular about liberal values of equality and rule of law, he officially advocated the European project and the state agenda to integrate the country into the European structures. Moreover, when the project started to unfold and progress, the patriarch got engaged through giving his own interpretations of what European Georgia should incorporate in order to become a member of European family, which were sometimes contradictory to the state-given interpretation. Therefore, instead of running mutually exclusive projects the two – the patriarch and the president – were involved in the same project of Europe.

Two parallel identity projects?

Majority of research papers about the state-church relations in Georgia, which studies United National Movement's (UNM) government in 2004-2012, claim that there was conflict between the state government and the church. Reason behind such tensions between these two institutions is reported to be a disagreement about a political project for a development of the country. The authors believe that the GOC was discontent with a state-driven project that is the reason it initiated its own counter-project, mostly referred as a religious nationalism. Religious nationalism of the GOC revealed itself in "the religious discourse" which resembled to "the nationalist discourse about the survival of the Georgian nation"⁴⁵⁹. Zedania believes that through "appealing to the past, to the biologically understood essence of national identity and to the story of its religious salvation" religious nationalism narrates a story "about Orthodoxy saving 'Georgian blood', 'Georgian genes', and Georgian identity as such"⁴⁶⁰. Moreover, it projects Orthodoxy as "an essential factor in determining national identity". The bottom-line of such narrative is that "'Georgianness' lies in 'being

⁴⁵⁸ Caucasus Barometer 2008 – 2012. Caucasus Barometer Georgia. Tbilisi: Caucasus Research Resource Center, Georgia, accessed February 03, 2017, <http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb2012ge/codebook/>

⁴⁵⁹ Zedania, G (2011) 'The Rise of Religious Nationalism in Georgia', *Identity Studies*, Vol 3, pp.123.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid, pp.125.

Orthodox”⁴⁶¹. Salome Minesashvili notes that a discourse on national identity has been a main tool for the Georgian Orthodox Church to impact on society. The GOC’s discourse emphasizes “traditions and customs—within the confines of the Orthodox faith”⁴⁶². Giga Zedania is convinced that this narrative of the GOC emerged in response to a “revolutionary” discourse sustained by the UNM government after 2003⁴⁶³.

There is more or less an agreement among scholars about the GOC’s narrative and intentions to revive religious nationalism, whereas there is slight divergence of opinions with regards to a typology of nationalism the UNM tried to institutionalize through its discourse. Three main type has been identified, which are civic nationalism, revolutionary nationalism and hybrid nationalism. Among these three, civic nationalism is most commonly used term in reference to a political project driven by the UNM government. Such project entails establishment of a civic form of nationalism, “able to encompass representatives of all ethnic and religious communities inhabiting the country”⁴⁶⁴. The author of “revolutionary nationalism” Giga Zedania has ventured a step further and claimed that the UNM’s “extensive state-building programme” gave birth to a nationalism which “aimed at establishing a novel kind of political identity and at protecting this identity from its enemies, both internal and external”⁴⁶⁵. In comparison to a civic nationalism, revolutionary project “wanted to revolutionize society by offering a new, more modern and dynamic interpretation of what it is to be Georgian in the twenty-first century” instead of preserving existing political identity⁴⁶⁶. Zedania insists that the UNM’s revolutionary nationalism was an inclusive political project because it was not “based on ethnicity and emphasized the factor of citizenship as something defining the understanding of nationhood”⁴⁶⁷. Whereas Tornike Metreveli, an author of “hybrid nationalism”, claims that a state driven identity project was “perhaps not hugely inclusive for the religious and ethnic minorities”, because Saakashvili “restored” “a flag that underlined Georgians’ Christian roots”. Moreover, he regularly attended “exclusively Orthodox Christian celebrations”, took a presidential oath “on the grave of David the Builder” and increased privileges for the GOC as well as for patriarch⁴⁶⁸. Based on these arguments he believes that the president advocated “hybrid

⁴⁶¹ Ibid.

⁴⁶² Minesashvili, S (2015) ‘Can the Georgian Orthodox Church Contribute to the Democratization Process?’, *GIP Policy Paper*. pp.3.

⁴⁶³ Zedania, G (2011) ‘The Rise of Religious Nationalism in Georgia’, *Identity Studies*, Vol 3, pp.120-128.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid,pp.121.

⁴⁶⁵ Ibid,pp.122.

⁴⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁶⁸ Metreveli T. (2016) ‘An undisclosed story of roses: church, state, and nation in contemporary Georgia’, *Nationalities Papers*, 44:5, pp. 694-712.

nationalism” which seems to be a combination of civic and religious nationalism. Metreveli argues that “Saakashvili’s discourse is civic”, but the president’s symbolic actions leaned towards religious nationalism⁴⁶⁹.

Despite diversity in using terminology with regards to the political project driven by President Saakashvili and its government, it seems there is an agreement among scholars that the aim of the state-driven project was modernization of the country, which targeted national identity and in particular ontological and normative notions embedded in a self-identification of Georgian society. This is the domain the GOC monopolized and hence served as a gatekeeper of Christian values and Georgian traditions. Kornely Kakachia claims that “for centuries, the church has played a pivotal role in the national identity of the country: in society, culture, economics, and politics”⁴⁷⁰. While Zedania believes that it is a recent phenomenon which emerged in the beginning of nineties⁴⁷¹. In any case, by 2004 the GOC’s ability to impact on the cognitive notions embedded within society was widely acknowledged. The GOC is reported to be operating through “spreading its position”, but also through ‘influencing the political agenda’ of the government⁴⁷². Barbare Janelidze argues that the GOC creates “a general discourse in society which has an indirect influence on state politics” and “state-level decisions”⁴⁷³. Salome Minesashvili is convinced that the GOC capitalizes on increasing religiosity of Georgian society to boost its authority⁴⁷⁴. The main source for scholars to calculate the church’s influence has been sociological surveys and statistical data which shows unparalleled popularity of the patriarch, increasing trust in the GOC and rising religiosity of Georgian people. For instance according to NDI study, 91% of those questioned like the patriarch and only 61% like the president⁴⁷⁵. Whereas IRI research reveals that 93% of respondents trust the church, while the president’s office is trusted by 70%⁴⁷⁶.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁷⁰ Kakachia, K (2014) ‘Is Georgia’s Orthodox Church an Obstacle to European Values?’, Policy Memo 322, *PONARS Eurasia*, accessed July 30, 2017, <http://www.ponarseurasia.org/memo/georgia%E2%80%99s-orthodox-church-obstacle-european-values>

⁴⁷¹ Zedania, G (2011) ‘The Rise of Religious Nationalism in Georgia’, *Identity Studies*, Vol 3, pp 120-128.

⁴⁷² Minesashvili, S (2015) ‘Can the Georgian Orthodox Church Contribute to the Democratization Process?’, *GIP Policy Paper*.pp.2.

⁴⁷³ Janelidze, B (2015) ‘Secularization and Desecularization in Georgia: state and church under the Saakashvili government 2003-2012’ in Agadjanian, A., Jödicke, A., Zweerde, E.V.D. (eds), *Religion, Nation and Democracy in the South Caucasus*, London & New York, Routledge.pp.77.

⁴⁷⁴ Minesashvili, S (2015) ‘Can the Georgian Orthodox Church Contribute to the Democratization Process?’, *GIP Policy Paper*.pp.3-5.

⁴⁷⁵ ‘Political Attitudes in Georgia: Result of an August 2012 Survey’ By The Caucasus Research Resource Center (CRRC) for National Democratic Institute (NDI), accessed January 06, 2013, <http://www.ndi.org/node/19283>

⁴⁷⁶ ‘Nationwide Study of Georgian Public Opinion: Oct 27 – Nov 11, 2011’ by International Republican Institute (IRI), accessed January 06, 2013, <http://www.iri.org/news-events-press-center/news/iri-releases-expanded-nationwide-survey-georgian-public-opinion>

The first reports of disagreement and even of conflict between the Georgian government and the church started to emerge soon after the Rose Revolution in 2003. But this was not a confrontation between two enemies, instead it was a “war of positions” between two agonistic entities. Zedania finds such “battles” as “unexpected and surprising, since there is no tradition of this kind of conflict in Georgia”⁴⁷⁷. It seems “the bonds between the Georgian Orthodox Church and the state” which are “longstanding and deep-seated”⁴⁷⁸ started to unravel because of the conflicting projects: religious nationalism and civic/revolutionary nationalism. Incompatibility of two separate projects driven and administered in parallel to each other is believed to be the main cause of tensions. Giga Zedania argues that the project were pulled towards different directions: “the modernization project with its revolutionary nationalism” intended “to transform the whole of society”, while “the re-traditionalization process with the religious nationalism” attempted “to impose religious semantics on the totality of societal and cultural phenomena”. Based on this argument he concludes that “religious nationalism would like to become the locus of resistance to modernity”⁴⁷⁹. Kornely Kakachia seems to agree by claiming that Orthodoxy as “one of the most conservative forces in post-Soviet Eurasia [...] tends to view any innovation as a foreign threat aimed at destroying sacred national traditions”⁴⁸⁰.

In the conflict between the UNM and the church a winner of “the battle” is unclear. The research results are mixed. Metreveli seems to claim that a state driven civic nationalism was compromised when President Saakashvili started to project “certain elements of ethnic particularism” which resulted into an institutionalization of “hybrid nationalism” in Georgia⁴⁸¹. Whereas Barbare Janelidze concludes that the government was defeated in a conflict with the GOC. She believes that “if this [government’s] program had been successful, the GOP would have lost most of its power, influence and popularity, since such project of modernization by the government would have placed limitations on the discourse of the Orthodox Church”⁴⁸². In spite of reports about conflicts, dichotomization of national front or even hostility between the president and the patriarch has never been either observed or reported in 2004-2012. Indeed there were disagreements

⁴⁷⁷ Zedania, G (2011) ‘The Rise of Religious Nationalism in Georgia’, *Identity Studies*, Vol 3, pp. 120-128.

⁴⁷⁸ Kakachia, K (2014) ‘Is Georgia’s Orthodox Church an Obstacle to European Values?’, Policy Memo 322, *PONARS Eurasia*, accessed July 30, 2017, <http://www.ponarseurasia.org/memo/georgia%E2%80%99s-orthodox-church-obstacle-european-values>

⁴⁷⁹ Zedania, G (2011) ‘The Rise of Religious Nationalism in Georgia’, *Identity Studies*, Vol 3, pp. 120-128.

⁴⁸⁰ Kakachia, K (2014) ‘Is Georgia’s Orthodox Church an Obstacle to European Values?’, Policy Memo 322, *PONARS Eurasia*, accessed July 30, 2017, <http://www.ponarseurasia.org/memo/georgia%E2%80%99s-orthodox-church-obstacle-european-values>

⁴⁸¹ Metreveli T. (2016) ‘An undisclosed story of roses: church, state, and nation in contemporary Georgia’, *Nationalities Papers*, 44:5, pp. 694-712.

⁴⁸² Janelidze, B (2015) ‘Secularization and Desecularization in Georgia: state and church under the Saakashvili government 2003-2012’ in Agadjanian, A., Jödicke, A., Zweerde, E.V.D. (eds), *Religion, Nation and Democracy in the South Caucasus*, London & New York, Routledge.pp.77.

on separate issues, but the president and the patriarch remained on the same side of the battle. Furthermore at official level the patriarch and the GOC supported Georgia's European project. Giga Zedania does not seem to believe into the unity of the president and the patriarch and argues that such unity seemed intact only "on the surface, on the level of ceremonialism and discourse"⁴⁸³. Indeed, there were reports of "hidden" tensions, personal hatred of certain members of clergy and even disapproval of the project, but such separate instances did not seem to impact an endorsement and support of the European project from the patriarch's side. Moreover, the GOC and the patriarch even actively participated in its implementation through discussions and debates on separate values and principles of liberal democracy. That is reason the research believes that the patriarch, on purpose or as an unexpected consequence of intended action, was drawn into a single hegemonic project in the country which was the project of Europe. Hence instead of running its own project, the patriarch and the GOC were engaged to enforce its own interpretation of the project of Europe.

State Policy towards the Church

President Saakashvili's attitude towards Catholicos Patriarch of Ilia II and the church, which evolved into the government's policy towards the GOC, can be characterized as a skillful mixture of *cooperation*, *persuasion*, *appeasement* and *marginalization*, which together formed agonistic politics. In general Saakashvili can be distinguished with his boldness to enforce, publicly shame and put a pressure in order to achieve a willing result at domestic level. This was his general approach to almost everyone and everything, except Catholicos Patriarch Ilia II and the church. Relations with the patriarch was a learning process for the president. In the beginning of his presidency he seemed bolder in his actions towards the GOC, which was not well digested by the GOC and certain conservative parts of society. It seemed Saakashvili initially intended to relegate the church to a private domain as per liberals' conventional teaching but soon he understood that this was a sensitive issue in the country and too much politically charged. There were few obvious reasons for such change of mind and attitude with regards to the GOC: 1. The patriarch and the GOC enjoyed unparalleled popularity within Georgian population, which could convert into mass mobilization; 2. Close links between Russian and Georgian patriarchs might have negative consequences for implementation of a state-driven project; the last but not least 3. Neglect or conflict with the church were likely to be used by opposition groups to boost their political standing through establishment of close ties with the GOC. Hence in order to avoid any of these scenarios the president started to have more measured policy averting open confrontations with the GOC and the patriarch in particular. Hence engagement with and in the GOC seemed on the agenda of the president, because by doing so he could control the GOC and press ahead with his own project of state

⁴⁸³ Zedania, G (2011) 'The Rise of Religious Nationalism in Georgia', *Identity Studies*, Vol 3, pp. 120-128.

development. By design or by default Saakashvili seemingly started to implement agonistic policy towards the GOC.

Narrative and actions undertaken by President Saakashvili does not seem to be directed against the GOC or the patriarch, the president's goal was to implement the project of Europe. But to ensure success of his project he needed full control over cognitive structures embedded in self-identification of Georgians, which was to certain degree monopolized by the GOC. Therefore, cognitive notions, which entails ontological and normative principles, were the main arena for contestation and battle between the two. The situation he was facing was not easy, he had to regain the influence over cognitive structures not only without making angry orthodox clergy but also remaining their best ally in popularizations of the GOC's activities. President Saakashvili's agonistic policy towards the GOC seemed to envisage a mixture of different approaches such as *cooperation*, *persuasion*, *appeasement* and *marginalization*. Such division of his policy towards the GOC is provisional as there is no linear separation between these four; all four served to one goal, engagement with and in the GOC to realize a state-driven project of Europe.

Cooperation with the church, which might overlap with an *appeasement* policy of the government to certain degree, was crucial in order to ensure support from one of the most trusted figure in the country, Catholicos Patriarch Ilia II. That is reason Saakashvili allied himself with the patriarch and ensured that channels for a dialogue with political establishment were always open for the members of Holy Synod, but this did not automatically translate into fulfillment of the GOC's demands. He officially committed himself to "further strengthening of links between the state and the church"⁴⁸⁴, which seemed to entail restoration and construction of churches, increase of state budget and benefits for the GOC and the patriarch. According to President Saakashvili "more than 50 million" was "spent on the restoration of cathedrals for the past several years"⁴⁸⁵. The aim behind such activities was "the preservation of our cultural heritage" which was "a very important and vital thing" for development of Georgia⁴⁸⁶.

President Saakashvili inherited the GOC, which had been granted unparalleled privileges and rights due to "the outstanding role of the Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Georgia in the history of Georgia

⁴⁸⁴ Mikheil Saakashvili "Georgian president opened first meeting of new elected parliament" (speech, June 7, 2008), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library.

⁴⁸⁵ Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia congratulated the Georgian nation on the launch of construction of a new cathedral on Makhata Mountain", (speech, 17 April, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library.

⁴⁸⁶ Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia visited Mukhatgverdi Brotherhood Cemetery together with the Catholicos Patriarch of Georgia" (speech, August 4, 2010), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library.

and its independence from the State⁴⁸⁷. Such privileges⁴⁸⁸ further increased during the UNM government. The state budget for the Georgian Patriarchate was increased from 1.64 million GEL in 2004 to 22.8 million GEL in 2012. Moreover, in 2006 the UNM government amended a Tax Code in order to grant to the GOC an exemption from revenue, land and noncommercial property taxes. In addition, the same Tax Code exempted Catholicos Patriarch from custom's control and revenue tax. On top of the amendments there were reports about allocation of "real estate properties" to the GOC and "luxurious gifts to bishops"⁴⁸⁹. Even though during Saakashvili's presidency privileges further increase, it seems those privileges given to the GOC and the patriarch in 2004-2012 were primarily either monetary or material donations and benefits. Apart from the privileges, the president regularly attended church services and whenever there was such chance he praised the patriarch for his contribution in order to showcase his respect and loyalty⁴⁹⁰.

The cooperation with the GOC was strategically motivated. Besides willingness to be appealing to larger number of voters, it was of key importance to ally with the patriarch because, it seemed clear for Saakashvili that the church was a very sensitive domain in the country which should be engaged with and in, otherwise there was a threat that a vacuum left by him would have been occupied by opposition groups and Orthodox Russia for popularization of anti-European sentiments and propaganda. Negligence towards the GOC from Saakashvili's side was likely to have negative impact on the state-driven project and as consequence on the president and his government.

Persuasion mostly focused on an engagement of the patriarch and the church in the project of Europe vis-à-vis a campaign to disband the bonds between the GOC and the Russian Orthodox Church. When the project of Europe was institutionalized as a sole roadmap for development, it was obvious that the patriarch and the GOC had certain reservations towards certain part of the project. Hence it was of key importance to reassure the church and those who were concerned that the project was not against Christian values. Against the fears towards Europe and European values, Saakashvili projected Christianity, which is also a pillar of Georgian identity, as a foundation of European identity and hence a main criterion for Europeanness. Harmonization

⁴⁸⁷ Constitution of Georgia.

⁴⁸⁸ The Consituional agreement (Concordat) between Catholicos Patriarch Ilia II and the state in 2002 ensured a privileged position of the GOC in the constitution of Georgia.

⁴⁸⁹ Metreveli T. (2016) 'An undisclosed story of roses: church, state, and nation in contemporary Georgia', *Nationalities Papers*, 44:5, pp. 694-712.

⁴⁹⁰ Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia: "if we all stand together united as we now stand here in this cathedral, we will restore a united, strong Georgia" (speech, September 16, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library.

of these two identities on a basis of Christian values seemed to envisage rapprochement of the GOC and its parish to Europe⁴⁹¹.

Links with the Russian Orthodox Church, which counted a long history of relations, was a main concern for Saakashvili and the government. Apart from this, there were instances of exchange of sympathies and mutual respect between the patriarch and Russian political establishment, with which Saakashvili had rocky relations since 2008. But it seems such mutual expressions of amicable relations were mere ceremonial, and thus did not carry any threat or entail a deeper preoccupation with Russia, otherwise it would have been exposed by the UNM. As it is highly unlikely that Saakashvili's regime which was known for mass wiretapping of almost every public domain and beyond in the country did not have information about political dispositions and inclinations inside the Georgian Patriarchate. But even a mere visibility of Russia in relation to the church and the patriarch was regarded as an unpleasant trend, because there was a threat that Russia might use Christianity as a common religious conviction of two nations to lure back Georgia under its influence. For that purpose the stories of terror and occupation of the northern neighbor were revived as a counter campaign to showcase Russian imperialistic intentions⁴⁹².

President Saakashvili breathed a new life to the story about Patriarch Ambrosi Khelaia, "another Georgian national hero and saint", who reportedly "wrote a letter to the Genoa Conference" in order to demand restoration of Georgia's independence in 1922, as a consequence "he was arrested and tortured by the Bolsheviks"⁴⁹³. Saakashvili repeatedly told the story about Patriarch Ambrosi Khelaia at several different occasions. Moreover just before stepping down as the president of Georgia he awarded Ambrosi Khelaia with the order of National Hero. Another frequently referred religious figure in Saakashvili's stories of Russian terror was Ilia Chavchavadze - a saint canonized by the GOC, founder of a national political project and national hero of Georgia – who reportedly died for "this idea" "about a united and strong Georgia", because "Ilia never doubted for one moment that Georgia should be free and independent"⁴⁹⁴. Apart from restating a story about Ilia Chavchavadze's role in awakening of Georgia against Russia, he was reimagined as "a modern thinker" and penholder of the UNM driven political project. Saakashvili declared that the UNM

⁴⁹¹ Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia congratulated the Georgian nation on the launch of construction of a new cathedral on Makhata Mountain", (speech, 17 April, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library.

⁴⁹² Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia has given a speech at the opening ceremony of the Ronald Reagan statue" (speech, November 23, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library.

⁴⁹³ Mikheil Saakashvili "President Saakashvili pays respects to Georgian independence fighter" (speech, November 21, 2005), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library.

⁴⁹⁴ Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia attended the ceremonial opening of "Ilia Lake" (speech, November 16, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library.

“program is a 21st century classical analogy of the 19th century reform implemented by Ilia”⁴⁹⁵. By doing so he reassured that there was no reason to be scared of novelties because the project was old. Considering that Ilia Chavchavadze was often quoted by Catholicos Patriarch such depiction of the political project should have been rather engaging for conservative religious groups.

Marginalization of the church targeted decreasing of the GOC’s influence on cognitive structures within the country. President Saakashvili and the UNM was implementing the policies bit by bit by giving the GOC and the patriarch time to stomach loss of certain amount of power and influence. The first target turned out to be the general education, the sphere the GOC was rather active in order to ensure popularization and indoctrination of the Orthodox Christian traditions and values among pupils at Georgian public schools from early stage of their life. To put limits to their activities, or as Tornike Metreveli argues “to eliminate an ingrained connection between the education system and a religious institution”⁴⁹⁶, in 2005 the Law on General Education was amended. The goal of the amendments was to: 1. ensure “freedom of public schools from religious and political associations” (Article 3); 2. Prevent “the use of the study process in general education institutions for the purpose of religious indoctrination, proselytism or forced assimilation” (article 13.2); 3. Prohibit “placement of religious symbols on school grounds” for non-academic purposes (Article 18); 4. Allow study of “religion or conduct religious rituals outside of school time, if it serves the purposes of acquiring religious education” (Article 18)⁴⁹⁷.

Several other steps were taken by the UNM government, which did not sit well with the patriarch. On July 4, 2011 the patriarch requested to stop “an adoption procedure” of a law on religious associations at the Parliament. He asked for “a public debate in order to form a common-national opinion” about the issue.⁴⁹⁸ Nevertheless “on July 5 the Civil Code of Georgia was amended to allow registration of religious groups as religious associations”⁴⁹⁹. These amendments sanctioned religious associations to register as “legal entities of public law”. On the same day the president approved the law. Such obedience from Saakashvili’s side was

⁴⁹⁵ Mikheil Saakashvili addressed the public gathered in the Ilia Chavchavadze Museum (speech, May 10, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

⁴⁹⁶ Metreveli T. (2016) ‘An undisclosed story of roses: church, state, and nation in contemporary Georgia’, *Nationalities Papers*, 44:5, pp.694-712.

⁴⁹⁷ Law of Georgia on General Education. accessed February 02, 2017, <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/download/29248/56/en/pdf>

⁴⁹⁸ ‘Amendment on Religious Associations Came into Force’, *NetGazeti.Ge*, 8 July 2011, accessed February 02, 2017, <http://netgazeti.ge/life/10219/>

⁴⁹⁹ ‘Georgian Parliament passes law to give minority religions legal status’, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, accessed February 02, 2017, http://www.usa.mfa.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=193&info_id=11544

interpreted as an attempt “to shrink ranking and authority of the church”⁵⁰⁰. Gender equality was still another issue of a disagreement. For the patriarch this value was interfering with and thus compromising family values. Moreover, equality was reported to be against the readings of the Divine Letter. Catholicos Patriarch claimed that according to the Divine letter “a head of a family is a husband”, and because “family is a single body”, it cannot have “two heads”⁵⁰¹. In spite of the GOC’s opposition towards the law, in 2010 the parliament adopted a law on gender equality.

President Saakashvili’s intention to sideline the church from controlling cognitive structures seem to run deeper. Even though Christianity was declared as an advantage – “passport”- to win a membership to European family, this pillar vanished from the national political project driven by Saakashvili. The enlisted pillars were “independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, democracy, prosperity and Europe”⁵⁰². This was a whole new project with pillars which addressed the challenges and threats of the time, while religion was seemingly discarded as inadequate or incompatible with an unfolding new reality. Therefore, Saakashvili’s motivation behind reconstruction of churches and increase in funding for the Patriarchate seemed to be a preservation of historical heritage like in most western European countries rather than a willingness to strengthen the GOC.

Appeasement towards the church, as a parallel process of marginalization, was a part of the government’s policy. Because loyal relations are mostly about a balance between give and take, the president with his agonistic policy could not strip the GOC of certain rights without giving back something in return or making concessions in order to give an impression of a dialogue, balance and two-way engagement. Thus, instead of casting a blind eye on every request coming from the patriarch, the UNM had to address the patriarch’s separate demands in addition to increasing monetary and material contributions to the GOC. One of such concessions was a request of the patriarch to put on hold negotiations with Turkey on restoration of four mosques and construction of one new mosque in Georgia. In exchange Turkish government was pledging to grant a right to restore Georgian historical monuments in Turkey. In general, the patriarch was not against of such agreement, but for him the main condition was a parity in the deal. In particular he was setting almost the same conditions Turkey wanted to achieve for itself through the deal. The patriarch was requesting not only restoration of cultural monuments but also of religious services in two Georgian churches, moreover one

⁵⁰⁰ ‘Levan Vepkhvadze assessed Parliament’s decision as an attempt to shrink the Church’s authority’, *InterpressNews*, accessed February 02, 2017, <http://www.interpressnews.ge/ge/politika/174041-levan-vefkhvadzem-parlamentis-gadatsyvetilebashi-eklesiis-avtoritetis-dacemis-mcdeloba-dainakha.html?ar=A>

⁵⁰¹ ‘Patriarch About Gender Equality’, *NetGazeti.Ge*, 30 April 2012, accessed February 02, 2017, <http://netgazeti.ge/opinion/13817/>

⁵⁰² Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia: “I was planning to go to the Parliament to offer them cooperation”, (speech, 02 August 2013), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library.

of such churches should have been located in the neighboring territories settled by Laz people (ethnically Georgian people).⁵⁰³The negotiations between Georgian and Turkish government started twice in 2006 and 2011, but by the demand of Catholicos Patriarch no agreement was signed due to a reported asymmetry of terms and conditions.

There is still another instance of a concession made by the UNM. Neglect of the patriarch's request to delay an adoption of a law on a registration of religious associations cost Saakashvili a string of street protests. The tensions started to ease on July 12 when the parliament further corrected the law in order to reaffirm a privileged status of the Georgian Orthodox Church. Furthermore, at the parliament clarifications were made that the amendments did not compromise or diminish the authority of the GOC. Next day "President Mikheil Saakashvili attended a liturgy conducted by Patriarch Ilia II at Svetitskhoveli Cathedral", which, as Molly Corso argues, provided "a visual reminder that tension had eased"⁵⁰⁴. While implementing its own political agenda the president and the government seemed to be testing the patriarch and Holy Synod in order to see how far they can proceed and how much the GOC can stomach. The protests ceded however the government received a Holy Synod's notice issued as a decree on July 11 which requested the government to adopt laws on religious issues in future only after consultations with the church. Decree served as a caution given to the president and the government that they crossed the line and that actions beyond that line will not be tolerated.

One Project, Different Interpretations

The unit sought to explore whether an agonistic policy of the UNM government kept the patriarch and the GOC engaged into the project of Europe. Even though there were reports about the GOC and the patriarch hindering Europeanization process and European aspiration of the country, discourse and actions undertaken by the church proves the opposite. In fact, the patriarch and the GOC officially supported the project of Europe, and as a consequence got involved into it in order to safeguard its own interests. The official position of the GOC stated that "European space is the nearest for us and no one will hinder our aspiration towards it"⁵⁰⁵, while the patriarch declared that "our greatest hope for Georgia is to become a member of the

⁵⁰³ "Georgian Church Says 'Ignored' in Turkish – Georgian Talks on Restoring Historic Sites", Civil Georgia, 1 February 2011, accessed February 02, 2017, http://www.civil.ge/eng/_print.php?id=23116

'Georgian Patriarchate's Proposals Regarding Restoration of Temples and Mosques', Georgian Journal, 19 January, 2011, accessed February 02, 2017, <https://www.georgianjournal.ge/component/content/article/9-news/2864-georgian-patriarchates-proposals-regarding-resuming-temples-and-mosques-.html>

⁵⁰⁴ Corso, M. (2011) 'Georgia: Church-State Dispute in Tbilisi Exposes Anti-Armenian Undertones', EurasiaNet's Weekly Digest, accessed February 02, 2017, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/63889>

⁵⁰⁵ 'Archbishop Iakob -In 21st Century it is a shame for our nation to live in the conditions of dictatorship' InterpressNews, 18 November 2012, accessed February 02, 2017, <http://www.interpressnews.ge/ge/sazogadoeba/220992-meufe-iakobi-sirckhvilia-21-e-saukuneshi-chveni-eridqtaturis-pirobebshi-ckhovobdes.html>

European structure”⁵⁰⁶. The support was not only on the level of rhetoric, in fact the patriarch was rather actively participating in negotiations and discussions about certain part of the project. It seemed clear for the patriarch that the project of Europe was the only framework for development of the country, apparently he had certain reservations towards the project, but still an engagement was the patriarch’s response to the process of Europeanization which was already unfolding. Moreover, going against state authority is not in the nature of the patriarch. 80-year-old Patriarch Ilia II is distinguished with “the diplomatic skills”, who “contributed to the Church’s special status” without encouragement of hostility in the country⁵⁰⁷.

Implementation of the project was a learning process and to certain degree grounding moment for all parties involved, both for the GOC and the Georgian government, but also for the EU. It is likely that the government’s plans to implement certain parts of the project, in particular those related to gender equality, sexual minority and religious freedom, were initially more radical and ambitious. But because of having another concerned player – the church – at national level, the government had to readapt the plan in order to avoid crisis in the country. The same applies to the GOC, the church was unlikely happy for liberal democratic project being institutionalized as a sole roadmap for the country, because it saw threat and conflict of interest in certain European values. But after being drawn in the project it had to face the reality of gaining benefits but also conceding certain rights, which was not a happy moment for the GOC. As most of the authors argued, there was a conflict between the church and the government. But the conflict between the UNM and the GOC was a battle between mutually acknowledged two legitimate players –agonistic actors - which were elaborating its own vision and definition of one of the most frequently asked questions ‘what is Europe?’. It seems there was neither fixed plan or content for the project, nor initially well-thought-over format of relations with each other within Europeanization framework. The government was experimenting with the project, the church – revising certain concerning parts, whereas the EU – monitoring, evaluating and devising according to achievements and setbacks; the process was rather dynamic and transformative for the project, country and actors involved as well. The GOC and the patriarch did not seem to have its own well-defined project, although the church had its own mission which is a protection and popularization of the Orthodox Christian values. In the process the GOC seemed to be in the mode of tackling the challenges the project of Europe was regularly setting for them. Rather than initiating or inventing the patriarch was responding by elaborating his opinion about the issues of liberty, equality, religion, sexual minority and their possible implementation within

⁵⁰⁶ ‘Ilia II – Abkhazia and Tskhinvali is an open cut on Georgia’s body’, 19 February 2013, accessed February 02, 2017, <http://www.interpressnews.ge/ge/sazogadoeba/230155-ilia-meore-afkhazethi-da-ckhinvali-saqarthvelos-ghia-tcrilobaa.html?ar=A>

⁵⁰⁷ Lomsadze, G.(2013) ‘Georgia: Where Does the Church End and the State Begin?’, *EurasiaNet.*, accessed February 02, 2017, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/67004>

Georgian context. In spite of seeing incompatibility of those concepts with Christian values, the patriarch did not scrap the project of Europe instead started imagining a different kind of European Georgia, which was ideologically more conservative and religious. In this way the patriarch was influencing ontological notions embedded within self-understanding according to his own reading of the concepts. Hence against the claims about two separate identity projects, which were reportedly contradictory to each other, the GOC and the UNM government were busy in projecting two different interpretations of the same project. There were fights between the two but not with the aim to annihilate, it was a war of positions about the project of Europe.

In the beginning of his presidency and even later President Saakashvili tried to hijack cognitive principles in a whole, but seemingly it became clear for him that it was too risky, respectively rather than taking radical actions to sideline the church completely, it was safer to take over normative notions by aligning rules and norms to European standard. Revision of normative principles envisaged creation of a new objective reality where equality and liberty was a standard and infringement of any of them was punishable. Conversely more loose approach was upheld towards ontological notions. Apparently, the president left some room for flexibility in interpretation of ontological principles. This was where the GOC was expected to play the role, but the church decided to participate in reconstruction of certain normative notions as well, because state driven revisions of norms and rules were reducing the GOC's influence over ontological principles and beyond. The government had to constantly readapt its agonistic policy towards the GOC skilfully combining cooperation and appeasement with persuasion and marginalization. What emerged out of the relations – battles - is supposedly a “hybrid” project and hence “hybrid” self-identification, because both of the parties involved in the project inscribed their own imprints in the implementation process.

Adopted/amended laws and increased benefits for the GOC and the patriarch were by-product of the battle, and in particular of the agonistic policy driven by the UNM government to tackle disagreement. Those achieved deals were “a conflictual consensus”, in which something was conceded and still something gained from each side. None of the parties seemed happy about such “consensus” due to failure to achieve initially expected results. Against the discussions about winner and loser, the primary winner of an agonistic struggler is the project of Europe, which was saved from outright rejection or/and antagonism towards it. Moreover, since the Rose Revolution relevance and validity of the project has never been questioned in the country at political level, which ensured continued implementation of the project.

7. The impact of Continued Hegemony of the European Project

Throughout 9 years in power the UNM regime and President Saakashvili faced major opposition and threat to be deposed from the office, which arguably influenced openness of the political space. The channels of political dialogue were closed in two different directions. While the project of Europe was hegemonized, political scene for alternative projects, such as Eurasian Union, was foreclosed. As Matusiak believes “harassment from Moscow put the resilience of the “Georgian experiment” to a test in the years that followed the ‘Rose Revolution’”⁵⁰⁸. However, the UNM government did not give in to the political pressure and further proceeded with the European project. It was of utmost importance for the UNM to ensure continued hegemony of the European project in order to “naturalize” it by turning it into a “state” – “objective” part of a state and nation of Georgia. The project made a long journey, from a foreign policy initiative it was upgraded into a logic of internal development of the country through implementation of institutional reforms which targeted transformation of internal post-soviet setting into European standard. There is hardly any sphere and area or even an actor at political level which was not touched by transformative power of the European project. Changes were channeled through different reforms, projects and programmes financed and supported by the EU and other international organizations. The process mainly proceeded through introduction and implementation of the EU driven projects (Twinning, TAIEX, SIGMA, etc.) in separate departments and even divisions within the ministries.

Whereas the government focused its resources and energy on institutional reforms directed towards state and nation building, democratic reforms were carried out selectively in order to keep the door for pluralism and this way for other projects closed. Exclusion of other projects along with their supporters from political scene is not unusual behavior for any political regime. Laclau and Mouffe claims that a decision to institute certain order with certain value-system exclude those individuals and/or groups who oppose those values and principles of a hegemonic political order⁵⁰⁹. But multiple defection from the UNM regime raised concern that the UNM government’s exclusive actions ran deeper than dumping other projects and that the door for a dissent was even foreclosed within the UNM and its allies. Arguably there were two main reasons for alienation of the opponents: 1. To prevent an internal infiltration of the alternative project from Russia channeled through financial support of certain opposition groups in the country (eg. Nino Burjanadze); 2. Irresolvable disagreements and in most cases personal distaste towards President Saakashvili and some UNM members due to authoritarian way of ruling ⁵¹⁰.

⁵⁰⁸ Matusiak, M. (2012) ‘Georgian dilemmas. Between a strong state and democracy’. *Point of View* No. 29, pp. 16.

⁵⁰⁹ Mouffe, C. (2005) *The Return of the Political*. London. Verso. pp. 143.

⁵¹⁰ Matusiak, M. (2012) ‘Georgian dilemmas. Between a strong state and democracy’. *Point of View* No. 29.

The UNM government did little to engage in a dialogue with non-parliamentary opposition and address their demands. However disengagement was mutual, a dialogue with the UNM or/and the president, or opposing them within the framework of parliamentary politics was not the strategy of the opposition either. The primary objective of oppositional political parties' unification was to achieve a resignation of Saakshvili and change of the UNM regime, while demands related to electoral and media reforms, release of political prisoners and impartial investigation of the August war were secondary. The demands were legitimate but a strategy, if there was any, to achieve them prevented them from coming into fruition. The enlisted demands were unlikely to be addressed in combination or in parallel to each other. In fact, the way they were posited doomed them to failure. The demands related to resignation and change of the regime a priori dismissed cooperation with the democratically elected president and government, while reforms and investigation of the August war required participation and goodwill of the existing government. Because the non-parliamentary opposition continuously prioritized change of the regime, some even urged for an unconstitutional change, over democratic reforms, the demands could not enter into a deliberation process between the government and the opposition. Respectively non-parliamentary opposition groups did not even come near to forming a "conflictual consensus" with the government – the UNM's hegemonic order.

There were many challenges and problems for the opposition to participate in a decision-making, some of them were imposed by the government, but internal weakness was the most significant for their failure, and the UNM seemed to realize this gradually after November 2007. Apart from absence of financial resources non-parliamentary opposition did not have well elaborated plan either how to change a power or how to force implementation of reforms. The main problem was that "the opposition has not been able to formulate a positive alternative vision"⁵¹¹. The initiatives did not seem to come from within, even a source of inspiration for criticism seemed to be reports by international organizations. In general, the years of street protest was not a learning process for the opposition. They could not transform the experience into a lesson to be drawn on and acted upon accordingly. They failed to understand that the UNM was enjoying substantial popular support and the only way to address the demands was engagement with the UNM government through pressure from international community instead of continuously alienating it.

Deliberation of demands should have been in the best interest of the government, because negligence was hindering democratic process in the country. However, this does not mean that the UNM should have been open for any dissent unconditionally. Closure of a political space for certain demands is unavoidable venture for any political regime. There is no space for deliberation of issues which advocates popularization of alternative projects. However, the UNM seemed to be scraping opposition's demands almost without

⁵¹¹ Ibid, pp. 25.

exception. Oversimplification of the political scene, politics and procedures was the main guiding principle for the UNM government and the the president during implementation of the European project in particular and in general as well. For the UNM there was one political group in charge of one project with one policy towards enemies which had one aim to destabilize the country through overthrow of democratically elected power.

8. Conclusion

The research has tried to understand and measure *the extent of impact of the UNM-driven European project on the Georgian political identity*. To this end the study has mapped ramifications of the continued hegemony of project of Europe on the ontological and normative notions of the cognitive structures sustained and supported by the president and the UNM government. In this regards the research has come to the conclusion that the legacy of President Saakashvili and the UNM government in institutionalization and implementation of the European project in Georgia is contested, but within the context and scope of the research President Saakashvili and its government made robust investment in revision of the political identity of Georgia through the European project. With the pro-European discourse they considerably redefined ontological principles of the political self-understanding and thus created new objective reality where Georgia emerged European because Europe became as one of the main pillar of the national political project as well as a dimension of certain national pillars and symbols such as culture, history, Christianity, flag, etc . The changes in the national project was not minor, the state driven Europeanization revamped the project thoroughly by introduction of democracy along with Europe in it as a maker of the Georgian identity.

Reforms in institution building along with amendments in the legal framework ensured redefinition of normative principles. The UNM driven changes supported approximation of certain fields and areas in the country to European standard. However selective approach to the democratic reform was a setback for Europeanization of Georgia, which impeded European integration to certain extent. Drawbacks in electoral and media reforms were particularly frustrating. But In spite of overwhelming criticism towards the UNM for failing democracy, which allegedly had detrimental effects on institutional building, the study believes that the Georgian government should have closed political space for deliberation to certain degree in order to ensure “naturalization” and endurance of the European project. Either due to lack of experience or out of fear of historical recurrence of political instability in the country the UNM failed to keep a political space partially open by almost completely closing it both for legitimate demands related to strengthening democracy and for certain non-radical groups from non-parliamentary opposition. By doing so the UNM ensured continued hegemony of the European project for nine years.

Closure of a political space secured Georgia from the Kremlin’s infiltration through introduction of an alternative project – Eurasian Union, but it at the same time failed the UNM to engage Russia in the European project of Georgia as a “strategic partner”. It was mistake to believe that it was possible to include the Kremlin into the European project while at the same time aiming to exclude Russia from Georgia’s internal politics for good. The UNM driven inclusion-exclusion politics failed to transform Russia from an antagonistic into an

agonistic power, because the relationship with Russia was arguably almost beyond the control of the Georgian government. Apart from this, the success in battling corruption and Soviet legacy negatively affected the relations with Russia. Moreover, the UNM's measures to tackle the problems related to a sovereignty and territorial integrity as of pillars of the national political project further tensed strained relations with the Kremlin, which damaged the relations between two countries irrevocably causing antagonization of Russia.

Russia's antagonistic status was neither new nor unexpected due to the history of occupation. The 2004-2012 politics brought more clarity in the relationship and methods to deal with the Kremlin. In contrast to Russia, a disappearance of Christianity as a maker of Georgian identity from the national political project was a new and bold move. But in spite of omitting it from the project, President Saakashvili repeatedly proclaimed Christianity as a maker of European identity and thus a passport of Georgia to the EU. By doing so he arguably intended to retain Christianity as a cultural heritage of the country and not as a defining feature of Georgian nation, because this pillar was rather particularistic and thus exclusive for other religious groups in Georgia.

In 2004-2012 the relations between the GOC and the UNM was agonistically conflictual. Conventional assumption about liberal democracy and religion being two irreconcilable dimensions, which was to certain degree verified by the disappearance of Christianity from the national project of Georgia, was contributing great extent to the tension. But the assumption was soon rebutted when the state-driven European project opened the space for both: progress and cultural diversity, which the president had to master gradually during entire period of his presidency through close cooperation with the patriarch. Through agonistic politics he managed to keep the church engaged in the European project. The implementation of the project was full of disagreements between the UNM and the GOC on separate issues, however the tensions did not seem to entail a rivalry between the two about popularization of two separate, antagonistic projects. The conflicts were mainly about interpretation and quest for incorporation of competing views on certain values within the framework of the same project. Otherwise the church would have rejected the state driven project of Europe thoroughly without much discussions. Hence the president saved the European project from an antagonism of religious conservative groups and thus secured continued cooperative implementation for it at national level, which presumably resulted into a hybridization of the project. Hybridity was most likely expressed in national and cultural elements being meshed and mixed with European. Such mixture makes European unique and particularistic, but also universal under which very diverse European countries can be united.

In a nutshell, in the period of 2004-2012 the UNM subjected ontological notions to drastic changes, while normative notions were handled selectively and partially. In particular, failure to address democratic reforms was a missed opportunity for the UNM and for Georgia on the one hand, but on the other closure of a political

space for alternative projects ensured stability of the European project. Nine years is not much time but it is not few as well. A generation grew up with the idea about European Georgia and a standard which came near to European. Absence of speculation and hesitation at political level whether Georgia was Europe or Asia as well as principled position towards European integration entrenched the project of Europe irreversibly by transforming Europe into the pillar of Georgian state and nation. Therefore, the state driven European project was successful but with certain faults, which were harmful but not destructive. Certain details, which used to invite lots of criticism, were disappointing, but the larger picture of transformation was impressive. In 2004 - 2012 the country advanced from a “weak”, “failing” state⁵¹² to a state with functioning state institutions⁵¹³.

An analysis of very complex process of hegemonization of the European project in 2004-2012 through a radical articulation of pro-European discourse by the UNM, which affected each and every part of the national political project, have yielded more or less complete picture of political identity of Georgia. Such research outcome is likely to challenge the existing literature on Georgian identity and Europeanization process from the period of 2004-2012 and hence generate new research questions and agendas.

⁵¹² Puppo L. Di (2009) ‘The Externalization of JHA Policies in Georgia: Partner or Hotbed of Threats?’ *European Integration*, 31:1, 103-118.

⁵¹³ Nodia, G (2013) ‘The Record of the Rose Revolution: mixed but still impressive’ in Vichen Cheterian, ed., *From Perestroika to Rainbow Revolutions: Reform and Revolution after Socialism*. Hurst and Co: London. Pp 100.

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Mikheil Saakashvili "Statement by the President of Georgia" (speech, October 1, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "Address by the President of Georgia at the 67th session of the United Nations General Assembly" (speech, September 25, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia addressed the audience gathered during the Public Service Hall opening" (speech, September 21, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "President of Georgia addressed the military servicemen and their family members" (speech, September 20, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia made an emergency statement" (speech, September 19, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia held an emergency briefing with regard to the changes in the penitentiary system" (speech, September 19, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia congratulated the residents of Poti with the launch of a Poti factory construction" (speech, September 18, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia: "if we all stand together united as we now stand here in this cathedral, we will restore a united, strong Georgia" (speech, September 16, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The address of the president of Georgia from the restored Bagrati Cathedral" (speech, September 14, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

"Mikheil Saakashvili addressed the certified pedagogues" (speech, September 12, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "Joint press conference by the President of Georgia and the NATO Secretary General" (speech, September 6, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia addressed the participants of the Tbilisi +35 Conference" (speech, September 6, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia addressed the public gathered at the Tbilisi International Airport” (speech, September 4, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “Statement by the President of Georgia” (speech, August 29, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

“Mikheil Saakashvili addressed the society gathered at the Kutaisi Airport” (speech, August 28, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia congratulated top students with enrollment to universities” (speech, August 25, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia addressed the population in Gordi” (speech, August 22, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili: “We are doing everything in order to open up a road towards a better life to your generation!” (speech, August 21, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia presented Giorgi Baramidze as the Majoritarian Deputy candidate for Batumi” (speech, August 20, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia addressed the population in Bakhmaro, Guria” (speech, August 19, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia addressed the public gathered at the Bagrati Cathedral” (speech, August 17, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The Rabat fortress is the real crown of our reconstruction” (speech, August 16, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia addressed the population of Rustavi” (speech, August 15, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia and a United States Senator addressed the public” (speech, August 12, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia: Our Didgori still lies ahead of us!” (speech, August 12, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia addressed the public gathered at the Poti port”, (speech, August 8, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The address of the President of Georgia in the David the Builder National Defense Academy” (speech, August 7, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia addressed the population in Beshumi” (speech, August 4, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia: “what doesn’t kill us makes us stronger” (speech, July 30, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia gave special orders to the members of government” (speech, July 19, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia addressed the population of Gldani” (speech, July 17, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia and the President of the European Council made joint statement”, (statement, July 4, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia presented the new Minister to the employees of the Ministry of Education and Science” (speech, July 4, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia addressed Cadets” (speech, July 1, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili: “We respect people’s free will and the freedom of choice” (speech, June 25, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia addressed the Georgian sailors” (speech, June 25, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

“Mikheil Saakashvili acquainted students with the new student card’s “Ease Life” concept” (speech, June 11, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia addressed the top students and teachers” (speech, June 7, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili and Hillary Clinton made joint statements for representatives of the media (speech, June 5, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili addressed foreign students (speech, June 3, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia addressed the population in Kutaisi” (speech, May 28, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia delivered a speech at the ceremonial opening of the Parliament in Kutaisi” (speech, May 26, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia and the NATO Secretary General held a joint press conference” (speech, May 22, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili gave a lecture “Georgian Democratic Transformation: A Test Case for the Post-Soviet World” at the Princeton University (speech, May 18, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili addressed the public gathered in the Ilia Chavchavadze Museum (speech, May 10, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “Speech of the President of Georgia delivered at the international conference of the World Tourism Organization” (speech, May 9, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia delivered a speech at the parade dedicated to the Police day” (speech, May 6, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili: “There are organs, by shutting down of which the organism cannot live – such an organ is Adjara for Georgia”. (speech, May 4, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia addressed the public gathered in the renovated Kutaisi Theater” (speech, May 2, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia addressed the public gathered at the new Rustavi Racing Circuit” (speech, April 29, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia addressed the participants of the Young Scientists’ and Inventors’ Olympiad” (speech, April 27, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia addressed the population in Chuberi” (speech, April 23, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili and Donald Trump made joint statements during the presentation of the Trump Tower project (speech, April 22, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili decorated Donald Trump with the Presidential Order of Excellence (speech, April 21, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia congratulated the public gathered in Tsinandali on the construction of new hotel” (speech, April 20, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia addressed the students of the new Kobuleti College” (speech, April 19, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia congratulated the Georgian nation on the launch of construction of a new cathedral on Makhata Mountain”, (speech, 17 April, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia addressed the population of Ozurgeti” (speech, April 13, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia addressed the personnel of the Military-Scientific Technical Center “Delta”, (speech, April 11, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili addressed the representatives of the Georgian Armed Forces (speech, April 9, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia met with the population of Kazbegi” (speech, April 9, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili made a statement about the imported machinery intended for the agricultural works (speech, April 6, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “Joint Press conference of the President of Georgia and the NATO Secretary General” (speech, April 3, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili addressed the participants of the summit (speech, March 27, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia addressed students of higher and professional institutions” (speech, March 19, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia addressed the local population in Tsnori” (speech, March 15, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia met with the population of Telavi” (speech, March 12, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “Speech of the President of Georgia to the Parliament of Azerbaijan” (speech, March 7, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The Presidents of Georgia and Azerbaijan made joint statements” (speech, March 6, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia addressed the population of Akhmeta” (speech, March 5, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili addressed the students and briefed them about new initiatives” (speech, March 2, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia addressed the Georgian soldiers participating in the ISAF mission at the “Shukvani” base in the Helmand Province of Afghanistan” (speech, February 20, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili addressed the population of Tsageri (speech, February 17, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia met the majority members of the Parliament” (speech, February 13, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia decorated a merited science figure Guram Tatishvili” (speech, February 9, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili addressed the participant of Munich security conference (speech, February 5, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili addressed the representatives and students of the United States Naval Academy (speech, February 3, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “Remarks by the President of Georgia at Georgetown University” (speech, February 2, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The Day After: President Mikheil Saakashvili on Post-Revolutionary Societies & What Comes After the Arab Spring” (speech, February 1, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia assessed the meeting with an American colleague” (speech, January 30, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia participated in the Summit Basecamp”(speech, January 29, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili: We have to turn Rustavi into a success on an international level”(speech, January 21, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia addressed the population of Rustavi”(speech, January 21, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili addressed the population gathered at the Martvili Medical Center” (speech, January 17, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikeil Saakashvili: “We have a state apparatus that every citizen of Georgia can be proud of”(speech, January 14, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia and the Prime-Minister of Turkey held a joint press-conference.” (speech, January 13, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia addressed the population of Gori.”(speech, January 11, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia addressed the residents of Gardabani” (speech, January 5, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili: “We are an advancing society with a great sense of dignity” (speech, January 5, 2012), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia met with the population of Keda” (speech, December 29, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili: “Akhaltsikhe should become the main crown of new rehabilitation” (speech, December 26, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili: “You are the ambassadors of the Georgian statehood” (speech, December 25, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili addressed the population at the Ozurgeti Center” (speech, December 16, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia met with the local authorities of Guria” (speech, December 16, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The address of the President of Georgia at the Forum “European Development Days” , (speech, December 15, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia gave a speech at the official reception regarding the end of EU Presidency of Poland” (speech, December 14, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia held a National Security Council session” (speech, December 12, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili: Our country will be a big discovery for many of you” (speech, December 8, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia addressed the Congress of the European People’s Party” (speech, December 7, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia addressed the population of Zugdidi” (speech, December 4, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia addressed the population gathered at the event of launching the construction of the training center in Gldani” (speech, December 3, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "Address by Mikheil Saakashvili at the reception held in the name of the newly-elected President of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan" (speech, December 1, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The Presidents of Georgia and Armenia made joint statements" (speech, November 29, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "Joint statements of Mikheil Saakashvili and Krzystof Lisek during the ceremony of awarding Krzystof Lisek the Victory Order of Saint George" (speech, November 25, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia addressed the public gathered at the presentation of a new district in Tbilisi" (speech, November 23, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia has given a speech at the opening ceremony of the Ronald Reagan statue" (speech, November 23, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The address delivered by Mikheil Saakashvili at the ceremony of decoration of the Presidential Orders of Excellence" (speech, November 23, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The Address by the President" (speech, November 23, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "Address by the President of Georgia regarding the European Parliament resolution" (speech, November 17, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia attended the ceremonial opening of "Ilia Lake" (speech, November 16, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili and Catherine Ashton made joint statements for the media (speech, November 16, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "Remarks of the President of Georgia at the International Democrat Union" (speech, November 11, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili and Anders Fogh Rasmussen held Joint press conference (speech, November 10, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The NATO Secretary General and the President of Georgia opened the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in Batumi" (speech, November 10, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia addressed members of the Parliament Majority" (speech, November 7, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia congratulated Tkibulians on the Day of Tkibuli" (speech, October 28, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The ten point action plan was discussed at a Georgian government session" (speech, October 26, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili: “Such Georgians are born once in a century...this is a tremendous loss” (speech, October 21, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili: “Our success is the result of specific reforms that we have been implementing together in the recent years” (speech, October 19, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia congratulated the refugees on the new settlement” (speech, October 17, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “Remarks at the Forum 2000” (speech, October 10, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “Statement of the President of Georgia and the President of France at the Freedom Square” (speech, October 7, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia congratulated teachers on Teacher’s Professional Day” (speech, October 5, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “Remarks by H.E. MR. Mikhael Saakashvili, President of Georgia” (speech, September 22, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “Remarks at the Inaugural Concordia Summit” (speech, September 20, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia gave a Georgian Passport to a Russian Conductor” (speech, September 16, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia addressed the audience in front of the newly opened Palace of Justice in Mestia” (speech, September 13, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia talked with top 10 college freshmen” (speech, September 12, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “YOUNG LEADERS SUMMIT” (speech, September 7, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia addressed the International Economic Forum” (speech, September 7, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “Georgian President opened the new sea resort Anaklia in a festive atmosphere” (speech, August 22, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia addressed teenagers of various ethnicities in Anaklia Patriot’s Camp” (speech, August 9, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili personally presented new ID cards to several Georgian citizens” (speech, August 1, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The joint briefing of the Presidents of Georgia and Poland, The President of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili: The President of Poland Bronislav Komorovski” (speech, July 26, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili “The President of Georgia opened one more world brand hotel - Radisson Blue - in Batumi” (speech, July 20, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili’s Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili awarded Plenipotentiary and Extraordinary Ambassador of Italy with the Order of Honor" (speech, July 19, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia awarded Alexander Lomaia with St George's Order of Victory" (speech, July 6, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "Joint statements of the Presidents of Georgia and Estonia" (speech, July 4, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "Mikheil Saakashvili addressed Georgian sailors" (speech, June 25, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "President of Georgia awarded French Minister of Cooperation Henri de Raincourt with Saint George's Order of Victory" (speech, June 18, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia met a hundred best students" (speech, June 13, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "Spokesperson of the President of Georgia Held Traditional Briefing" (speech, June 7, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia addressed guests gathered at the charity dinner" (speech, June 6, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili and the Prime Minister of Turkey opened new border crossing point in Sarpi in a festive atmosphere" (speech, May 31, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The statement made by the President of Georgia before the start of parade" (speech, May 26, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "Public speech made by the President of Georgia at the Parade dedicated to the Independence Day of Georgia" (speech, May 26, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "Speech delivered by the President of Georgia at the opening ceremony of House of Justice in Batumi" (speech, May 26, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia addressed society gathered at the opening of Rike Park" (speech, May 24, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The Presidents of Georgia and Hungary held a joint press conference" (speech, May 23, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia and the President of the European Parliament Held Joint Press conference" (speech, May 19, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia attended the National Business Awarding Ceremony "Mercury 2011" (speech, May 11, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia met certified teachers at the President's Palace" (speech, May 10, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "Speech delivered by the President of Georgia dedicated to Police Day at Batumi Boulevard" (speech, May 6, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The Presidents of Georgia and Lithuania made statements" (speech, May 4, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia addressed the society gathered at the ceremony of radar opening in Poti" (speech, April 22, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili met the certified teachers at newly opened school in Tadzrisi (speech, April 18, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia hosted the students at the President's Palace" (speech, April 9, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia met village Argveti population" (speech, April 2, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia awarded the Officers of MIA with Vakhtang Gorgasali I Degree Orders" (speech, March 25, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "Remarks of President Mikheil Saakashvili "From Popular Revolutions to Effective Reforms: The Georgian Experience" Brookings Institution" (speech, March 18, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "Mikheil Saakashvili and Donald Trump Hold Joint Press-Conference" (speech, March 11, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia met the pensioners in Rustavi" (speech, March 8, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "President of Georgia Opened New Economic Zone of Registration" (speech, February 28, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia met the Cadet Corps in the Museum of occupation" (speech, February 25, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili speaks at Munich Security Conference (speech, February 6, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia awarded Senator Joseph Lieberman with St George's Order of Victory" (speech, January 13, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "President of Georgia Congratulated New Year to Georgian Population" (speech, January 1, 2011), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "Speech of President of Georgia on the Oath Ceremony of the State Guard Special Service Conscripts" (speech, December 27, 2010), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia held a government session in Mestia" (speech, December 24, 2010), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia held a government session at Sataplia reserve" (speech, December 17, 2010), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "Remarks of H.E. President Mikheil Saakashvili" (speech, December 9, 2010), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

Mikheil Saakashvili "President of Georgia Opened Economical Zone of Concluding (EZC) in New Building" (speech, December 3, 2010), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

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Mikheil Saakashvili "The President of Georgia congratulated the investors with the launch of construction of hotels in free tourists' zone" (speech, November 13, 2010), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

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Mikheil Saakashvili met the students and professors of Tbilisi Free University" (speech, November 8, 2010), archives of the Saakashvili's Presidential Library

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