Gigi Tevzadze

Sociological View from the Top of Tree of Sociological Perspective

On skimming through the 10 questions put to me by Ghia Nodia for this project, I realized that I did not agree with the wording of some of the questions. First I decided to write a text which would deal with the subjects that the questions touched on, but I reconsidered, as in that case, my participation in the discussion might follow either of the two patterns: 1. My text might turn out to be so out of the general discourse that no-one would read it (which was more likely); or 2. My text would win over the participants in the discussion and no-one would answer the questions of the originators of the discourse (this is less likely, but still a possibility). This is why both intellectually and academically, the decision to get involved in this interesting project had to result in my unconditional acceptance of the rules of the process. Therefore, when reading my answers, the reader will discover both an analysis of the expediency of asking the questions in this manner and slight alterations of the formulations of the questions.

And finally, the pattern I follow when supplying answers is a sociological one. In other words, I do not discuss the motives or desires, I discuss only structures. Accordingly, the reader should not expect assessments of political developments or analysis of the international political situation from my answers; rather, they will find a lot of detail about the existing, non-existent and incipient structures of political social life.

1.
The form and intention of the question always indicate the form and intention of the answer. The intended answer to this question should be a list of achievements and failures. But at the same time, this question implies that someone (or some groups) had some plan or vision (or a number of them) both at the moment of winning independence and at different moments and in different political situations throughout the last 15 years. The problem is that these plans and visions were different from one another and were not always clearly formulated, so if we try to find out which objectives of which plan have been achieved, we will lead ourselves to a quite complex typological labyrinth. If, however, we still make an attempt to develop a general typology of these plans or expectations, we will need to take into account the fact that expectations for Georgia's independence were, and still are, notches on a gauge which has political romanticism on one end and political pragmatism on the other. However, even this seemingly easy layout is not very informative either in terms of the identity of those people who have and design these expectations or the plans and their successfulness or otherwise: If we add political movements and politicians to the gauge, those who are on opposite ends of the gauge will turn out to be allies, whereas those who are on the same end - radical opponents.[1] This is why, when we discuss achievements of independent Georgia, we should opt for a what-did-not-exist-and-what-happened discourse[2]. Reaching some consensus to launch a discussion is easier with this approach.

Before independence, Georgia did not have:

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[1] For example, Gamsakhurdia and his ideology were a manifestation of extreme political romanticism, but his team members, who effectively managed to revive the Soviet system, were clearly guided by pragmatic plans. The same discrepancy is encountered when we seek to describe Shevardnadze's and Saakashvili's ideologies: both fall under the description of radical pragmatism. At the same time, Saakashvili's pragmatism of 2004-2005 is in synch with Koba Davitashvili's and Zviad Dzidziguri's (allies of Saakashvili during the Rose Revolution and the following one-year period, now members of different opposition parties) political romanticism of the same period.
[2] The vague discourse of achievements is theoretically unstable: in that case, the author should choose some system (say, liberal democratic) and start measuring which of the benchmarks have been achieved and which have not. However, a heated (and perhaps endless) discussion is likely – first on the system that has or should have been chosen and then on those benchmarks.

1. A political system which allowed for the existence of many parties and free elections;
2. Ethnic conflicts and breakaway regions;
3. Free media;
4. Self-governance;
5. Its own fiscal and monetary policy;
6. Free enterprise;
7. Civic institutions independent of the state;
8. Its own armed forces;
9. Its own education system.

Accordingly, Georgian culture changed as these new elements were introduced into its system. Among the abovementioned new developments, perhaps the ones which were introduced to our cultural and social systems first, as soon as independence was declared - the multi-party system, free elections, ethnic conflicts and the free media - had the greatest effect. In their turn, and it seems that precisely for this reason, the political programs and reference points mainly concentrate – and confront one another – around these four systems (or subsystems) to this day.

2.

The Georgian political system of the last 15 years (at least until 2004) can be described as the struggle of the political governance system against those systems and structures which it itself fostered in the recent past. The so-called structural dilemma first emerged under Zviad Gamsakhurdia. Gamsakhurdia came to power through a free election, but the development of his government generated resistance precisely to the multi-party system and free elections. The same is true about the ethnic conflicts. Despite the negative connotations of the term "ethnic conflict", it too, together with the multi-party system and free elections, fits into the "first create, then resist" pattern which I just proposed.

Another dilemma which caused the fiasco of the Gamsakhurdia government was the opposite of the Chinese syndrome: Gamsakhurdia's entourage was trying to preserve and control the Soviet-style economy[3] by replacing ideology with patriotic and nationalist romanticism.

3.

Structurally, the difference between the Gamsakhurdia and Shevardnadze governments was insignificant. The former created and the latter sustained the ethnic conflicts, and society was radically divided into feuding groups. The fundamental difference was the timeframe: Shevardnadze's presidential tenure lasted more than 10 years, whereas Gamsakhurdia managed to stay in power only for a matter of months. The unconditional achievements of the Shevardnadze government are:
1. Independent fiscal and monetary policy;
2. Free enterprises;
3. Civic institutions independent of the state.

In addition, the Shevardnadze government preserved the structures which were created under Gamsakhurdia (including the ethnic conflicts) in a relatively stable condition, which should also be considered an achievement of his government.

If we compare the Shevardnadze and Gamsakhurdia governments in terms of effectiveness of their achievements, we will see that despite the 10-12 years of real political power, the systemic contribution of the Shevardnadze government to the Georgian social and political realities is the same as the Gamsakhurdia government's: both created three systems/subsystems each (or rather,

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[3] Gamsakhurdia's refusal to privatize land is an illustrative example of this, although that time around, the explanation why it should not be sold was not the Soviet argument of people's common property, but the nationalist argument that it should not go to foreigners.

these systems were created during their presidency), which eventually played an important role both in the civil sector and in everyday life. However, as noted above, the systems that were created under Gamsakhurdia (the democratic political system, free media and ethnic conflicts) are much more influential even today than those that were created under Shevardnadze. It has to be said that these three systems were so important that they had to be created and would have been created under any president in the domestic and foreign political situation of that period. The participation (positive and negative) of Gamsakhurdia personally and his team in the creation of the democratic political system (culture), free media and ethnic conflicts is undeniable.

4.
Compared to its predecessor governments (I would refrain from using the word "regime"), the Saakashvili government created the same number of new systems as did Shevardnadze and Gamsakhurdia. In particular:
1. Self-governance;
2. Armed forces;
3. Education system.
Saakashvili clearly leads in terms of the number of new systems created. He created the same number of new systems in 2003-2006[4] as his predecessors did combine in 1991-2003. The difference between the creation/sustenance of the systems is that Saakashvili is clearly trying not only to create new systems (at which he is successful), like his predecessors did, but also make amendments[5] to the systems that were created by the previous governments, for example by putting an end to the ethnic conflicts. What changes this process will bring about and what assessments it will receive is a different matter, but Saakashvili is the first among the three presidents who rejected at least one system that was introduced by his predecessors[6].

5.
Again, from the point of view of a sociologist and using the theory of introduction of new systems: The opposition is unable to offer to the public anything that would be different from these nine systems. It can only amend the existing systems and the systems proposed by the government. This is why there are even instances of opposition politicians supporting the other party to the ethnic conflict[7] or hard-to-understand objections against the sound principles that are implemented in some systems. Even resistance to the settlement of the ethnic conflicts can be noticed in the opposition discourse.

6.
I think that the only way out for the opposition is finding and introducing a new system. This should be either radical protection of human rights – although it is doubtful that such behavior will rally the public around the opposition – or strong economic programs which, at the systemic level, will demonstrate to the public the benefits of a knowledge-based economy. However, the government might forestall the opposition regarding the latter.

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[4] In the three years from December 2003 to December 2006.

[5] Which in itself is an innovation already at the cultural level for Georgia. As the most recent studies show, the traditional social structures are still strong, and accordingly, the creations of predecessors are still culturally untouchable. Saakashvili's actions at the level of political activity set the precedent – and create a prospect - of breaking with the untouchability.

[6] Although after the relatively unsuccessful military campaign in South Ossetia in 2004, Saakashvili had a choice to keep sustaining all systems including the ethnic conflicts, different domestic and foreign factors and the need to reach a decision which would be appropriate in the given international political situation (especially regarding the EU and NATO) made it impossible to continue the routine policy of preservation of ethnic conflicts.

[7] For example, the opposition's cautious attitude toward the restoration of law and order in Abkhazia's Kodori Gorge or resistance to (or silence about) the emergence of the alternative, pro-Georgian authorities in South Ossetia (breakaway region).

7.

Looking the present-day opposition parties' actions and priorities, it is doubtful that they will agree on any long-term project aiming at the establishment of new systems. This is why it is more likely that the incumbent ruling party will not have a strong opposition for a long time to come. The emergence of a strong and efficient opposition hinges on two components: 1. The opposition political group should have a clear idea of which system it intends to destroy and 2. It should have sufficient time and political timeframe to achieve its goals, in other words, they should agree to work long-term to achieve at the end of this work – as a conclusion of the job done – the coming to power. So, even if some existing opposition party has human and financial resources to become the initiator of new systems, the incumbent ruling party will still not have a serious rival capable of winning the majority in the elections for quite some time to come.

8.

It follows from the answer to the preceding question that, if the ruling party manages to maintain the liberal democratic balance and does not make its predecessors' mistake[8], our political future can be envisioned as the rule of the dominant political party for some period of time (say, for the next two parliamentary elections) and then development of liberal democratic pluralism.[9] Naturally, it is important to take into account economic development and foreign factors in these assumptions. Each of these factors might prove to either promote or hinder the implementation of this scenario.

9.

To answer this question, we should list the new social and political systems that were created during the last 15 years and assess the role of domestic and foreign factors in their creation and in creating obstacles for political governance:

1. The political system which allows a multi-party system and free elections would not have been created had it not been for the foreign factor, the dissolution of the Soviet Union;
2. Ethnic conflicts were initiated by foreign factors (the free media – by domestic and foreign factors, self-governance – by domestic and foreign factors);
3. Independent fiscal and monetary policy – foreign factors (strong intervention of international financial institutions);
4. Free enterprise – foreign factors;
5. Civic institutions independent of state – foreign factors;
6. Independent armed forces – domestic factors. Of course, the military sector is developing with foreign technical assistance, although our political allies have always been ambivalent to the strengthening of this system and responsibility always lies at the government's door;
7. Independent education system – domestic factors.

This list can be presented as table with a column added for actions by the creators of these systems that were aimed at destroying these systems (see Figure 1).

As we can see, despite the growing international awareness of Georgia, the influence of foreign factors on the creation of new systems was much greater under the previous two governments. In other words, foreign factors were decisive in the creation of the democratic political system, ethnic conflicts, free media, independent fiscal and monetary policy, free enterprise, and independent civic institutions; whereas the impulses and activities which paved the way for the

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[8] The mistake was mainly combating against the system which it created itself.
[9] From today's point of view, however, this scenario might manifest itself in the appearance of only one or two extra strong parties on the political arena.

creation of the local governance, military development and education reform can be considered to be domestic factors. However, this premise may be moot concerning local governance.

The table allows for one more hypothesis: The government is ousted with employment of strong-arm methods after it starts to struggle against the systems which it established (or which were established with its help). It seems that we are dealing with strong opponents at the systemic level here. In other words, what confronts the government is the people or the side which created the particular system against which the authorities, willingly or otherwise, are waging a struggle. In other words, the pattern is simple: First the government starts to create a system, creates the infrastructure, human resources, human and social capital of the system, and then it starts a struggle against it. If the establishment of the system was successful, the government has no chance in its struggle.

Here is the pattern which demonstrates this situation (figure 2):
Figure 2.

Government system	Systems which they introduced and then tried to abolish	Outcome
Gamsakhurdia	Democratic political system, free media, Ethnic conflict and breakaway region	Overthrown
Shevardnadze	free enterprise, civic organizations, Ethnic conflict and breakaway region	Forced resignation
Saakashvili	Armed forces, education system, self-governance	

This is what this hypothesis translates into when applied to Saakashvili: Unless the ruling party initiates activities against the armed forces, the education system and self-governance, its peaceful replacement and relatively long stay in power until then are guaranteed.

10.
The logic of developments shows that in the years to follow, the independent judiciary system (1) and knowledge-based economy (2) should be established in Georgia.

Setting out a comprehensive large-scale program which will be able to unite society around liberal democratic values is possible. Time will tell who will implements this program or its constituent parts. The country's political future will depend on this (who and how).

Figure 2.

New systems	Foreign factor determining creation	Domestic factor determining creation	Resistance from the government which created the system	Remarks
A political system which allows for the existence of many parties and free elections			▓	There was resistance from both the Gamsakhurdia and Shevardnadze governments, which ultimately resulted in the forced termination of their powers
Ethnic conflicts and breakaway regions				There were no serious or significant attempts to settle the conflicts before 2004
Free media	▓	▓	▓	Hindering the free media also played an important role in premature termination of the Gamsakhurdia rule
Self-governance	▓	▓		Introduction of local governance started under the Saakashvili government. For now, there are no noticeable government attempts to impede local self-governance
Independent fiscal and monetary policy	▓		▓	The fiasco of the voucher system resulted in the need to involve international financial institutions and improve the situation
Free enterprise	▓	▓	▓	The Shevardnadze government established this system on the one hand and fought against it on the other, through the creation of clannish business entities
Civic institutions independent of state	▓		▓	The existence of civic institutions can be entirely attributed to foreign influences. At the same time, the Shevardnadze government viewed this as an important threat
Armed forces		▓		The development of these systems was based entirely on the government's political will. Neither a strong Armed Forces nor a successful education system have yet been unconditionally recognized as guarantors of democracy and stability in the international arena. Thus foreign influence on the development of these two systems was minimal.
Education system		▓		