

THE PROBLEM OF NATIONALISM IN GEORGIA

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Tbilisi, Georgia
June, 1998

INTRODUCTION

The study was carried out in the framework of the project "The Problem of Nationalism in Georgia" financed by NATO Fellowship Programme of the NATO Office of Information and Press. Therefore, we highly appreciate the Foundation's assistance.

We are also deeply grateful to all those who kindly supported our project. Particularly, our special thanks to:

- personnel of the research service of the parliament;
- NGO "Civitas Georgica";
- newspaper "Kavkasioni";
- the Popular parliamentary group.

Of course, we admit that our study may be far from perfect. We had great difficulty collecting required information about the problem. So as pioneer researches we beg your pardon for the shortages and hope that the article will make interesting reading and provide the readers with essential information.

The above mentioned project aimed to describe the problem of nationalism in Georgia in a separate context. During its implementation it became clear that the task could not be achieved without analysing the process of state and social developments. It was decided, therefore, that conclusions should be drawn after the analysis.

The article deals with problems of state-building in Georgia and the public attitude towards them. Naturally, all this cannot be separated from examining cases of nationalism since political processes in most of the post-Communist countries are developing just under the banner of nationalism.

The article aims to look into the following problems:

- an impact of the ethnic factor on state decision-making policy and its reasons;
- an impact of the ethnic factor on migration in the last years;
- comparison of nationalism cases in Georgia with similar processes in the other Transcaucasia states;
- specifying general prospects of the further developing of nationalism in Georgia;
- recommendations for state institutions and the international organisations or all those interested in the development of events in Georgia.

Analysis of these issues will enable us to draw some general regularity with regard to the problem of the nationalism in Georgia.

More exactly, the following topics may be specified:

- a brief historical review of the Georgian state developments and the country's Government system;
- analysis of the current situation in the country;
- description of the development trends and prospects of the process from the aspects of nationalism.

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The first years of the Georgian modern history were rather stirring. All the problems that had been amassing in the country for decades came out into the open after Georgia regained its independence (1991-98).

The economic crisis that derived from the collapse of the Soviet economy was capped with post-Soviet armed conflicts broken out for ethnic or political reasons.

At the same time the people have had difficulty adapting themselves to the new life, while the governmental institutions appeared incapable of solving a whole range of urgent problems.

Of course, there are some reasons accounting for such a situation. Nowadays Georgia is encountering the problems that must have been solved in the past century or decades. While in western countries the same process was a sort of "smooth" evolution, in post-Communist countries, especially former Soviet

republics, it was anything but. These last, save the Russian federation, had been deprived of sovereignty for quite a long time. Now they have to bridge the gap between them and already developed political systems, though there is little time for the task.

It would be wrong to conclude that the Georgian ruling elite or other political forces do not perceive the above mentioned needs. At the same time there are various opinions aplenty and, above all, most people's apparent indifference and the lack of public awareness. All this put a lot of hurdles in the way of problem solving.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

First of all, there is a need for a brief historical review of the state-building in Georgia.

A. Georgia in Pre-Independent Times

Tribe coalitions of the Bronze Age are known as the earliest organised communities on the Georgian territory. This period was characterised by primitive forms of government. Tribes were governed by councils and chiefs, while tribe coalitions were ruled by grand chiefs. In mountainous regions this form of government remained unchanged even till antique and Hellenistic times.

Diaokhi and *Kolkha* that emerged in valleys of southern and western Georgia by the end of the 2nd millennium BC are traditionally considered the first proto-Georgian states. The only available information about their political system suggests that they were governed by kings and viceroys. Amidst the 1st millennium BC they were replaced by two other kingdoms: *Egrisi* or *Kolkheti* (western Georgia) and *Kartli* or *Iberia* (eastern and southern Georgia). According to historical tradition, King Pharnavaz I (the end of the IV/the beginning of III centuries BC) is claimed to be the initiator of administrative reforms in *Iberia* - the country was divided into *saeristao* (manor) and one central district (*saspaspeti*). An archaic succession tradition existed in *Iberia*: the oldest member of a royal family not a king's son used to succeed to the throne.

Prior to feudal era, the Georgian political system was based mainly on Hellenistic traditions. The country was again divided into *saeristao*. Just that time saw the ascent of feudal separatism which benefit first Iran and Byzantium and then the Arabs (IV-V centuries). Political systems of the conquerors were in many ways alike. The country was governed by supreme rulers (*marzpani* from Iran and the emir of Tbilisi from the Arabian Caliphate) and their subordinates - governors of various regions (*pitiakhsh* from Iran and

inferior emirs from the Caliphate). The intermediate period when Georgia gained independence (VI-VII centuries) was marked by the strengthening of *erismtavari* (regent) institution which substituted for strong royal rule. *Erismtavari* was not a suzerain of *eristavi* (governor) but the first among the peers.

Several feudal states that were created in VIII-X centuries - during a fight against the Arabs and Byzantium - merged into a common kingdom in XI century.

Serious changes occurred in the country from the end of XI to the beginning of XIII centuries. It was the apex of a Georgian feudal state. Its kings enjoyed the highest authority. There was also a royal *darbazi* (advisory board) with gradually extending functions. At a certain stage, it had a right to issue legislative acts alongside with a king.

The executive branch was represented by *savaziro* which was made up of *vazirs* (seniors) - chiefs of various institutions (foreign and domestic policy, the army, finances, etc.). Some of these institutions had their own subordinate bodies. Besides, there were various services but their heads were not associated in the *savaziro* (for instance, the *mstovarta* institution - intelligence service). *Saadjo Kari* served as the supreme court and court of appeal. *Eristavi* (governors of provinces) were in charge of local governing. The frontier regions were granted exceptional privileges and autonomous rights, and were governed by *monapire eristavi* (frontier governor). For their part, *saeristao* were divided into *khevi* ruled by *khevistavi* (in mountainous regions - *khevisberi*). Towns were governed by *amiri* and *amirt-amiri*, while large cities by *amirt-amiri*. All these arrangements were codified and systematised in special legislation (*khelmtzipis karis garigeba* - royal court regulations - and codes of laws).

Mongol raids followed by Thamerlan's and then Turkmens' invasions extremely enfeebled Georgia in XIII-XV centuries. As a result, the country disintegrated into several political units in the second half of XV century (Kartli, Kakheti and Imereti kingdoms, and Samtskhe, Samegrelo, Abkhazeti, Guria and Svaneti provinces). In XVI-XVIII centuries Georgian states faced aggression of the Ottoman Empire from the west and Iran from the east.

At the end of XVIII century, the Russian Empire gained a firm foothold in the Caucasus. After its 1801 manifesto (September 12), Russia annexed eastern Georgia (Kartli and Kakheti kingdoms) and replaced local government system entirely by a Russian one. In the consequent years the whole Caucasus, including Georgia states, appeared under the Russian empire. At the end of XIX and the beginning of XX centuries the Caucasus, as a part of the Russian empire (governed by a viceroy), consisted of provinces and regions, while these last, for their part, were divided into *mazri*. By 1914 the current territory

of Georgia comprised the Tbilisi and Kutaisi provinces, Batumi and Sukhumi regions and a part of the Black Sea province.

Local residents could not participate in state governing. There were no representative institutions to voice people's will. Even the half-liberal administrative, military and legislation reforms carried out in Russia in 60s-70s of the XIX century did not reach the Caucasus.

The Russian czarist reign overthrown by the February 1917 revolution gave way to Provisional Government which had to be in power until Constituent Assembly was convened. Actually, a system of "double-power" was established on the whole territory of the former Russian empire: the country was ruled by Provisional Government on the one hand, and the councils of workers', peasants' and soldiers' deputies on the other.

Unlike many other regions of the former Russian empire, the Menshevik wing of the Russian Social Democratic Party dominated the councils of Georgia from the very beginning of their functioning. To govern the Transcaucasus, Provisional Government set up an extraordinary Transcaucasian committee on March 18, 1917, which, however, failed to gain wide popular support.

After the Bolshevik October 1917 coup, most of the Transcaucasian political forces refused to recognise the new government. Transcaucasian Commissariat came in power thereafter. These events were paralleled by the creation of "national councils" that adhered to nationalistic ideas. Transcaucasian Seim was convened on February 10, 1918. There were 95 deputies, including 24 Georgian Mensheviks, 24 Armenian Dashnaks and 30 Azeri Mussavatists. On February 15 Transcaucasian Commissariat conceded power to the Seim which, for its part, declared independence of the Transcaucasus on April 9, 1918.

A newly created Transcaucasian Federative Republic proved rather weak and failed to check Turkish aggression. The main reason of the weakness should be found in discords between the main three Transcaucasian ethnicities - Georgians, Armenians and Azeri. On May 26, 1918, Georgia declared its independence. Two days later, Armenia and Azerbaijan followed its example. As a result, the Transcaucasian republic fell apart.

National Council created as early as in 1917 came to power in Georgia. After announcing Declaration of Independence, the council proclaimed itself the parliament of Georgia. The 1919 elections (February 14) led to the creation of Constituent Assembly which was dominated by an overall majority of the Social Democratic Party.

During its 2-year history, Assembly adopted 126 laws. Notably, the laws on citizenship, local elections, the country's defence, agriculture, legal system, political and administrative arrangements for ethnic minorities, a national

system of public education, and some other laws and regulations on fiscal/monetary policy, the Georgian railways, trade and domestic production, etc.

Chairman of the government - the chief executive post - was approved by the parliament for one-year terms of office (the post could not be held more than two times running). The chairman's rights were determined by a parliamentary law. The chairman assigned ministers, and was responsible for governing the country and represented Georgia in foreign relations.

Assembly also worked out a system of local self government based on combination of self governing and governing principles. Local self government bodies were to be elected through direct, universal and proportional ballot. They had a right to issue local legislative acts. The same principles underpinned a system of city governing - municipality. The 1919 elections to local self governing bodies (*eroebi*) and 4 city municipalities were carried out according to just these postulates.

On February 21, 1921, facing the onset of Russian aggression, Assembly adopted a constitution of the Georgian democratic republic.

On February 25, 1921, having defeated the Georgian army, Russian forces invaded Tbilisi establishing Soviet rule in Georgia. A puppet government - Georgian Revolutionary Committee - came to power.

The first Soviet constitution of Georgia adopted on March 4, 1922, declared the country an independent Soviet Socialist republic. In spite of this, Georgia joined the Transcaucasian Soviet Socialist Federative Republic (TSSFR) on March 12 of the same year. For their part, the Russian Soviet Socialist Federative Republic, the Ukrainian and Byelorussian Soviet Socialist republics and the TSSFR set up a new state - the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) - on December 22, 1922. According to a new constitution adopted on April 3, 1927, Georgia was declared a member of the USSR.

Besides, three autonomous territorial units were established in Georgia after the Soviet system was instituted in the country. Two of them - Abkhazia and South Ossetia - were based on the principle of ethnicity, while the third - Adjara - on that of religion (the region is populated by Georgian Muslims - Adjarians). It must be mentioned that the constitution of independent Georgia, too, provided Abkhazia and Adjara with autonomous rights. As to the South Ossetian autonomy, it was first initiated by the Bolshevik government.

After the break-up of the TSSFR on December 5, 1936, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan enlisted the USSR.

The third constitution of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia approved in 1937 was in fact an adapted copy of the 1936 USSR constitution. The latter substantially curbed the rights of the republic as a sovereign member of the union.

In 1957, under the circumstances of broad anti-Stalin censure and the USSR's half-liberalisation, the Soviet republics again saw their rights extended. Particularly, they got a right to issue essential legislative acts which, however, remained on paper: no Soviet republic has ever applied this right.

A new USSR constitution was adopted in 1977. It again defined the union's members as sovereign republics which formally had the right of secession from the USSR. On the basis of the 1977 USSR constitution, the Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia adopted its new constitution on April 15, 1978.

The new constitution, as well as previous ones, defined councils of people's deputies as bodies in power. Supreme Council was the main legislative body of the republic. Besides, there was universal suffrage (and the right for referendum) in the country. These structures, however, had no real authority: the country was actually ruled by the USSR Communist Party which formally received such a status in the 1977 constitution. But in fact it had enjoyed such a right since the Bolshevik 1917 coup.

The republic was divided into 65 districts and 4 territories subordinated to city municipalities. There were also 13 cities directly under the republic's government and one under regional authorities. The republic comprised also the Abkhazian and Adjarian Soviet Socialist Autonomous republics and the South Ossetian Autonomous Region.

B. Georgia in the Period of Independence

In 1988-89 the liberal regime introduced by the USSR's new leadership gave rise to mass and rather radical nationalistic movement in Georgia which aimed to break away from the Soviet Union and destroy the Communist political system. Although it embodied a lot of small factions, this movement turned out the leading political force in a little while.

On October 28, 1991, the strongest force of the movement, the bloc "Round Table - Free Georgia", proved impressively victorious at the first multi-party elections to Supreme Council winning almost 70% of the seats. Presidential rule was instituted in April, while Zviad Gamsakhurdia, the leader of the Round Table - Free Georgia, won a resounding victory at the first presidential elections in May 1991.

Actually, it was a coalition of former dissidents and marginalised social strata with poor statecraft experience that came to power.

The lack of experience clearly revealed itself in such fields as economic regulations of domestic production, human rights protection, the problem of ethnic minorities, foreign policy, etc.

Prior to the restoration of Georgia's independence, state, national and ethnic interests often overlapped. Ethnic consciousness was adequate to mythical thought of the XIX century public movements.

From this viewpoint, the Soviet system has changed nothing. At that time the importance of parasociety appeared in the foreground - individuals and social strata had come to view anti-state notions ("a code of criminal honour", clan mentality, "profiteering") as signs of privileged position.

In times of a strong state system, when real and legal opposition was impossible, dissidence proved the only protest way against the government's injustice.

In national republics this movement gave birth to an eclectic mix of western democratic values and mythical thought emerged at a certain stage of ethnic developments.

Just as the crisis of the Soviet system unfolded, while political pluralism was still not organised, dissidence appeared the only alternative to the Communist regime.

Having gained independence, the political force that came to power under slogans of national liberating movement actually raised demands for social revenge and struggle against privileged strata.

The need to settle relations with the USSR central government and, more importantly, with the Abkhazian and South Ossetian separatist regimes (that counter-attacked Georgia's plans for independence with demands for their own freedom) was the main problem to be solved by the new Georgian leadership which was quick to declare its course towards the republic's independence. Conflicts that derived from the above mentioned confrontation (the so-called "ethnic conflicts") largely determined peculiarities of the post-Communist political processes in Georgia. Confrontation over a status of the South Ossetian autonomous region turned into an armed conflict during Gamsakhurdia's reign. Besides, from the very beginning relations of the new government with the parliamentary and non-parliamentary opposition (mainly with other factions of the national movement) showed signs of sharp confrontation. While mentioned tensions went on growing, the leadership of

the Round Table - Free Georgia failed to carry out political or economic reforms, despite its declared ideological opposition to the Communist system.

Apart from introducing presidential rule, reforms of the state system included a new model of self government: *prefects* (governors of provinces) appointed by the centre and *sakrebulo* (local councils) elected through local elections. All this obviously aimed to preserve the centralised model of the government. Although the authorities vindicated their policy by the need for national consolidation, the opposition viewed it as cosmetic reforms of the Communist system and attempts to establish Gamsakhurdia's personal dictatorship. The National Guards viewed as ancestors of a modern Georgian army were created at the same time.

At the end of August 1991, after a split in the Round Table - Free Georgia, the political confrontation became extremely sharp. The biggest part of the National Guards led by their commander, Tengiz Kitovani, raised against the president, while almost all the wings of the political opposition demanded the president's resignation. A significant part of the national movement, liberal intelligentsia and a majority of the Communist nomenclature united against Gamsakhurdia's rule. The conflict that burst out at the end of 1990 turned into armed confrontation in autumn 1991.

The end of 1991 and the beginning of 1992 is known as the "Tbilisi winter". Two-week battle in the centre of Tbilisi ended with the overthrow of President Gamsakhurdia.

The confrontation clearly showed the strength of a comparatively small opposition which associated chiefly top-classes of the Tbilisi intelligentsia backed by Georgian Communist functionaries (*nomenclature*) residing in Russia.

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The military council that came to power included Tengiz Kitovani and Djaba Ioseliani, the leaders of two armed groups - National Guards and Mkhedrioni. The military council was based on the state council formed by opposition parties - unveiled its main goal: to replace Gamsakhurdia's nationalistic and pro-Socialist policy. At the same time, it started with promising to build democracy in words and repression against the former government's supporters ("Zviadists") in deeds.

In March 1992 the military council that obviously failed to control the post-coup situation offered Eduard Shevardnadze, who was residing in Moscow at that time, to take the helm. His candidacy appeared acceptable to all the political forces: for the Communist nomenclature he was reminiscent of the golden era of the "zastoi" (stagnation), democratic forces viewed him as the

"Berlin wall destroyer", while ethnic minorities considered him an alternative to Gamsakhurdia's radical nationalism.

On October 11, 1992, Shevardnadze's government secured its legitimacy through new elections. All the political forces, save Zviadists, were represented in a new parliament. Respecting the will of Gamsakhurdia's opponents favouring the substitution of the presidential republic by a parliamentary one, Shevardnadze confined himself to the post of the Head of State.

This, however, made little to improve the inner situation in the country. The liberation of prices and political confrontation soon transformed into a new government crisis.

In fact, only a part of the voters cast ballot in the new elections. Gamsakhurdia's supporters (especially in western Georgia) and ethnic minorities (in the outer, frontier regions) factually boycotted the elections.

A fair chunk of the country was still controlled by Gamsakhurdia's supporters (eastern Georgia) and separatist regimes (self-proclaimed republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia) that did not obey Shevardnadze's rule. Moreover, the cease-fire in Ossetia helped strengthened the separatists' positions in the Abkhazian Autonomy. The Abkhazian war broke out in August 1992 and ended in September 1993 with a complete defeat of the central government. Shevardnadze's and the government's position were weak in the centre too: Gamsakhurdia's armed supporters refused to obey, allowing Shevardnadze to handle only foreign policy issues. Then situation is often described as anarchy.

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In 1992-1995 Shevardnadze managed to strengthen his positions by skilful political manoeuvring. His enemies, as a result, either weakened or were defeated (in the case of paramilitary units). At first, he got Russian assistance to achieve the task. In October 1993 the head of state enlisted Georgia in the CIS and declared a course towards strategic partnership with Russia. This gave birth to doubts about the country's real independence but "Zviadist" forces in western Georgia were defeated. It actually rescued the country from disintegration. Thereafter Shevardnadze's and the government's positions strengthened.

The country's new constitution was adopted in August 1995, instituting a presidential governing system patterned upon the American one. Shevardnadze's positions strengthened even more after the 1995 August 29 assassination attempt. It allowed him to neutralise the most powerful paramilitary force - Mkhedrioni - and substantially reduce influence of pro-Russian and neo-Communist forces in the state apparatus and security service.

After the 5 November 1995 E. Shevardnadze won the elections having gained 78% of the votes. The Citizens' Union, a rather amorphous but fully loyal to Shevardnadze's policy political organisation, became the only real parliamentary force. As to the opposition, only the National Democratic Party - one of the most moderate opposition forces - was successful enough to get parliamentary seats. Almost all the opposition parties found themselves out of the parliament. Local observers acting under the aegis of the NGO "Fair Elections" registered serious infringements in a number of the polling stations. Nevertheless, the final results of the elections were not called into question.

The new, actually mono-party, parliament encountered the need of developing strong legislative grounds. A whole package of laws was adopted in 1995-98.

The situation, however, is still anything but clear. Adopted laws often contradict each other, while the consensus within the Citizens' Union seems doubtful due to a great variety of inside groups with different political orientations.

People's political indifference and corruption of the bureaucratic apparatus add uncertainty to the process of reforms, making it longer in time.

THE GEORGIAN STATE TODAY

The years that followed the regaining of independence proved a serious challenge to Georgia. Ethnic conflicts, the civil war, severe economic crisis and worsening relations with Russia impeded progress of the country.

Recent legislative developments have clearly mirrored frequent changes of political situation.

On April 9, 1991, Supreme Council declared Georgia's independence. State attributes were changed but it was the only legislative innovation of that time.

First the military and then the state council that came to power after the 1991/92 "Tbilisi winter" surely made an important decision, restoring the 1921 February 21 constitution of Georgia on February 21, 1992.

After long debates, the parliament approved a new constitution on August 1, 1995.

Constitution was based on the results of the 1991 March 31 referendum on independence (Article 1); Georgia's border line was specified according to the 1991 December 21 situation (article 2). The constitution declared priority of international law over local one (article 6); prohibits civil servants' membership in political parties (article 26); a right for legislative initiative was

granted to the president, a member of the parliament, a parliamentary group, a parliamentary committee, an autonomous unit or 30,000 voters (article 67). Referendums can be held at the demand of the president, the parliament or 200,000 voters. Holding a referendum to adopt or abrogate a law is prohibited (article 74).

A constitutional court was created to settle legislative conflicts. The bodies enjoying the right to appeal are the President, 1/5 of MPs, courts, autonomous entities and individual citizens (article 89). The constitution can be revised at the initiative of the president, a half of the MPs or 200,000 voters (article 102).

The new constitution has left out the issue of the territorial arrangement of the country. It will be settled after the territorial integrity of Georgia is restored and according to the organic law on self government (article 2).

However, there is still a lot of work to do for creating really democratic legislation. Notably, there is an immediate need to adopt a penal procedure code, local budgets, information freedom, TV and radio broadcasting, etc.

Correspondence between the already existing laws is another problem. In August 1997, at its session held in Poti, the parliament admitted that 157 laws had to be revised, while 55 must be made complied with the constitution. Contradictions between various branches of power or between regulations of different institutions pose serious problems. Some ministries or departments often self-willingly pass such resolutions that counteract other institutions' regulations and even a whole range of laws (including the organic ones).

Apart from legislative problems, difficulties in the process of democratic developments in Georgia can be linked to the experience of state governing.

The process of state building in Georgia was largely determined by day-to-day political needs. Law-enforcement bodies appeared in the focus of concern - their personnel started to grow, while pro-Russia oriented officials were appointed their heads (March-April 1994).

The public is especially concerned with widespread corruption in state structures. Various Mafia clans could be often seen behind this process too. A parliamentary commission to fight corruption and organised crime was set up on May 31, 1994, but the first stage of its activities was far from successful.

All the mentioned problems troubles not only ordinary citizens and businessmen: the inability of the tax and customs departments to improve a meagre state budget by adequate revenues mirrors and brings about inefficiency of the whole state system. Non-democratic policies of the government and bureaucracy - the legacy of a Communist past - significantly

impede transition to democracy. It is especially true of the law-enforcement system which firmly resists the call for democratic reforms.

The crisis in the legitimacy of authority triggered by the coup, the military defeat in the war, the downfall of living standards and the spread of corruption transformed the initial political enthusiasm into cynicism about the government. Political parties remain rather weak. Despite growing activities of NGOs, the society's role is, on the whole, insignificant. There is a need to increase public awareness.

STATE STRUCTURES

Examining current public trends, one should start with a general analysis of the Georgian state structure. Here are roles of various branches of state system in the process of state-building.

A. Parliament

The role of Parliament in Georgia's public life is becoming more pronounced. The country with no tradition of democratic statehood gradually realises the importance of a legislative body.

However, this process is slow and painful and often neither the population or the representatives of the executive, or even parliamentarians themselves do not fully realise its liabilities and obligations.

The three consecutive multi-party elections of October 1990, October 1992 and November 1995 contributed in gaining experience of parliamentarism in Georgia.

The parliament representing the widest range of parties was that of 1992 when 26 parties got the seats.

The parliamentary majority of the present parliament, "Citizens' Union of Georgia," being a politically and ideological conglomerate power centred around Shevardnadze's charisma, is a political party that gained strength relatively recently.

The party gained more popularity following the failed assassination attempt on Shevardnadze's life on 29 August 1995. The elections of November 1995, despite the participation of 54 parties and blocs, brought a decisive victory to the Citizens Union having won 108 of the 233 seats in the parliament.

It should be noted, however that the electorate's participation compared to the previous elections, was relatively low (63%). 60% of the votes were lost due

to the 5% threshold. Some cases of law infringement were observed in the pre-election period as well as in the course of the elections.

The new, actually one-party parliament continued legislative activities of its ancestor. If compared with the previous one, it seems more productive but can be likened to the Supreme Council of 1990-91 due to the number of developed laws and their inefficiency.

B. Executive Power

The President's post in Georgia was introduced on 9 April 1991. The first presidential elections held on 26 May 1991 made Zviad Gamsakhurdia the first legitimate President of Georgia.

By the law on the state administration of 6 November 1992, the Head of State's post soon substituted the Presidential one. The Head of State did not have the right to dismiss high officials. His/her rights however, were quite significant, e.g. the National Security Council having wide powers in emergency situations in particular, was subordinated to the Head of State. He/she was given the right to appoint the Heads of local administrations. The Head of State could be discharged by the 2/3 of the votes.

The Constitution of 1995 and The Law on Executive Branch of December 8, 1995, significantly changed the Government structure. Constitution re-established the President's post in Georgia and the Law on the Executive granted him/her wide powers. At present the President is the head of the Executive. The Prime Minister's post, presiding over the Cabinet of 19 Ministers supported by 5 Deputies was abolished and the Government was brought under the President's direct control. It is also significant that the Constitution does not specify the Government's obligations: the Executive Government is specified solely in the context of the presidential rights and obligations. Direct governance of the Executive power is exercised by the President through the State Chancellery, headed by the State Minister.

In the presidential elections of 1995 Shevardnadze received 73 % of the votes leaving the 5 other presidential candidates far behind.

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May 3, 1997, a new Law on State System was enforced:

The Executive structure consists of:

President

State Minister (The head of The State Chancellery)

20 Ministries:

1. Agriculture and Food;
2. Commerce and Foreign Economic Relations;
3. Defence;
4. Economics;
5. Education;
6. Environment and Natural Resources;
7. Finances;
8. Foreign Affairs;
9. Fuel and Energetic;
10. Health Service.
11. Industry;
12. Internal Affairs;
13. Justice;
14. Post and Communications;
15. Refugees and Accommodations;
16. Social Security, Labor and Occupation;
17. State Property;
18. State Security;
19. Transport;
20. Urbanization and Construction;

16 Departments:

1. Archive;
2. Automotive Roads;
3. Geodesy and Cartography;
4. Geology;
5. Intelligence;
6. Land Managing;
7. Material Reserves;
8. Protected Territories, Preserves, and Hunting Establishment;
9. Sports;
10. Standardization, Metrology, and Certification;
11. State Border;
12. Statistics;
13. Timber Industry;
14. Tourism and Recreation.
15. Veterans' Affairs;
16. Youth Affairs;

2 State Inspections:

1. Protection of State Secrets;
2. Technical Supervision

The Law on Audit Chamber, adopted on May 7, 1997, actually makes this institution subject to parliamentary control.

The former Cabinet of Ministers, following the Soviet tradition, was mainly engaged in regulating and administrating economy. Its role in the determination of state policy and national strategy was minimal.

This tendency, with some exceptions is still maintained and the government often follows the will of certain political forces. It is noteworthy that the expenditure on state machinery has increased from 0.83% in the 1992 budget to 38.6% in 1997. One of the determining factors is the increased number of personnel in law enforcement bodies (it did not exceed 25 000 in 1990, whereas in 1997 it increased threefold reaching 75000).

C. Judiciary

June 13, 1997, a Organic Law on Judiciary System was enforced.

According to the law, the following bodies are to be created: district (town) and regional courts, Supreme Courts of Georgia, Abkhazia and Adjara, and the Court of Appeal (in the autonomous republics, Tbilisi and Kutaisi).

Members of the Supreme Court of Georgia are nominated by the president and approved by the parliament, while members of the supreme courts in the autonomous republics are approved by local legislative institutions in agreement with the president. At the low level, all the judges are appointed by the president.

A 30-year-old or older person can be appointed a judge with the 10-year term of office.

The council of justice, a special consultative body, will function at the president to control the judiciary. Similar councils will be set up in the autonomous republics.

According to the Constitution, Procurator General is appointed by Parliament on the President's nomination for a period of 5 years.

To resolve conflicts related to legislature and for protects the Constitution and human rights the constitutional Court was established in January 31, 1996. The bodies enjoying the right to appeal are the President, 1/5 of MPs, courts, autonomous entities and individual citizens. The persons allowed to initiate the

revision of the Constitution are the President, half of the total number of parliamentarians or 20.000 electors.

The Constitution Court consists of 9 members appointed for 9 years. 1/3 of the members are appointed by the President, 1/3 - by minimum 60% of the parliamentary votes and 1/3 by the Supreme Court. Members of the Constitutional Court cannot be detained without the consent of the Constitutional Court.

In general, judiciary in Georgia, compared with other branches of governance, is in a dire state. It is large, old and experiences the shortage of professionals. Generally the underdeveloped system of courts and their bad reputation, inherited from the Soviet period, determines a very low prestige of judiciary in the population.

D. Regions

Collapse of the old system raised the necessity of creating new system. The aspiration for independence was complicated by the ethnic diversity of regions, that demanded independence based on the ethnicity. Such regions appeared to be Abkhazia, former South Osetia, Djavakheti in the south of Georgia settled by Armenians mostly.

The center was worried about these circumstances. This is complicated by the fact that the nuclei of the political parties and organizations function exactly in the capital of the country. Several of the political bodies which formerly supported idea of federalization, are against broad autonomies. Most of the parties and politicians at present stand for limited self-governing in regions in order to defend territorial integrity of the country.

Unfortunately, interference of forces from outside have encouraged the positions of separatism and above mentioned unitarist tendencies should be regarded as a counter-reaction.

One more tendency emerged. Some politicians demanded self-governing to be limited to the level of city and village community, where the rights of local governments should be increased, while the self governing on regional level is considered inadmissible.

Local Governance has been one of the most significant problems in the process of building the Georgian state. As distinct from the relatively well-established legislative basis of Parliament and Government, the prospect of the local arrangement of the State is still very vague.

The present system was preceded by the institutes of the Prefect and the Community Council [sakrebulo] established under the laws of 23 April and 14 May 1991 respectively. The laws provided for the establishment of a body consisting of an elected representation and governed by the Community Board [sakrebulo gamgeoba] and presided by the Community Chairman [gamebeli]. The Community Council would approve the budget and elect the Board and the Chairman nominated by the Prefect.

According to the rule of administrative territorial arrangement (came to force on 23 May 1991), the territorial units were a region, a city region and a community. The populated units were a town, a town-type settlement and a village. On 10 August 1991 the law on Tbilisi administration was adopted to divide the city into 10 districts and 1 settlement. The administrative bodies of Tbilisi were District Community Council [raionis sakrebulo] and Tbilisi Community Council, the bodies of state governance were Prefectures and Mayor's Office.

On 31 March 1991 the elections to self-governance bodies - Community Councils - were held.

After the coup the Prefect's post was abolished the whole power was handed to the Chairmen of the Community Board.

The 1921 constitution, re-adopted in 1992, has in fact made no impact on the system of local self-government. From November 1992 to June 1993, the head of state and the cabinet issued 4 contradictory decrees on local self-government.

On August 3, 1993, the head of state signed decree 93 on temporary self-governing regulations. According to the document, local legislative branch was to be formed by "sakrebulo", while executive one by "gameoba". Sakrebulo consisted of its own and gameoba members plus two representatives from every party functioning in the district. Article 10 of the decree granted the parliament and courts the right to abolish sakrebulo's illegal resolutions. Article 12 stated that gameoba was to submit a draft budget and carry out administrative functions. A gamebeli had the right to veto sakrebulo's resolutions twice.

Article 5 demanded to hold local elections no later than three months after the constitution was adopted. But they actually were not carried out.

The 1995 Constitution does not provide for the administrative-territorial arrangement because, the internal territorial state arrangement will be determined when the Georgian jurisdiction is restored on the whole territory. The right to create self governance bodies is to be determined by organic law.

In October 1997 Georgian parliament adopted an organic law on local self-ruling and local government.

The most significant change in the system of local self-governance was the introduction of a middle (regional) body: the post of the President's Commissioner to the region (future Governor).

The issue of the country's territorial arrangement has always been perceived as sensitive not by political circles alone, but also by public and the ethnic minorities populating the border regions. Several examples of ethnic tension can be adduced of which the most recent one is the appeal by the Javakheti nationalist organisation to the parliament of Georgia requesting Javakheti's separation from Georgia and its unification with Armenia. The only reaction that Georgian authorities are able to show in response to this action is that of an iron hand.

* * *

The relations with the regions, not populated by ethnic minorities are no less complex. The reasons for that are as follows:

- ideological opposition being largely determined by the composition of the leading party the "Citizens Union". As distinct from the party's liberal and pro-western headquarters, the core of its regional units consists of former conservative nomenclature, favouring an iron hand and state controlled economy;
- tribalistic tendencies having got the upper hand in some of the regions (e.g. Samegrelo, the stronghold of President Gamsakhurdia's supporters) due to the difference between the privileged city "elite" and the population of the provinces;
- considerable opposition between the local and central bureaucratic nomenclature and clans often resulting in the substitution of Tbilisi candidates for local ones.

Notwithstanding the above, the President's Commissioners have firmly taken root in 9 regions (Kakheti, Shida Kartli, Kvemo Kartli, Mtskheta-Mtianeti, Meskhet-Javakheti, Imereti, Samegrelo and Zemo Svaneti, Guria). In January 1996 regional budgets and regulations on Commissioners were adopted and regional funds were set up.

The legitimacy of local authority is another problem. Actually, there is no self government system in Georgia. The terms of office of the *sakrebulo* (local councils) elected in 1991 expired in March 1994. Thereafter, neither new

elections were appointed nor the terms prolonged. More importantly, regulations of local self government specify no elected bodies.

Although local self government elections have been already appointed to the autumn 1998, a respective legislation is still being created. However, the necessity to inculcate a self-government system institutionally is the main problem.

E. Autonomies

Relations between the centre and the autonomies remains to be one of the most acute problems of the state building process.

In accordance with the Constitution of 1978 being the basis for the 1990 Law on Interim Period, the autonomous republics were states within the State. Their governance was specified by local constitutions.

The ethnic autonomies of Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia and Autonomous Region of South Ossetia have strongly resisted Georgia's independence since its early days.

Simultaneously, the Autonomous Republic of Ajara where the factor of ethnic confrontation is ruled out, exemplifies the opposition between the central and local nomenclature. Despite full independence in personnel policy conducted by the leader of Ajara Aslan Abashidze, and disregard for the central authorities, there is a certain unanimity of actions when the interests of the sides coincide. In the elections of September 1996 Abashidze's party "Revival" got 76 seats in the parliament.

Of late, relations between the Adjarian autonomy and the central government on the one hand, and between various political forces of Adjaria on the other, have worsened. This tendencies were proved on August 6, when 7 MPs broke away from the Adjaria's parliamentary group "Revival".

* * *

The conflict between the Georgian government and the former Soviet autonomies transformed into an armed confrontation resulting in the de facto separation of these territories from Georgia. The first of the two conflicts started in December 1990 when in response to the activities of Ossetian separatists', the then Supreme Council of Georgia announced the abolition of the Autonomous Region of South Ossetia.

The Ossetian side succeeded in the establishment of true governance on the territory populated by ethnic Ossetians. In view of that the statement by

Tskhinval authorities (August 1993) that the Government consisting of 22 Ministries and 4 Committees is in full control of the situation on the territory of former South Ossetia, is a reality.

As regards relations with Georgia, the Ossetian side considers three different options:

1. South Ossetia will get a wide autonomy within Georgian borders (similar to that of Tatarstan in the Russian Federation);
2. Together with Abkhazia and Ajara, South Ossetia will form a confederation with Georgia;
3. South Ossetian territory will be governed by a Russian-Georgian condominium.

Separatists in Tskhinval demand South Ossetia's full independence from Georgia e.g. Ludvig Chibirov, leader of South Ossetia stated that the unification of the two Ossetias is inevitable.

The opinion poll of 1996 showed that 52% of the population supports the unification with North Ossetia, 31% favours independence and only 3.5% - return to Georgia's jurisdiction.

The presidential elections of September 1996 in South Ossetia were declared illegitimate by the Georgian Government. Nevertheless, Tbilisi, trying to avoid complications, is more liberal towards the activities of the South Ossetian side; on the other hand the problem of refugees from South Ossetia due to their relatively small number, is less acute compared to Abkhazian problems. It should be noted that the procrastination policy towards Ossetia causes irritation of the opposition.

Two parallel processes have revealed themselves in recent times: strengthening Georgian-Ossetian economic contacts on the one hand, and emerging reasonable politicians (Lyudvig Chibirov) instead of ultra-nationalist Ossetian radicals (Alan Chochiyev, Oleg Teziyev) on the other. There is still no progress, however, in solving the problem of refugees.

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Abkhazia, unlike South Ossetia, was granted autonomy already by the 1921 Constitution of the Democratic Republic of Georgia.

In September 1991 elections of the Supreme Council of Abkhazia, 28 seats of the 65 were taken by the Abkhaz (constituting only 17% of the population), 26

were given to Georgians and 11 to other nationalities. The relations with Tbilisi aggravated since and resulted in a legislative conflict.

On July 23 1992 in response to the re-adoption of the 1921 Constitution by the then State Council of Georgia, Supreme Council of Abkhazia, by simple majority, declared the re-establishment of the Abkhazian Constitution of 1925 and de facto separation of Abkhazia from Georgia. This Act was not recognised either by the Georgian MPs in the Abkhazian Supreme Council or by the then State Council of Georgia.

On 10 March 1994 Georgian Government abolished the Abkhazian Supreme Council (including the Georgian faction); however, on 24 February 1995 it was re-established and on 14 June the Georgian MP elected from Abkhazia were co-opted onto the Abkhazian Supreme Council in exile.

Hence two Governments were established, one which has been functioning in Sukhumi and exercising true governance on the Abkhazian territory. The other, symbolically representing refugees, has been in Tbilisi.

On 22 August 1995 full independence of Abkhazia was declared by adopting a special resolution of the Sukhumi parliament. On 25 August, at the Georgian-Abkhazian negotiations in Moscow, the idea of federal arrangement with Georgia was rejected by the Abkhaz authorities.

According to the Abkhazian official data, 81% of the population (180 000 of 220 000) participated in the Abkhazian elections of 23 November. It was announced that 15 mandates were allocated to the Georgian having stayed Abkhazia. The Georgian authorities declared these elections were illegitimate.

According to the official results of the referendum with the participation of refugees from Abkhazia, held by the Georgian authorities on the same day as the Abkhazian elections, 225 000 refugees condemned the separatist policy of the Abkhaz and only 88 supported it.

The problem of refugees makes the situation ever so complicated. This March, the parliamentary group "Abkhazia", hitherto fully obedient to the president's will, went on a hunger-strike, protesting against Shevardnadze's policy.

This summer, Georgia, which has been increasingly critical about Russia and especially the Russian peacekeeping troops in recent times, made some diplomatic steps. While Abkhazia repeatedly launch military provocation, Georgian guerrillas continue their subversive activities on the Abkhazian territory.

On August 14-15, 1997, the Georgian and Abkhazian presidents met in Tbilisi with Russia's mediation but there have been no tangible results so far.

A part of the Georgian opposition considered dividing Abkhazia, i.e. the "Bosnian model", the only way-out.

At present, the Georgian Abkhazian negotiations have reached deadlock; the demands by the political circles in Tbilisi to settle the Abkhazian problem by force, is becoming more pronounced.

SOCIETY AND LEGISLATIVE ACTIVITIES

Social developments are going on against the background of the aforementioned events. For the country with new-gained independence, which actually has to start state-building from scratch, friendly, or at worst loyal, public attitude may prove crucial to the very existence of the nation.

How do things stand in Georgia with this respect?

The post-Soviet mode of thinking is generally characterised by distrust of laws and, at best, indifference towards them. This is natural, as having a negative connotation, in the Soviet system laws were perceived as tools for punishment rather than a mechanism protecting individuals and social strata.

With the break-up of the USSR and the creation of new independent states, the dissident thinking also underwent some alterations but the conflict between the law and reality continued to exist.

The activities of the nationalist Government gave vent to the frustration of intelligentsia partially causing the events of the end of 1991 and the beginning of 1992, when as a result of a coup, President Gamsakhurdia lost power and fled from the country.

In fact only a third of the voters participated in the 1992 elections. Non-Georgians (especially in the outer regions) had little confidence in the Georgian government, while a part of the Georgian population (the so-called "Zviadists) did not recognise its legitimacy.

The 1995 November 5 parliamentary and presidential elections left the multi-party opposition without parliamentary seats - thanks to people's increasing indifference and a whole chain of the government's machinations. During the pre-election campaign the parties displayed different financial potency. Apparent infringements of the law and democratic standards that were registered in many polling stations on the election day questioned the fairness of the elections. Local administrations and law enforcement authorities often interfered in the ballot. The elections also revealed incompetence of election commissions and deficiency of the election legislation. "Technical"

infringements were committed by the Central Election Commission, as well as by the head of the state himself, who shifted some state officials during the pre-election campaign, though such shifts are banned by the law.

The new, actually one-party parliament continued legislative activities of its ancestor. If compared with the previous one, it seems more productive but can be likened to the Supreme Council of 1990-91 due to the number of developed laws and their inefficiency.

* * *

A rather interesting tendency showed up in the Georgian state policy in recent years. Notably, the government seems anxious to increase the public interest in political processes and improve its rating.

In 1992-95 the authorities were mainly concerned about strengthening their positions and made every effort to this end. Naturally, this could hardly make for people's confidence in the government.

After the situation became more or less stable the authorities came to realise the necessity to find common language with the population, as the alienation between the society and state interests posed potential threats for the government itself.

One more trend has come out lately: forces which have already given up their political activities are accused of crimes or blunders committed by state structures in past years.

On the one hand, to attract the destitute and the president Gamsakhurdia's supporters the authorities are strengthening their campaign against once almighty "Mkhedrioni". In April 1997 the "Mkhedrioni" was charged with some well-known assassinations (notably, the murders of Soliko Khabeishvili, Shevardnadze's "right hand", George Tchanturia, the leader of the National Democratic Party, and Gia Gulua, a police general). After being arrested, the Mkhedrioni leader, Djaba Ioseliani, went on hunger strike at the beginning of August but to no effect.

On the other hand, to calm the elite nomenklatura and privileged strata the authorities keep on repressing Gamsakhurdia's supporters. In April 1997 seven "Zviadists" charged with the 1995 assassination attempt against Shevardnadze were sentenced to various terms of imprisonment - from 7 to 10 years. It's noteworthy that they were arrested by Igor Giorgadze, the former chief of the state security service who was declared the main organiser of the attempt by the authorities. Under the circumstances, the society and especially Gamsakhurdia's supporters suspect that these seven "Zviadists" were mere "scapegoats".

All this is accompanied by the president's and the government's increasingly frequent calls for national unity.

In May 1997 the Ministry of Justice worked out a new criminal code abolishing death penalty and introducing 15-25 years imprisonment instead. On July 25 the president pardoned 54 sentenced to death prisoners, mostly Gamsakhurdia's supporters.

One more tendency must be mentioned. The government is more and more often appealing for the national idea, although just such an appeal was blamed, as a rather serious anti-democratic factor, on Gamsakhurdia's government. To make the society more active and gain the public support the authorities are trying to influence people's national feelings.

To this end the government also attempts to profit by the authority of the church. A department of national (secular) state and religion was created in the State Office in August 1997. It must be mentioned, however, that such a policy seems likely to politicise the church and decline its authority rather than increase public confidence in the government.

The role of church has become the topic of heated debate in the relations between the state and the society. Traditionally, the Orthodox Church is the strongest in Georgia, and whose "particular role in the history of Georgia" is acknowledged by the 9th clause of the Constitution. That same clause declares the full freedom of religion and independence of church on the state. But the society and the government have yet to clarify how the particular role of the Orthodox Church and freedom of religion correspond each other. The part of society frequently demand the declaring of the orthodoxy as the state religion. The current political situation, however, makes less possible to grant orthodoxy such formal status. But the role given the church in some spheres actively puts it closer to the status of official church. For example, the church is legally granted the right to reject as defective the educational programs of the Education Ministry. The state power actually supports the fight of the Orthodox Church against the other religious sects which lately has become increasingly active in Georgia. On June 24 1997 the Security Minister officially declared the security must fight with the dissemination of sects who threaten the national security. The state budget earmarks the funds to the Orthodox Church but fails to do so in respect to other churches. All this provokes discontent of other confessions and the civil society. In the meantime the interference of the state in the church affairs results in more involvement of the church in policy. As a rule, the politization of the church results in split in the church establishment, and the first signs of which have already appeared.

The other religious organizations can be separated into two groups. These are traditional churches (catholic, moslem) and new sects (in Georgia the strongest

of them is Jegovians). The baptists enjoy a middle status, as considered the church with solid traditions. But because of Soviet inertia the baptists still enjoy the status of "sect." The condition and activity of these religious organizations is examined insufficiently. But what can be said confidently they do not aim to exert any influence on the state. There are no visible indications of that. The public activity of that religious groups is mainly framed with humanitarian actions and proselitism. It's obvious that both these aspects may be related to each other. As the proselitism of other churches causes the sharp discontent of Georgian Orthodox Church, and some officials, the relations of religious minorities with the authorities is rather of defensive nature. The interactions of these organizations with the civil society is mainly linked with the facts of violation of human rights (for example the facts of persecution of Jeghovians).

The law on religion is perceived to be the means which will put in legal order the relations with the state and religion and the dominating religion with religious minorities. However, the submitted draft law underlined the domination of the Orthodox Church and cut short the rights of other confessions. This breeds the concern of both the state power and the democratic part of society. Once the current social political atmosphere does not contribute to the adoption of democratic law on religious issues, some officials including the parliament's leadership, delivered the opinion not to pass such kind of law at all, and leave the case open.

PUBLIC MOOD

Throughout 90s Georgian public thought has been marked by radical changes of orientations and attitudes.

Mass rallies that originated in late 80s led to public euphoria which lasted for some time after the first multi-party elections and the victory of the bloc "Round Table - Free Georgia". The new government's course, as it is known, resulted in mounting frustration of the privileged strata and their opposition to the regime.

The number of voters who cast their votes at the 1992 October 11 elections was significantly smaller than at the 1990 October 28 ballot. A good deal of the population boycotted the elections. While the presidential election proved uncontested - Eduard Shevardnadze won 96% of the votes - the parliamentary one was anything but: 26 parties and electoral blocs gained parliamentary seats, creating the most-ever multiparty parliament of Georgia. The outcome of the elections indicated people's disappointment rather than real balance of political forces in post-Soviet Georgia.

The role of charisma became evident in September 1993 when the head of the state offered his resignation. His supporters reacted in a way that once again revealed people's poor political culture regardless of their political orientations.

The year 1993 was marked by considerable tensions. Severe economic crisis and erratic political course added to the strength of the opposition. The second congress of the National Liberation Movement (the first was held as early as March 1990) on February 21, 1993, censured pro-Russian policy of the head of the state. The popularity of "Zviadist" newspapers mirrored the public mood even in Tbilisi - Shevardnadze's main "bastion".

At the same time, people seem increasingly indifferent. In 1992 locals of the Samegrelo region, ex-president Gamsakhurdia's main stronghold, threw stones at Shevardnadze and raged against the governmental forces as occupants. In June 1994 additional elections in this region went off almost without disturbances. About 60% of the voters appeared at the polling stations there, voting for Shevardnadze-oriented candidates. Being weary of chaos, people would have supported any force that could guarantee them peace.

Due to the above mentioned reasons the public interest has changed. Opinion polls of past years placed the problems of stability, anti-crime/drug operations and the necessity to restore the country's territorial integrity on the top of public interest. During the 1997 April 14-15 opinion poll respondents specified the following main problems facing the country: small wages and pensions (86.6%), inability to earn the living wage (66.6%), too costly but low-quality public health care (25%), poor power supplies (16.6%). Less than 10% of the population had interest in other problems.

According to official statistics (August 1997), 57% of the population have average incomes - 89-98 GEL - smaller than the living wage - 99-112 GEL. Unfortunately, the pace of economic developments is far from stable. For instance, national income was gradually growing after the middle of 1996 but the process has been stagnating since May 1997 and the income per capita fell by about 12%.

All the above mentioned factors have made their impact on the mood of the population. Eduard Shevardnadze's rating has substantially improved by 1995. People credited him for successful anti-crime activities of the law enforcement bodies.

The 1995 presidential and parliamentary elections brought Shevardnadze to a convincing victory. But his rating again started falling just at the same time. Opinion polls, held mainly in Tbilisi, showed the decline of his popularity (at the end of 1993 - 75-80% of the respondents; in summer 1997 - 30-40%). His party, CUG, also saw its rating dropped (in the middle of 1995 - 40%, at the end of the same year - 20%). This may be linked to the chronic economic crisis

(according to the United Trade Unions, the number of unemployed had reached 1.1 mln by December 1, 1995) and growing public scepticism about possibility of "economic miracle" with the help of "Shevardnadze's factor". Georgia's failure to solve the Abkhazian problem and, consequently, the problem of refugees also plays an important role.

It must be mentioned that people put little confidence in other political leaders too. Opinion polls give them support of 10-15% of the population at best (Irina Sarishvili-Chanturia, the leader of the National Democratic Party, and Zurab Zhvania, the chairman of the parliament), while the rating of other politicians does not exceed 10%. At the same time, a large number of citizens (36-38% in summer 1997) fail to specify any trustworthy political leader at all.

Under the circumstances, people hope that young leaders may improve the situation. According to the July 1997 opinion poll, 70% of the respondents said they hoped, while 23% said they did not.

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People's adaptation for the current situation arouses a lot of interest.

The issue was examined in a sociological survey carried out by the international organisation "Women's Initiative for Equal Rights" among 300 respondents.

Residents of the Tbilisi region display the best level of adaptation. The Kakheti region is the second. As to the Samegrelo, it is the worst, maybe due to the fact that just this region appeared in the hub of events which have befallen Georgia in recent times. People took the outcome of the civil war as their ignominious defeat.

As to the correlation between adaptation and people's incomes, the households that get most of their incomes from private enterprises appeared best adapted.

Comparatively high level of adaptation display also the young respondents (from 18 to 35 years of age).

It would be interesting to find out popular opinion about liberality of state structures.

The Caucasian Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development and Burgschtrasser Institute (Freiburg, Germany) conducted a nation-wide sociological survey in Georgia in the summer 1997. Remarkably, it was held on the territories which are currently off Georgia's sovereignty (Abkhazia and the former South Ossetian autonomous region).

The author of the present article requested to include the following question in the survey questionnaire:

There are various systems of governing. Which one do you prefer from the following three?

- government is head by a single person;
- government is head by an elected body;
- the authority is shared by these two.

2000 respondents were interrogated. Their answers range as follows:

1 variant - 28.9%;
2 variant - 24.9%;
3 variant - 46%;
Don't know - 0.2%.

Rather interesting results were achieved when correlating the answers with respondents' ethnicity, social conditions, incomes and education.

1. Correlating the respondents' answers with their occupation, it was found that employees of state offices/organisations and NGOs, personnel of educational institutions, students and invalids back a liberal (collective) model of self government. Personnel of building, transport and health care organisations, law-enforcement authorities and pensioners favour autocratic forms of self government. It seems that judging various systems of self government, people as a rule unwittingly link the issue to the specifics of their professions.

2. According to average estimates, an autocratic model of governing is backed by 28.9% of the population, collective one by 24.9%, while a system of equal division of powers by 46%. The correlation of the answers with the respondents' ethnicity looks as follows:

Ethnic Georgians	- 27.3%, 20.0% and 52.6% respectively,
Non-Georgians	- 33.0%, 37.7%, 28.4%, including:
Armenians	- 37.8%, 16.5%, 44.9%;
Russians	- 52.9%, 5.9%, 37.3%;
Azeri	- 23.2%, 57.3%, 19.5%;
Ossetians	- 26.9%, 48.5%, 23.1%;
Abkhazians	- 35.0%, 51.7%, 13.3%;
Others	- 28.9%, 26.3%, 44.7%.

It is hard to explain why the Armenians and Russians seem biased towards a "rigid hand" as compared with Georgians, while the Abkhaz, Ossetian and

Azeri population is more in favour of pluralistic self government. In all likelihood, this is conditioned by ethnic mentality (for instance, relics of clan mentality among the Azeri and Abkhazians). At the same time, ethnic mentality alone can hardly cause such a result. Probably, it stems from the fact that the Abkhaz and Ossetian population are politically more active than the Russians and Armenians residing in large Georgian cities.

3. It's interesting to correlate the respondents' answers with their incomes. There is one apparent tendency - the higher incomes the smaller number of respondents back autocratic governing and the more of them favour the system of collective responsibility:

incomes from 0 to 50 GEL -	32.7%, 18.6%, 48.7%;
50-200 GEL -	28.0%, 23.6%, 50.2%;
more than 200 GEL -	19.8%, 23.8%, 56.4%.

A part of the middle-class population is employed in law enforcement bodies. Most of them support a strong state apparatus and autocratic government.

According to the survey materials, the similar situation was revealed in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. It's hard, however, to specify more details. Only 204 respondents have been interrogated in these regions. Therefore, it is difficult to correlate the survey data.

4. From this viewpoint, it would be interesting to examine attitude towards the problem in various regions. Wide differences revealed there may be explained by various, often diametrically opposite reasons:

- collective self government gained most support in Tbilisi, the Samegrelo, Guria and Tskhinvali regions, and Abkhazia. Most likely, this is caused by relatively high incomes (in comparison with the national average), higher proportion of people with university education (Tbilisi) and more active participation in political life (Guria). While opposition regions (Samegrelo) have negative stance towards autocratic self government for individual factors, Abkhazia and the former South Ossetia disapprove it due to ethnic or political reasons;
- a big part of the population in the Imereti, Ratcha and Samtskhe-Djavakheti regions support autocratic self governments. In the first two regions this may be explained by lower incomes and high concentration of population, while ethnic factors (majority of Armenian residents) dominate the third (Meskheti);
- in Adjara, Shida and Kvemo Kartli regions most of the residents favour a balance between collective and autocratic self governments. This may be linked to comparatively high incomes (Shida and Kvemo Kartli), religious

factor (Muslim population of Adjara and Kvemo Kartli) and ethnic mentality (the Azeri majority in Kvemo Kartli).

From this viewpoint, the Kakheti region yielded rather interesting results. Despite relatively monoethnic population (the overall majority are Georgians) and low incomes, most of the respondents back a balance between collective and autocratic governments.

5. As to the correlation between the people's education and their attitude towards governing, the higher education the more people support elected bodies:

incomplete/complete secondary education - 34.3%, 22.9%, 42.8%;
incomplete/complete higher education - 22.8%, 27.3%, 49.8%.

collective bodies are especially supported by those with academic degrees - 14.3%, 32.1%, 53.6%

6. Autocratic self government was disapproved mostly by those respondents who learn news from independent media (press, radio), while those listening/reading state-run media (chiefly TV) reveal contrary stance. It's worth noting that 72.1% of the population claim TV to be their main source of information.

* * *

Three more noteworthy aspects have been disclosed in the survey: people's attitude towards society, state structures and ideology.

7. How much do Georgian citizens trust their fellow citizens?

67.7% of the respondents trust and feel closer to people of their ethnicity, while 52.2% of them put confidence in Georgian citizens regardless of their ethnicity. So people's ethnic consciousness seems stronger than their identification with each other as fellow citizens of a common country. Asked to specify what they regard as more important, wealth or ethnicity, 83.8% of the respondents preferred the latter.

It must be emphasised that this factor largely determines people's stance towards governing. Most of those distinguishing their fellow citizens by the ethnicity criterion favour autocratic self government and the idea of "rigid hand", while those for whom ethnicity does not matter mainly back collective elected bodies (respectively, autocratic model is supported by 32.1% and 28.6%, while 20.7% and 25.1% give priority to *sakrebulo* or councils).

At the same time, those respondents who believe that Georgia is still not ready for democracy (82%) support, unlike their opponents, autocratic self government rather than collective or balanced models (respectively 30.5% and 21.6%; 44.0% and 55.2%).

8. As to people's attitude towards the state system, the survey unveiled two aspects:

a. What kind of state model should be considered comparatively better?

Correlation between the answers to the question and the survey data on self government problems allowed to divide the respondents into several groups:

- the respondents who favour big western powers (France, Great Britain, Italy, partly Germany) support a balance between collective body and one-leader administration;
- autocratic administration (elected or appointed) is supported by those who admire big powers with strong presidential rule (USA, Russia);
- a system of collective elected bodies is backed by those who consider European small countries ideal states (Sweden, Holland, Switzerland). It must be mentioned that they were joined by the respondents who describe Georgia as an ideal country as well.

A small part of the population chose an ideal country judging from their ethnicity. Particularly, Armenians, Azeri and Russians specified Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia respectively as ideal countries.

b. Examining the survey results, it was found that the respondents, who clung to the idea of autocratic governing, oppose (on national scale) the idea of multi-party system and, on the whole, consider the role of the parliament as a representative institution in the public life insignificant:

9. Finally, it would be interesting to draw correlation between people's vision of the world and their attitude towards the problem of governing.

The part of the public which give priority to the socialist economy over market one and believe that the state should regulate everyday public life, support the idea of one-leader administration. At the same time, the overall majority of supporters of liberal economy and social life claim that heads of administrations and elected structures should balance each other.

* * *

Proceeding from the survey results, some conclusions may be drawn:

- the majority of the population favours the idea of simultaneous functioning of autocratic administration and elected representative bodies;
- people's assessment of the political system is based on their professional experience;
- people's attitude towards governing vary dependent on their ethnicity;
- answers to the questions are also linked to regional factors that may be explained by a whole complex of reasons;
- the higher people's education and incomes the more democratic stance they display;
- those who get information mainly from state-run media show more conservative thinking if compared with those who read/listen independent (as a rule, the opposition) media;
- the overall majority of the population considers ethnic distinctions more important than the sense of common citizenship;
- supporters of socialism and the government's increased role in public life have more conservative judgements than those favouring a liberal state system and market-led economy.

Generally speaking, it can be assumed that unlike liberal values, democracy still has some grounds in the public. Consequently, there is a danger that democracy may turn into mob rule or national-socialism.

SOCIETY AND GOVERNIN

Let's see now what is being done and what forces govern the state system. In this case we'll examine current activities of political parties and the mood that prevails in the state apparatus.

Public life in Georgia at present is characterised by a significant reduction of the number of political parties as distinct from the wide range of political parties in post-Soviet Georgia of 90 where for example 14 blocs (comprising 34 organisations participated in the elections. In 1992 there were 47 organisations, in 1995 there were 54 of them. Parties often having weak structure, lack social basis and are centred around a charismatic leader. They often have the same names as western political organisations however have

very little in common with them. All this makes the chances of political parties very slim.

The Citizens' Union is the only political force which managed to retain its features after the elections. This organisation has in fact merged with state structures and may be viewed as the post-Soviet Communist Party of Georgia.

By the spring 1994 it has already 35 thousand members. Although pro-Russian communist nomenclature have a strong position within the party, the leading force is still pro-Western, claiming to be supportive of market economy and democracy.

All the above-mentioned aspects do not suggest that the Citizens' Union is secure from inner perturbations. The absence of common ideological bases, the conglomeration of different mentalities, and various inner clans struggling for power pose a real threat to the party.

* * *

Opinions expressed by the state administration representatives on the future of governance is conflicting.

The relation of the state administration with commerce deserves special mentioning as it often causes infringement of the law. The Chairman of Procedural Committee stated that 12 MPs infringe the law by participating in commercial activities.

As a result of the inspection of government activities carried out by the Prosecution on the President's request, 1400 law offences were revealed in 1991-1995. This led to declaring 1997 as the year for combating corruption. Independent press considers this to be a campaign which is largely aimed at avenging old style functionaries.

PROSPECTS

Proceeding from the mentioned above, one can draw certain conclusions:

1. activeness during Zviad Gamsakhurdia's rule was followed, as a result of developments in 90s, by political indifference of public life caused by the loss of confidence in any political party's ability to cope with the crisis in the country;
2. the deep economic crisis, which seems unlikely to end soon, prevents from carrying out substantial (nation-wide and costly) programs (in 1995 the budget totalled \$190 mln, in 1996 - \$555 mln and in 1997 - \$840 mln);

3. there is an obvious tendency towards enlarging and strengthening state institutions, first of all law-enforcement bodies, which naturally also strains the budget. At the same time, state officials' low salaries and uncertainty makes for misuse of authority, first of all for corruption;
4. although a lot of time has passed (1992-98), the Georgian governing forces have failed to accomplish in developing the state system and, worse still, certain legislative bases.

When developing a state system, the primary attention must be given to the fact that in former Soviet republics, including Georgia, the process is marked with two characteristics:

- first of all, state structures display a trend towards more independence. All levels of government (political and ethnic autonomies, regions, municipalities and communities) are striving for more and more independence;
- at the same time, the initial euphoric mood has abated both in the society and bureaucracy. The hope for rapid changes was replaced with deep pessimism. As a result, it is now argued that old Soviet systems cannot be reformed - they must be entirely destroyed and give way to new ones.

Finally, a few words about the future prospects. It seems that:

- instead of swift reforms, the process tends to stretch;
- the government is unlikely to enjoy as people's mass support as it got in 1989-92. The majority of population (from 37% to 61%, according to various opinion polls) does not believe the government a priori and has no hopes for the future;
- all this makes the state structures unstable, and dependent on foreign (Russia), internal (corruption, Mafia, bureaucracy, retrograde processes, though the latter have decreased in frequency), and personal (who will be the president's successor?) factors.

CONCLUSIONS

The following aspects must be taken into account in order to find how these processes affect different cases of nationalism in Georgia:

1. By its essence, the Georgian ethnic mentality stands close to the so-called Mediterranean "Shame and Honor Society" and was strongly affected by the bicentennial rule of, first, the Russian Empire and then the Soviet Union. Abolishment of the country's state sovereignty resulted in national infantilism, on the one hand, and emerging of a para-society (in the kind of state officials' criminal clans), on the other;
2. On the present stage of development, the clan mentality and modernist and post-modernist views have merged. Western values and paternalist thinking are often intermingled;
3. There are relics of tribalism in the country. They especially revealed themselves in 1991-93 during, first, the overthrow of the government and then the civil war. At that time, the residents of the western Georgia supported ex-president Gamsakhurdia, while those of Tbilisi (together with former Communist nomenclature) backed Shevardnadze;
4. The disintegration of the USSR and economic crisis destroyed the old ideological and economic bases. As the society knows little about the western liberal values and no groups of economic interests have been created yet, nationalism turned out the leading ideological factor of the society;
5. Despite a critical situation in the country exacerbated by ethnic conflicts, the migration caused by ethnic reasons is rather insignificant against the background of general emigration. Migration is mainly caused by economic problems;
6. In 1992-98, there were some signs of underestimating the nationalism by the Georgian political elite. As a rule, any event is considered only in the light of criminal clans' interests and subversive activities of the neighboring countries (first of all of Russia). The role of a nation's self-identification is assessed only post-factum;
7. Both the Georgian ruling circles and the international organisations functioning in the country often try to present the current ethnic processes in Georgia by international, unified schemes. Specific characteristics of Georgia and the Caucasus in general are ignored;
8. Ethnic problems of Armenia and Azerbaijan somewhat differ from the current situation in Georgia. The Armenian society is influenced by the factor if the military victory over Azerbaijan. If compared with the other Transcaucasia republics, it may be considered more militaristic. As to Azerbaijan, it has more in common with Georgia. Continuous military defeat and the danger of ethnic conflicts caused by a relatively high proportion of the ethnic minorities have led to a pessimistic and nihilistic

stance of certain strata of the society towards the future of the country. The people are more interested in improving of the economic situation. Intellectual circles prefer working in the third sector to being employed in state institutions. At the same time, Georgia has much more developed third sector than Azerbaijan;

9. As to the attitude of the biggest part of the Georgian population (ethnic Georgians) towards the state sovereignty and the comparison between the and the mentality of ethnic Georgians of Turkey, Georgian citizens are obviously more active politically. This is determined by better education and relatively more active political life of the country. Unlike Turkey, civil society, not the military, is politically more active in Georgia. At the same time, one must take into account that the Georgians of Georgia regard the Georgian state as the form of their own sovereignty. As to the ethnic Georgians of Turkey, they display the universal tendency characteristic of an ethnic minority - the minority is less interested in developing the state sovereignty and is more focused on its narrow ethnic problems. This may be likened to attitudes of the ethnic minorities of Georgia.
10. The cases of nationalism will hardly become less acute in the near future. The process may be somewhat impeded by the economic crisis and continuous military defeats, but reprisals will take place anyway until all the chief problems in this field are solved.

What are possible solutions to the existing problems?

Under the circumstances, just the state should take charge of certain functions. This has to do not only with politics in general, legislative regulations of economy or social guarantees for the people but with choosing of a proper direction for the development of ethnic self-consciousness. This will help avoid the threat of radicalism and, to some extent, social or ethnic revenge.

Of course, a whole range of measures should be implemented to overcome the existing difficulties. Permanent failures of foreign and domestic policy have substantially shaken positions of the new independent state. First of all, the scope of alienation between the government and the people has grown and may be described as much worse than in Soviet times. Therefore, there is an immediate need to awake people's interest in state policy and increase their sense of responsibility.

Activities of state structures are decisive to keep people informed and secure their participation in governing processes. The public should be educated in the use of finances. Otherwise, citizens will be unaware of their rights and responsibilities. General democratisation and privatisation of state property alone will hardly make things better.

What should be done to this end?

1. first of all, a "code of demeanour" of the state apparatus should be changed. While legislative bodies have the prerogative to legislate, the code is subject to just the public opinion;
2. thus, the most urgent problem is to make the society more active. Participation in elections means much by itself, regardless of what an election system is instituted in the country. The government must maintain relations with the society and attenuate, at least partly, indifference of the broad public;
3. under the circumstances, local elections reveal one more, indirect implication. Given people's current indifference, elections to legislative structures and citizens' participation in their activities is the last hope to make the society more active and the government legitimate in the public eye.

Finally, it must be underlined once again that excessive indifference to ethnic or social problems on the part of the government can pose a threat as long as it encourages the society, or its biggest part, to seek solutions on its own, often by illegal means.

The core of the problem may be generally outlined by the following formula:

A state should be reasonably national and social to prevent the onset of national-socialist mood in the public.