



საქართველო და ევროპა
GEORGIA AND EUROPE

საერთაშორისო სამეცნიერო კონფერენცია

„კავკასია გზაჯვარედინზე: რა როლი აქვს ევროკავშირს?“

4-5 ნოემბერი 2022

International Scientific Conference

"The Caucasus at the Crossroads: What Role for the EU?"

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კონფერენციის შრომათა კრებული

Proceedings of the conference

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GEORGIA AND EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

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POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS



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EUROPEAN UNION: BORDERS AND ENLARGEMENT AFTER THE RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE

Abstract

The European Union is an international organization that is constantly evolving and enlarging. Since its inception sixty-five ago, it has accomplished seven rounds of enlargement. It has identified seven states – Albania, Moldova, the Republic of North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine as official candidates for membership. Several more European states have declared their intention to join and are working towards achieving candidate status. Despite the United Kingdom’s withdrawal, the organization has retained its attraction. The war in Ukraine has focused the attention of Brussels on its eastern and south-eastern borders, adding an unprecedented security and defence dimension to be considered not only for existing member states but those countries aspiring to be future members. This paper identifies the dynamics at play in this volatile period and the challenges and processes facing extending the borders of the European Union.

Keywords: European Union, Enlargement, War in Ukraine, Ukraine, Georgia

1. Introduction

The need for definitions of European identity and its borders is noticeably frequent in most disciplines dealing with Europe. Regarding the legal dimension, there has been much debate concerning which path the EU should take to advance the federalisation process or adapt to the increasingly serious challenges it faces. Many studies have been conducted on the various

aspects concerning European integration: basic issues of constitutional law, such as the sources of law, the form of state and government, rights and specific issues relating to individual sectors, such as environment, agriculture, public services, and financial markets to name but a few.

The central debate concerns the question of the future of the Union: how to renew institutions, increase the level of participation and awareness of citizens, and find an acceptable balance in the relationship between state sovereignty and supranational order. These themes are linked to a fundamental question: a vision of Europe that one has and from which one starts formulating the various political, institutional, and social ideas and developments. Which Europe - which model of Europe - to pursue is the choice to be made a priori, after which all the institutional constructs can be derived utilising various forms of integration.

However, as in the past, it is now a question of choosing a Europe of States or peoples but of understanding how to advance the institutional system with tools that allow it to act effectively towards its internal components and in the external dimension. In this regard, it is necessary to understand the criteria for enlargement and the nature of European identity, to study its characteristics in-depth and deduce its cultural, juridical, institutional, and social foundations.

The identity of Europe is not as is assumed unitary. However, it is a plural identity, constituted in a seamless dialectic between distinct factors which have entered relationships with each other, both from the chronological point of view, harmonisation between experiences and ideas of the ancient world and events and concepts of the Modern, both shining a light on the borders - both geographic and cultural - of the Old Continent.

This composite identity has shaped a story of unity and commonality of very close values (Manners, 2006). One must read the history of the European continent as an alternation of moments of unity and fragmentation followed in a continuous dialectic, each leaving a legacy which has enriched that plural fabric which is the matrix of Europe as it is known today. Such a matrix created a system of values that united all the Member States and remained the main tool to distinguish what Europe was from what it was not. All until Brexit. The idea of Europe was born out of binary contrast with what was beyond, on the perimeter, what was different: Greeks and Persians, Romans and Barbarians, Western and Eastern, Christian and Muslim (Pagden and Lee, 2002).

Similarly, today the borders of Europe are becoming less geographical and delimited, an area sharing common constitutional values and democracy (Schimmelfennig, 2010). Such identification is equivalent to listing the characteristics of European integration. The EU has been able, especially since the end of the Cold War, to propose itself as a collector, catalyst, and creator of a uniform system of rights and values inherited and re-proposed in a new guise to the Member States (Sjursen, 2007).

States such as Georgia that currently desire to accede to the Union find themselves having to adopt this system of values: hence the study of the requirements that they must meet to join reflects what member states already have, which the European institutions consider as fundamental for the European order, allows one to understand the nature and the contents of these values fully.

2. Enlargement

The life of any regional organisation is made up of two contrasting dimensions, different and complementary. In the case of European integration, this has been characterised as

deepening and widening (Smith and Wallace, 1994). While the first indicates the deepening of the integration process, the extension of the collaboration between states to new sectors and a greater commitment to cooperation itself, the second term focuses on expanding the social base of the states that are part of the organisation. Hence, one of the challenges of the integration process is to make sure that one does not occur at the expense of the other.

The enlargement of the European Union is the process whereby new nations apply to become a part of the European Union through an agreed legislative adjustment path. This is possible thanks to the extension of the contents of the constitutive treaties of the three European Communities. From the six founding states of the European Communities, the number of member states has steadily grown, and other European states have negotiations underway to join the Union.

While respecting the limits imposed by the continent's geography, the Union tends to include third countries to strengthen further and extend the achievement of such goals as peace, stability, and improvement of living conditions under the guise of which it was founded (Joffé, 2008). Each enlargement also enhances a broad cultural activity and linguistics, a distinctive aspect of the European Union. In terms of the EU, enlargement is a permanent process.

In 1957, six countries founded the European Economic Community (EEC), which formed the origin of the European Union: Germany, Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. The European Communities and then the European Union gradually grew to fifteen members from these six founding members in 1995. Then, in 2004, with a great enlargement: 10 countries entered the EU simultaneously - Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Malta and Cyprus. They were joined in 2007 by Romania and Bulgaria, then in 2013 by Croatia.

For the past decade, the central question has been raised: Can the European Union still expand? This question is posed as "enlargement fatigue" has set in and, for the first time, an EU Member State, the United Kingdom, has left the European Union (Szolucha, 2010). The major enlargement of 2004 is at the origin of a "fatigue" of enlargement, which marked a halt to the benefit, in particular, of the neighbourhood policy. Although the enlargement, crowned by the great enlargement to the East, has come to a halt since 2013, it is nonetheless a living process based on a proven negotiation method that could lead to the accession of new Western Balkan and Black Sea States (O'Brennan, 2014).

After expanding very gradually until 1995, the European Union was able to expand to the East from 2004 to 2013, thanks to the fall of the Iron Curtain. The EU's continued enlargement has halted, sparked by questions about its ability to expand further after the so-called 2004-2007 "big bang" (Inotai, 2003). Hence one can identify enlargement starting from six countries in 1957 to twenty-seven currently; the EU has witnessed seven waves of new countries joining:

- first enlargement: United Kingdom, Ireland, Denmark (1973): in 1971, after two refusals by France, which feared a weakening of the Communities, the United Kingdom saw the doors of the common market finally open. It was officially admitted on January 1, 1973, along with Ireland and Denmark. The Communities (ECSC, EEC, CEEA) thus grew from 6 to 9 members.

- second enlargement: Greece (1981): in 1975, after the fall of the colonels' regime and the return to democracy, Greece submitted its candidacy. It became the tenth member of the Communities on January 1, 1981.

- third enlargement: Spain, Portugal (1986): after the death of Franco and the fall of Salazar, these two countries were, in turn, able to join the Communities on January 1, 1986, bringing the number of members to twelve.

- fourth enlargement: Austria, Sweden, Finland (1995): Due to their neutrality, some European countries remained on the sidelines of European integration, preferring to join EFTA (European Free Trade Association). The fall of the Iron Curtain rendered the status of a neutral country less relevant. Hence, Austria, Sweden, Finland, Switzerland and Norway applied for membership. In 1995, only the first three joined the European Union, bringing the number of its members to fifteen (Norway and Switzerland rejected membership by referendum).

- fifth enlargement: Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia (2004): alongside Cyprus and Malta, ten Central and Eastern European countries in the 1990s launched the process of accession to the European Union, in the wake of the fall of the iron curtain. While the PHARE program made it possible to help the former socialist states financially, accession negotiations started in 1998 with the six best-prepared countries (Cyprus, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic and Slovenia), then in 2000 with the six other countries (Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Romania and Slovakia). The Heads of State or Government decided at the European Council in Copenhagen in December 2002 that these countries could join the Union, except for Bulgaria and Romania. The 10 States joined the Union on May 1, 2004.

- sixth enlargement: Bulgaria, Romania (2007): the EU signed an accession treaty on April 25, 2005, with Romania and Bulgaria, which joined the EU on January 1, 2007.

- seventh enlargement: Croatia (2013): accession negotiations with Croatia started on October 3, 2005, and the last chapter was closed on June 30, 2011. Croatia became the 28th state of the European Union on July 1, 2013, after the accession treaty was ratified on December 9, 2011.

From the first enlargement, the debate between enlargement and deepening appeared as one of the main debates on European construction. This problem resurfaced forcefully with the gains of 2004 and 2007, concurrent with the failure of the European Constitution and the adoption of the Treaty of Lisbon (Szolucha, 2010). Fears over further enlargement beyond Central and Eastern European countries have led to a pause in the enlargement process.

Admittedly, the successive enlargements enabled the Union to strengthen and punch above its weight on the world stage: the world's leading economic power between 2005 and 2014 remained the leading trading power (Meunier and Nicolaïdis, 2005). The current European Union, with 27 Member States and almost 500 million inhabitants, is much more powerful than the economic community, which brought together six States and less than 200 million people. Furthermore, with particular regard to the enlargements of 2004 and 2007, it is worth stressing the political importance of the enlargement to Central and Eastern Europe and the stabilising function for the former socialist states from the perspective of the return to Europe after the upheavals of the late 1980s and the economic and social shock of the end of communism in the 1990s (O'Brennan, 2006).

2.1 Central and Eastern Europe

However, the enlargement to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe weakened the cohesion of the European Union, particularly given the strong economic and social disparities it

created in the Union (Farkas, 2013). Insufficient social and tax harmonisation fuelled concerns about “social dumping” - fear of much cheaper Eastern European manual workers - or the race to the bottom in terms of corporate taxes. It should nevertheless be underlined that nearly twenty years after the great enlargement of 2004, these economic disparities are diminishing, the economic convergence between Western and Eastern Europe being very strong. The economic differences within the EU are now hardly greater than, for example, within the United States (Filauro and Parolin, 2019). In the Czech Republic, for example, GDP per capita rose from 78% in 2004 to 89% of the EU average in 2017 (Čajka and Abrahám, 2019). The standard of living in Hungary and Poland - which also enjoys full employment - came closer to the European average (Čajka and Abrahám, 2019).

The fears aroused by the enlargement of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe are also political. At 28, decision-making within the European Union may have seemed more difficult, particularly within the Council and on subjects requiring the unanimity of the Member States, for example, taxation. The heterogeneity of positions on certain issues between old and new Member States can also constitute an additional obstacle to decision-making. The abuses in terms of the rule of law observed in Hungary and Poland have not silenced these critics (Kelemen and Laurent, 2019).

In this context, enlargement to Central and Eastern European countries has resulted in enlargement fatigue, especially in Western European countries, where the prospect of further enlargements does not seem popular (Cornell, 2014). Drawing conclusions from this situation, the European Commission set up in 2014 expressly indicated that no enlargement would occur under its mandate until 2020, considering that no partner country could be ready by then (Copsey and Pomorska, 2014).

This enlargement fatigue has led to the development, as an alternative, of a European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), which was born out of a double observation following the 2004 enlargement: on the one hand, the EU, as it grows, draws closer to new neighbouring countries to the East and the South, which could be a source of instability at its borders; on the other hand, its capacity to integrate new members is limited (Missiroli, 2010). This is how the European Union decided in 2004 to implement a global policy vis-à-vis neighbouring countries which do not intend to join the EU, at least in the medium term. Within this remit are six eastern neighbours - Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine - and ten Mediterranean countries: Algeria, Palestinian Authority, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria, and Tunisia. The ENP highlights three main priorities for cooperation: economic development, security and migration and mobility. It thus promotes reforms in these areas employing financial assistance - European Neighborhood Instrument was endowed with 15.4 billion euros for 2014 – 2020 (Kalicka-Mikołajczyk, 2014).

Among the neighbouring countries, it was feasible but exceedingly difficult to imagine that Ukraine, in particular, could claim the status of a candidate country in the future. At this stage, the EU limited itself to its “neighbourhood policy”, which, without exception for the future, did not currently plan to include Ukraine. However, accession negotiations continued with certain countries based on a precise negotiation method, particularly in the Western Balkans.

Enlargement is based on very general eligibility criteria and a proven negotiation method. The general criteria determine the eligibility of countries for membership in the European Union.

The Treaty on European Union (TEU), in its Article 49, provides that “any European State which respects the values referred to in Article 2 of the TEU” and which “undertakes to promote them” may apply to become a member of the EU (Blanke and Mangiameli, 2013). They must submit their request to the Council, which decides unanimously after consulting the Commission and after obtaining the approval of the European Parliament, which decides by a majority of its members.

2.2 Copenhagen Criteria

With the ending of the Cold War, eligibility criteria were formulated and approved by the European Council. These are what is termed as the “Copenhagen criteria”, defined by the European Council in June 1993 with a view to enlargement to the East: (Marktler, 2006).

- Political criterion (having stable institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights, respect for minorities and their protection).
- Economic criterion (establishing a viable market economy and the ability to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union).
- Institutional criterion (having the capacity to adopt and implement the community acquis).

Moreover, the leaders of the Union, after the great enlargement of 2004, agreed in December 2006 in the renewed consensus on enlargement that the Copenhagen criteria should be combined with the Union’s ability to assimilate new members, but this should not become a prerequisite for membership (Amentbrink, 2007). This capacity for absorption or integration is measured by the ability of the EU to welcome new members at a given time or in a given period without jeopardising the political objectives established by the Treaties.

The European Council grants the status of the candidate country based on an opinion from the European Commission considering the above criteria. Depending on the situation of the candidate countries, they can undertake to implement a reform process to adopt the Community acquis and strengthen their infrastructures and their administrations. During this process, the candidate benefits from financial and technical assistance to prepare for EU membership. The Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance is the financial instrument of the pre-accession process accession begun in 2007 (Forýtek, 2022). It was endowed with €12.8 billion for the 2014-2020 multiannual financial framework (European Commission, 2022). The financial framework for 2021-27 worth €14.16 billion is for both actual candidates - Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, North Macedonia, and Turkey - and potential ones: Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo (European Commission, 2022). Other states can also be included in the program, but only in exceptional cases, if this is part of a cross-border or regional development. The assistance the IPA provides depends on the needs of the candidate countries and their progress, according to the Commission.

The IPA operates based on five components, which are available for all candidate countries, whereas only the first two apply to all potential candidate countries: (Szemplér, 2009).

- assistance with transition and institution building;
- cross-border cooperation;
- regional development component aims to prepare the country for implementing the Community cohesion fund i.e., European Regional Development Fund, Cohesion Fund)
- human resources development component concerns the skills training necessary for participation in cohesion policy i.e., European Social Fund.

- rural development component, which includes access to the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

The IPA is based on annual or multiannual development frameworks, and its contribution can take on different forms: investments, contracts, or grants; administrative cooperation, by sending experts from the Member States; participation in community programs or agencies; measures of support for the implementation process and program management; budget support (Boneva, 2011).

The accession negotiations are based on a highly supervised process, aiming at adopting all the Community acquis. The accession negotiations with a candidate country are opened only by a unanimous decision of the European Council. The talks occur within Intergovernmental Conferences (IGC) between the governments of the EU countries and the candidate country. All the Union's positions concerning the negotiations are determined within the Council - preparation by the "enlargement" working group and approval in Coreper. All the positions taken by the Union within the IGC must obtain the unanimity of the Member States. The negotiations are divided into 35 thematic chapters covering all of the *acquis communautaire*, with the opening of each chapter decided unanimously by the Council (Ker-Lindsay et al. 2017).

Negotiations begin with a screening or analytical examination of the *acquis*, which is conducted by the Commission and aims to describe to the candidate countries the whole of the *acquis* and then to identify the problems which will arise from taking over the *acquis* by the candidate country. Each screening report submitted by the Commission ends with a recommendation addressed to the Council: either to open negotiations on the chapter concerned or to postpone it. In the latter case, the Commission proposes in its report the reference criteria, the satisfaction of which by the candidate country will make it possible to envisage the opening of negotiations.

The negotiation begins when the candidate country and the EU present their respective negotiating positions. When invited to do so by the EU, it is up to the candidate country to offer its position first. The first common position of the EU on each chapter concerned, which allows the opening of negotiations, must indicate in particular the benchmarks which must be fulfilled to consider the provisional closure of the chapter. Impact studies can be conducted to help Member States negotiate, such as free movement of people, border management, agriculture, cohesion policy, transport, energy, foreign and security policy (Fernández, 2002).

Negotiations can only be closed if all chapters have been provisionally closed and the Member States decide to close the negotiations. The Accession Treaty must be ratified by the candidate country and each member state according to their constitutional procedures. The enlargement process was reinforced with the adoption of a renewed consensus for enlargement by the European Council in December 2006, which reaffirmed strict conditionality at all stages of the negotiations based on the individual merits of each one (Amentbrink, 2007). Difficult issues, particularly those relating to the rule of law and the fight against corruption, must be tackled at the start of negotiations, and there is no fixed date in advance for the end of the talks. Membership.

A "new approach" to the rule of law, justice, freedom and security was proposed by the Commission for opening accession negotiations with Montenegro and then with Serbia and was validated by the Council in its conclusions of December 2011 (Whitman and Juncos, 2012).

Negotiation of chapters 23, Judicial power and fundamental rights, and 24 Justice, freedom, security, were intended to be opened among the first chapters after the opening of accession negotiations and closed at the end of the process to ensure the adoption of the necessary reforms and to enable the establishment of a solid track record of results in this area (Mirel, 2018). This approach was supplemented in 2014 by two other interrelated subjects with the rule of law to form the three fundamental pillars of the enlargement strategy: first, questions of economic governance, second, the reform of public administration and third, the functioning of democratic institutions (Armstrong, 2005).

A new enlargement methodology was approved in May 2021 concerning Montenegro and Serbia (Sydoruk, Yakymchuk and Avhustiuk, 2022). Greater emphasis was put upon a stronger focus on fundamental reforms; a stronger political steer; an increased dynamism and an improvement concerning the predictability of the process (Council of the EU, 2021). It further reinforced the focus on issues related to the rule of law, fundamental rights and the functioning of democratic institutions. In addition, it provided for IGCs meeting at the ministerial level to give a stronger political dimension.

3. Candidate Countries and Negotiations

Since the withdrawal in 2015 of Iceland's candidacy, submitted in 2009, five countries had been officially recognised as candidates for membership of the European Union by the summer of 2022: four Western Balkan countries - Albania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia - and Turkey. The European Union first began conducting accession negotiations with three countries: Turkey (on October 3, 2005), Montenegro (on June 29, 2012) and Serbia (on January 21, 2014). In March 2020, the Council decided to open accession negotiations with Albania and Macedonia. A draft negotiation framework with these two countries was presented to Member States in July 2020, but negotiations had yet to start effectively within the context of the Covid-19 crisis. In addition, two countries were considered as potential candidates: Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo.

In October 2022, Bosnia Herzegovina was recommended by the European Commission to be granted candidate status, firmly entrenching the view that the Western Balkans belonged to the European family (Reuters, 2022). The challenges facing all applicants include, but are not limited to, bolstering democratic credentials, the functionality of state institutions and the rule of law, effectively tackling corruption and organised crime and guaranteeing media freedom.

Some Western Balkan countries were thought to join the European Union in the medium term as the Feira European Council in June 2000 granted the status of "potential candidates for membership" to all the Western Balkan states (Phinnemore, 2003). The European perspective of the Western Balkans was reaffirmed in 2003 by the Heads of State or Government and at the Thessaloniki Summit, then at the Sofia Summit in 2018 (Mirel, 2018). The prospect of enlargement to the Western Balkans was welcomed positively by all the Member States of the EU, even if the positions diverged on the timetable and the degree of rigour expected, with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe being the most enthusiastic.

3.1 Western Balkans

The Commission recalled with the 2018 Communication on EU enlargement policy that the accession negotiations were part of a broader process of long-term modernisation and

reform and, to this end, called on the governments of the enlargement countries to undertake the necessary reforms much more actively, truly integrating them into their political agenda (Petrovic and Tzifakis, 2021). The Commission indicated that public support for future enlargements would depend on the degree of preparedness of the candidate countries. The Commission underlined the importance of the countries concerned implementing reforms relating to the rule of law, fundamental rights, and good governance, particularly regarding the effectiveness of the judiciary, the fight against corruption and organised crime, and efficient public administration. Implementing the aforementioned reforms constituted the main benchmark for assessing individual countries' progress.

There was also a need for greater transparency in the management of public funds, especially at all stages of public procurement; the presence of organised crime remains strong in the countries involved in the enlargement process in the Western Balkans. The Commission noted that there remained a gap between the analysis of threats posed by organised crime and the operational priorities set. The authorities had to start using financial investigations and improve the results in terms of confiscation of the proceeds of crime; the fight against terrorism needed to be further strengthened through cooperation between the EU and all countries with each partner in the Western Balkans: Structures at the national and regional level needed to be made more effective, especially as regards the prevention of violent extremism, the fight against arms trafficking, terrorist financing, money laundering, and information (Kovačević, 2018). The rules on protecting personal data had to be aligned with EU standards to allow for the conclusion of cooperation agreements.

The communication noted that, although fundamental rights were enshrined in the legal order in the Western Balkans, considerable efforts were still needed to ensure their full implementation. The Commission considered it a priority, in particular: to safeguard freedom of expression and the independence of the media, which undermined the basic right to freedom of expression and democracy in the region (Kmezić, 2020). Governments of the countries concerned urgently needed to take concrete measures to implement existing legal frameworks on freedom of expression and improve the general framework for media freedom; greater protection of children's rights and gender equality by anticipating and combating violence against women; the fight against discrimination against disabled people, minorities, and other vulnerable groups; fighting discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people (Đurić and Vasiljević, 2012). Furthermore, the precarious situation of the Roma had to be addressed as a matter of priority, and the detention conditions should be improved, aligning with the EU acquis the procedural rights of suspects, defendants, and victims (Kacarska, 2012). Within functioning democratic institutions and public administration reform, constructive dialogue must be ensured across the political spectrum, particularly with national parliaments.

Challenges related to the refugee crisis and irregular migration have been at the heart of the EU's work with the enlargement countries. More efforts are needed to equip countries with the necessary resources to address migration challenges and reduce irregular migration, return and border protection, prevention of irregular migration, capacity building in the field of asylum, social inclusion, and integration. The European Commission recommended further strengthening administrative capacity and infrastructure throughout the Western Balkan region to stabilise the situation along its borders (Demetropoulou, 2002).

The Commission noted that both the Western Balkans had significant economic potential. Despite the increase in growth rates in recent years, all governments faced significant structural challenges of an economic and social nature, including high unemployment rates, especially among young people, severe skills mismatches, persistently prominent levels of the informal economy, inadequate business environments, with limited access to finance, and low levels of innovation and regional connectivity.

The Commission regarded regional cooperation as a key element in ensuring political stabilisation and economic opportunities. The EU Connectivity Agenda had, in particular, given further impetus to regional cooperation in the Western Balkans (Pavličević, 2019). In 2017, the region's leaders approved an action plan for the regional economic space in Trieste and signed the treaty on the Transport Community, named as the Berlin Process (Griessler, 2020). In good neighbourly relations, further efforts were needed in the most sensitive areas, such as war crimes, missing persons, organised crime, and judicial and police cooperation. Bilateral disputes needed to be resolved urgently by the responsible parties. The results were quite limited; progress was needed towards fully normalising relations between Serbia and Kosovo.

The EU approach concerning countries applying to join can be seen in the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP), which aims to create a general framework to stabilise the region politically and economically and operates as a pre-accession stage (Phinnemore, 2003). This opens with candidate countries representing the foundation of the Union's policy towards those areas. The EU starts a series of contacts to ascertain when the countries requesting entry are ready concerning the strict requirements required for admission. EU indicates the priorities that must be given to necessary reforms to meet the required parameters and includes financial and economic aid, trade liberalisation between the EU and the Balkan countries and the signing of Stabilisation and Association Agreements (Grieverson, Holzner and Vukšić, 2021). The rule of law and good government are key priorities which accompany these processes through regular political dialogue and monitoring of the progress made by the partner.

Montenegro and Serbia, for which negotiations have already been opened, remain the most advanced in the accession process. Thus, the strategy published by the Commission in February 2018 for a credible enlargement perspective as well as a reinforced EU commitment to the Western Balkans referred to the potential accession of Montenegro and Serbia in 2025 (Petrovic, 2021). Despite a political crisis during the October 2016 legislative elections, Montenegro made clear progress on its path to European rapprochement, and its modest size is likely to facilitate rapid accession. 33 out of 35 chapters have been opened, three of which have been provisionally closed (Džankić, Mladenov and Stahl, 2021). Concerning Serbia, the negotiations are less advanced, with 18 chapters opened, including two provisionally closed (Domachowska, 2021). The election of President Aleksandar Vučić in April 2017, then the appointment of the government of Ana Brnabić in June 2017, confirmed the pro-European orientation of the country. The puzzling question of normalising relations between Serbia and Kosovo remains open (Gashi, Musliu and Orbie, 2017). The most concrete objective until 2022 in terms of enlargement, therefore, concerned the countries of the Western Balkans. The entry of this area into the interior of the EU can be said to have begun with the accession of Croatia in 2013. It is in the Western Balkans where four of the six official candidates are located: Serbia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Albania.

The other states that have obtained candidate status belong to different and distant geographic areas but have experienced a troubled accession process. These are Iceland, which in March 2015 withdrew its membership application definitively, and Turkey, whose relations with Brussels hit a major hurdle in 2019 with the suspension of relations imposed by the EP (Lippert, 2021). Furthermore, Norway - whose citizens rejected membership in a referendum on two occasions - and Switzerland are linked to the EU by bilateral free trade agreements (Lavenex, 2011).

3.2 Black Sea and the Caucasus

Beyond this region, there are interesting perspectives in the Caucasus: Azerbaijan and Georgia became interested in the signing of Stabilisation and Association Treaties, just as Armenia initially was before it returned to the Russian sphere of influence. To the East, however, there were still two pieces missing. Belarus was excluded primarily for political reasons, even though it bordered the Union, but not so concerning Moldova and Ukraine (Nizhnikau, 2022). Before 2022, the former faced a long path of reforms, despite being able to count on the quasi-identity which bound it to Romania and Italy. On the other hand, Ukraine faced a difficult challenge: the failure to sign the Stabilisation and Association Agreement, which led to the Euromaidan protests (Van der Loo, 2019). After the 2004 enlargement and given potential future accessions, it is important to question how far the integration process can go and, therefore, to understand what the potential boundaries are concerning the maximum expansion of the Union.

If one recalls that only a European state can aspire to join the Union, then the limits are eminently geographical. However, there are inherent problems: what are the borders of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe? Is it legitimate to consider the Caucasus? The same doubt would arise regarding Turkey, given that most of its territory is in Asia. The Catholic Church - in particular, Pope Benedict XVI - highlighted the opportunity to underline the Christian roots of Europe, which were inferred in the Treaties (Schlesinger and Foret, 2006). Accepting such a thesis signifies the medieval coincidence between “Europe” and “Christianity”. In this case, states who have applied or intend to apply for entry into the Union, such as Turkey, Bosnia Herzegovina, and Albania, would have to be rejected. This question has never had relevance for two fundamental reasons: European institutions rejected the principle of Christian roots by appealing to secularism; on the other, the intent of Church did not want to exclude people with a different creed different but offered its preferred historical, cultural matrix (Habermas, 2008).

The Commission’s approach has been to not set limits by clarifying how Europe is, that each country has the right to apply for membership, provided it is willing to implement the *acquis* and – in perspective - to adopt the Euro (Bulíř and Šmídková, 2005). Therefore, the Commission’s position is quite clear: the European objective encompasses a series of geographical, historical, and cultural factors contributing to constructing European identity. Hence, the sharing of ideas and values and the common experience of historical interaction cannot be condensed into an immutable formula but must be subjected to the scrutiny of each new generation. Geographical enlargement is now only possible towards the East and towards the Balkans. As one moves away from what can be defined as the “heart” of old Europe, cultural, political and, above all, religious differences are increasing.

What has accelerated the impetus for enlargement has undoubtedly been the invasion of Ukraine in 2022, which prompted Kyiv to submit its application for EU membership on February 28th, 2022, followed by Georgia and Moldova a week later (Sapir, 2022). On June 23, 2022, the European Council gave candidate status to Moldova and Ukraine, which also recognised Georgia as a potential candidate. Since March, the EU has had to react to developments on its eastern border, taking unprecedented steps in terms of military aid and economic sanctions (Yigit, 2022).

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has profoundly affected the European Union and how it views its future in terms of size. In the late 2010s, the EU's enlargement policy focused primarily on the Balkans, with the possibility of an eastern Balkan enlargement deemed possible by 2025. The commitment to a European horizon for the countries involved in the enlargement process was conditional upon the EU becoming stronger and more effective through a series of initiatives to be implemented based on the Treaties in force by that date. Since the Cold War, enlargement has been subject to the Copenhagen criteria, establishing democratic, economic, and political conditions for countries wishing to join (Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier, 2002).

Therefore, one can assert that the EU is open to enlargement through treaty provision and political will. Whilst the former requires much time, organisational effort, and complete unanimity to change; the latter is not. Even though the EU is a supranational entity, the member states that compose it are not hesitant to defend and impose their national interests, whether related to internal developments or enlargement.

Concerning Albania and North Macedonia, on 6 September 2022, the accession negotiation process finally began (Eurostat, 2022). The Prespa agreement concluded in June 2018 with Greece on the name of North Macedonia (now North Macedonia) was a positive point for the European perspective of North Macedonia (Chryssogelos and Stavrevska, 2019). However, on June 26, 2019, the General Affairs Council refused to open accession negotiations with Albania and Macedonia, particularly to the opposition of France and the Netherlands (Demaja, 2020). France asked for a reform of the accession process considered too rigid and not reserving the possibility of going back in case the candidate would question the reforms that were previously undertaken (Fejérdy, 2020). Taking these demands into account, the Commission presented in February 2020 a new methodology for enlargement, which, if it does not revolutionise the negotiation process, is inspired by the French proposal (Reka, 2020).

In this document, the Commission emphasises the chapters relating to fundamental reforms (judiciary and fundamental rights; freedom, security, justice), which will systematically be opened first and closed last and whose progress will determine the general pace of negotiations. It takes up the French idea of reorganising the thirty-five accession chapters into seven policy blocks, which could be opened in any order, according to the wishes of the candidate countries (Eisl, 2020).

To strengthen the political steering of the process, it proposes the regular holding of EU/Western Balkan summits, an annual debate at the European Council on enlargement or even the participation of ministers from the Balkan countries in ministerial discussions in the areas in which their countries are fully committed, such as Horizon 2020 (Jusufović and Ajdarpašić, 2020). To avoid divergent analyses about the candidate countries, the Commission suggests that the Member States be involved in monitoring the progress made by the candidate States in resuming the Community acquis.

Finally, the new methodology highlights the principle of reversibility. The process, based on merit, will allow a country progressing on the priority track to benefit from an acceleration of the integration process, increased participation in EU programs and increased funding and investments. Conversely, in the event of a setback in the implementation of the reforms, the Council, on a proposal from the Commission, may decide by a qualified majority vote to suspend the accession negotiations, to reopen chapters which have already been closed or reduce access to EU funding (Gray, 2009). Consequently, France lifted its opposition to opening accession negotiations with Albania and Macedonia, which the Council authorised on March 26, 2020 (Müller-Brandeck-Bocquet, 2022). The situation is more complicated concerning the two countries which do not yet have candidate status, namely Bosnia and Herzegovina, particularly given the persistent division of the country between its two entities (Croatian Federation -Muslim Republic and Republika Srpska) and Kosovo, given its economic difficulties and in terms of the rule of law and pending the normalisation of its relations with Belgrade.

Turkey's entry into the EU is undoubtedly the most debated among the planned enlargements. This is explained by its demographic weight - a population of 85 million - economic characteristics, political and cultural differences, and geographical location. The prospect of Turkey's accession to the EU dates to the contract of association between the EEC and Turkey in 1963, which strengthened economic and commercial exchanges between the two parties and led to a customs union in 1995 (Yigit, 1996). The Helsinki Council of 1999 granted Turkey the status of a candidate for the EU. In October 2005, given several reforms strengthening the rule of law in Turkey such as abolition of the death penalty, accession negotiations were officially opened, before being partially frozen in December 2006, because of the Cyprus question (Acemoglu and Ucer, 2015). Of the 35 chapters making up the *acquis communautaire*, 15 opened, the last in 2016, and only one closed - science and research (Phinnemore and İçener, 2016).

The events that have taken place in Turkey since 2016 - failed coup attempt in July 2016, constitutional referendum on the extension of the powers of the President in April 2017 - have made the future of relations between Turkey and the EU uncertain (Martin, 2019). Accession negotiations thus remain at a standstill. The relationship between the EU and Turkey is based on the search for a balance between maintaining the EU-Turkey strategic partnership, in particular concerning the response to the migration challenge - Turkey hosting more than 3.6 million Syrian refugees - and condemnation by the EU of the deterioration of the situation in Turkey concerning the rule of law and fundamental freedoms (Sahin et al. 2021). On June 26, 2018, the Council adopted conclusions on Turkey, which sent clear messages to Ankara in this respect and indicated that Turkey has further distanced itself from the EU; it is impossible to envisage any other chapter's opening or closing (Pierini, 2019).

4. Conclusion

It is helpful to gauge potential new members' economic size when investigating potential new members. As can be seen from Table 1, the member states of the EU come in all shapes and sizes. They range in dimension from the small island of Malta to Germany. Therefore, it is incorrect to characterise the EU as consisting of only large wealthy states. Within the borders of the EU, there are states with smaller economies. Hence as Table 2 demonstrates, whereas Turkish accession would make Turkey the sixth largest member state, most of the other candidate

states would be the smallest member states in terms of national economy. Therefore, most of the candidates are what may be termed small states in terms of economic size and territory, with the obvious exceptions of Turkey and Ukraine.

Table 1. EU Member State by Economic Size

	EU Member States	2021 GDP (Millions)
1	Germany	4,223,116.21
2	France	2,937,472.76
3	Italy	2,099,880.20
4	Spain	1,425,276.59
5	Netherlands	1,018,007.06
6	Poland	674,048.27
7	Sweden	627,437.90
8	Belgium	599,879.03
9	Ireland	498,559.58
10	Austria	477,082.47
11	Denmark	397,104.34
12	Finland	299,155.24
13	Romania	284,087.56
14	Czech Republic	282,340.85
15	Portugal	249,886.46
16	Greece	216,240.59
17	Hungary	182,280.52
18	Slovakia	114,870.71
19	Luxembourg	86,710.80
20	Bulgaria	80,271.12
21	Croatia	67,837.79
22	Lithuania	65,503.85
23	Slovenia	61,526.33
24	Latvia	38,872.55
25	Estonia	36,262.92
26	Cyprus	27,719.34
27	Malta	17,189.73

Source: World Bank, 2021

Table 2. Potential and Candidate States

EU Rank	Candidate Countries	GDP (Billion)	EU Rank	Potential Candidates	GDP (Billion)	Caucasus	GDP (Billion)
6	Turkey	815.3	27	Bosnia-Herzegovina	22.6	Azerbaijan	54.6
17	Ukraine	200	27	Georgia	18.7	Armenia	13.9
23	Serbia	63.7	28	Kosovo	9		
27	Albania	18.3					
28	North Macedonia	13.9					
28	Moldova	13.7					
28	Montenegro	5.8					

Source: World Bank, 2021

Although in the immediate future, the removal of certain barriers - in particular of customs-related regulations - has created difficulties, reactions, and protests on the part of some production and service sectors that found themselves faced with forms of competition that they were not accustomed to; entry into the Union has led to considerable benefits to countries that have joined. The countries of the Baltic region, as well as Malta or Cyprus, have been able to

expand the impact of their business relationships by finding new markets, resulting in increased employment, productivity, and trade with a notable improvement in the living conditions of the populations (Dandashly and Verdun, 2021).

Given the attractiveness of the EU, it is not surprising that the list of candidate states continues to grow. The most significant impetus has been one that was never thought of: securing territorial integrity. Most of the criticisms related to EU membership were clustered around the loss of sovereignty. One of the essential tools of the state, the pooling of sovereignty, has attracted much critical thought. Despite this fact, it is precisely the loss of sovereignty and the inability to maintain territorial integrity that has proven to be the most powerful factor in attracting potential member states and the EU proactively reaching out to fast-track membership. One can conclude that the event which has completely transformed the established mental map of European borders and thinking regarding enlargement has been the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

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AWAKENING REGIONALISM IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS? AZERBAIJANI LEADERSHIP AND THE ROLE OF EUROPE

Keywords: regionalism; South Caucasus; Azerbaijan; (sub)regional leadership; Europe

Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia are bound together at the crossroads of civilizations. The three countries make the South Caucasus, a geographic region within Eurasia that, despite posing many of the characteristics that enable regionalism, is yet to develop formal regional arrangements let alone institutions. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, different foreign policy inclinations and intraregional conflicts led the three countries to pursue diverse strategies in the globalized (and regionalized) world. Still, Gerard Libaridian (2012, p. 238) argues, the international (and thus also European) perception is that the political dynamics of these countries cannot be detached from the region in which they are located. As such, prospects after the signing of the November 2020 Statement by President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia and President of the Russian Federation opened up possibilities for a *Pax Caucasia* regional arrangement under Azerbaijani subregional leadership (Santana, 2021). Should this yet-to-be born regionalism foster in the South Caucasus, what would then the role of Europe be?

Before answering the aforementioned question, it is important to highlight the important milestones of regional integration in the South Caucasus: the Russian Empire was the first entity to have unified the South Caucasus in some sort of political region. In a top-down (or exogenous) approach, it not only imposed Russian as the *lingua franca* in the region, but also built transportation networks that connected the peoples of the South Caucasus and put them under a unified administrative system, homogenizing the social structures of life. After the empire, once again, the three nations came together during the Bolshevik revolution to resist external threats under the short-lived Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic (DeWaal, 2018; Gadimova-Akbulut, 2020). Later, again as an exogenous movement, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia were summed together under the Transcaucasian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic

to ease Moscow's governance in the region (DeWaal, 2018). The Transcaucasian Soviet Republic was dissolved in 1936. Since then, and until the collapse of the Soviet Union, the South Caucasus nations did not have any formal institution into which to align their regional positions. Likewise, after independence, government approximation approaches in the region were rejected due to the rise of ethnic nationalism and the unresolved status of the regional conflicts, being the initiatives of cooperation seen as bilateral or multilateral cooperation rather than trials of regional arrangements with most projects bypassing Armenia for the troubled relations between Yerevan and Ankara and Yerevan and Baku (Gadimova-Akbulut, 2020; Santana, 2021). Therefore, despite holding geographic characteristics of a region, any talks about present-day South Caucasian regionalism or any sort of political regional arrangement is unfruitful. Nonetheless, the aforementioned 10 November statement presents the South Caucasus with a possibility for building regional arrangements. Meanwhile, Europe was a bystander in issues of regional integration in the South Caucasus—a role that has been increasingly changing to that of an interested player (Romanovski, 2021).

Regionalism may be fostered by a region's endogenous players as well by exogenous might. As exogenous attempts to integrate the South Caucasus did not produce long-lasting regionalism even if geographical and historical conditions are present, and did not prevent security tensions and ethnic conflicts, Libaridian (2012, p. 238) argues that stability in the region—and as such any sort of regionalism project—should rely, first, in the ability of Baku, Tbilisi and Yerevan to resolve their issues together. In this sense, thoughts on (sub)regional leadership and middlepowermanship show that regional leaders should possess a set of attributes to promote regionalism. Among these attributes, it is possible to highlight the relative power capabilities (which include GDP—absolute and *per capita*—, size of the territory and of the population, military power, roles in international politics, and responsibilities for maintaining regional order and security (Nolte, 2010; Holbraad, 1984). Elsewhere, I made an analysis of such attributes which showed that Azerbaijan scores better than its South Caucasus neighbors in most capability variables in a subregional context and, as such, is in an advantageous position to promote regionalism should Baku's behavior match that of a (sub)regional leader (Santana, 2021). For that to happen, Azerbaijan must not only have the willingness to assume the role of a peacemaker and peacekeeper, but Azerbaijani leadership position should also be accepted by its neighbors in the region as well as by the regional powers surrounding it. Also, such regional arrangement must overcome a series of barriers among which it is possible to highlight distrust and lack of a common regional identity (Gadimova-Akbulut, 2020).

Still, even if Azerbaijani subregional leadership fosters *Pax Caucasia*, exogenous influence will not cease to exist in the South Caucasus. Russia, Turkey and Iran, as regional powers, will have their share of influence in the region as well as the United States and Europe. For the Old Continent, especially, which seeks to limit the gradual disintegration that took place with the collapse of the Soviet Union between Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, and to redirect their regional arrangements towards a “European Caucasus” (Romanovski, 2021), a peaceful and integrated South Caucasus would be beneficial. The European Union cooperates with the South Caucasian countries mostly through the Eastern Partnership under the European Neighborhood Policy. Nonetheless, the European Union has already reached the conclusion that despite having all three nations under a common policy, the approaches to them must be individual

to better reflect the realities of the region. The EU is the major economic partner of Georgia and Azerbaijan, having with the latter special interests over energy resources in an attempt to diversify its sources of energy and diminish European dependence on Russian energy. Armenia, in turn, suffers from energy instability and economic blockages that sets Yerevan behind in the run to Europeanization and pushes it to Russian influence as it signed membership in the Eurasian Economic Union. Still, Armenia tries to maintain links to the European Union. While Georgia clearly demonstrates the will to join the European Union in the future, Azerbaijan, as the economically best-off country in the region, tries to maintain a balanced position between the European Union and the neighboring regional powers.

For Azerbaijani leadership to prevail and for the hopes of a European Caucasus to flourish, both Baku and Brussels must convince Yerevan that its net gains in joining a regional project are greater than if it decides for an opt-out (Santana, 2021), especially in security and energy issues. Therefore, should regionalism develop endogenously in the South Caucasus under Azerbaijani leadership, Europe should use its agency of domestic change to promote regional identity and integration not as an exogenous might, but as a supporter of local initiatives for stabilization and energy security of the region as a whole that will benefit not only the three nations but Europe itself for, as Argun Başkan (2021) suggests, if the European Union focuses on the stabilization of the region rather than solely on its energy needs, not only will the Union achieve a prosperous neighborhood but it will also increase the reach of its institutional norms and practices and fulfill its interests over energy and geopolitics.

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THE INFLUENCE OF THE ASSOCIATION AGREEMENT ON THE EUROPEAN INTEGRATION PROCESS OF GEORGIA

Abstract

From the very first day of its independence, Georgia has been striving to join the European Union. Relations between Georgia and the EU began in 1992. The country was entering a period of deep crisis at that time following the collapse of Soviet-era economic links, the loss of economic markets, internal conflicts, political instability, social destitution, and many other negative factors.

In 1994 Georgia and the EU began to negotiate the terms of a partnership and cooperation agreement (PCA). This enabled Georgia and the EU to establish a trade relationship following the requirements of the World Trade Organization. During the following years, Georgia was a financial and technical member of the European Union and became one of the important beneficiaries. In the same period were signed several agreements about sectoral cooperation.

In 2003, the European Union initiated a new and larger process of cooperation, the “European Neighborhood Policy”(ENP). The aim of this policy became the Europeanization of neighboring countries and their transformation in a way that would approximate their legislative and institutional systems to those of the EU.

Since 2014 the European Neighborhood Policy has been replaced the by European Neighborhood Policy Instrument. There is no doubt that the association agreement has historical significance for our country.

The paper is based on certain scientific materials, policy documents, and their analysis, and aims to study the impact of the Association Agreement on the political reality of Georgia

Keywords: Association Agreement, European Integration, Influence, Partnership, Europeanization.

Introduction

On June 27, 2014, the European Union and Georgia signed the agreement About Association, which entered into force on July 1, 2016. This agreement took the cooperation between the parties to a new stage. The relationship began in 1992 with the recognition of Georgia's independence by the European Union. At the time, the EU had no views specifically on Georgia, and only considered the possibility of forming regional partnerships with post-Soviet countries, whose main aim would be the establishment of democracy and a market economy in the region. This was to be achieved by bringing these newly independent countries (including Georgia) into the international community by ensuring their internal stability. One of the weaknesses of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement was that the internal problems of Georgia and the effective mechanisms of their solution were incompletely reflected.¹

Through various programs and projects, the EU contributed enormously to the process of Georgia becoming a modern state, to the development of the country's market economy, and the establishment of democratic principles.

From 1999 to 2004, the EU provided three main types of support in humanitarian, financial, and technical fields. During this period, the European Union spent more than one billion euros supporting Georgia. By 2004, the country's economic situation and, accordingly, its social stability significantly improved.²

In response to the Russia-Georgia war, the emergency EU summit on 1 September 2008 was convened. On 15 September 2008, the European Union Monitoring Mission in Georgia (EUMM) was established that started its operation on 1 October 2008.

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

On 23 June 2022, according to the decision made by the European Council Georgia was granted a European perspective.

To join the European Union, the country should meet the so-called "Copenhagen criteria", which implies democratic principles of social organization, freedom, the existence of human rights, and respect for the rule of law. The member states must provide stability to those institutions which provide democracy, human rights and freedoms, and the rule of law.³

Discussion

In 2017, Georgia successfully concluded a visa liberalization dialogue and was granted visa-free travel with the European Union and Schengen zone member countries. As part of the EU precondition for a visa-free regime, Georgia adopted the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination in 2014.⁴

EU's support to Georgia is reassuring for pro-integration supporters both in Georgia and the EU. However, there are also some obstacles on Georgia's road to EU integration. To assume EU integration correctly, it is important to understand social perceptions, attitudes, and more

1 Center for Development and Democracy (CDD), 2016, "Georgia and the European Union In the wake of development and reforms". Tbilisi 2016 p 57

2 Georgian Center for Security and Development (GCSD), Georgia-EU Relations and Future Perspectives (Policy Paper)

3 Union "21st century" Georgia's European choice", Tbilisi 2018

4 Open society Georgia foundation "EU Integration".

importantly, fears. Here, both state and non-state actors need to be proactive. Few know, for example, that, thanks to the EU's support, by November 2017, 90,000 people had received free legal support and 140,000 free legal consultations were provided to citizens who otherwise could not have to afford such services.⁵

A lot of myths were spread during the European integration process of Georgia, among them was the one "Signing the Association Agreement poses a threat to Georgian culture and traditional values.", "The Association Agreement will force Georgia to legalize gay marriage." "The Agreement challenges the authority of the Georgian Orthodox Church." On the contrary, it should be said that the EU is committed to defending the diversity of European culture. The EU is an organization that supports diversity; the European Union respects Georgian cultural values and we believe that the Association Agreement can help to protect them. It must be said that the European Union has the greatest respect for the Georgian Orthodox Church and its important role in Georgia's national life. In March 2014, European Commissioner Stefan Fule met the Patriarch, Ilia II, with whom he discussed Georgia's political association and economic integration with the EU. The Patriarch expressed his strong endorsement of Georgia's European choice.⁶

The agreement establishes the specific areas in which Georgia should carry out certain reforms with the support of the European Union:

Strengthening and protection of common European values;

Foreign and Security Policy;

Justice, Freedom, and Security;

Modernization of all areas of sectoral policy and introduction of European standards;

Trade and trade-related issues.

To monitor the implementation of the Association Agreement was established the Association Council.

Conclusion

Georgia is a European country. Today, Georgia's policy is aimed at European integration, after its independence, Georgia was recognized as a state with European aspirations and European choices.⁷ The Association Agreement aims to deepen political and economic relations between the EU and Georgia, also through the creation of a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA). The Agreement commits Georgia to an ambitious reform agenda in key areas such as security policy, trade, economic recovery, and growth and governance.

We have to say that after 8 years from the signing of the Association Agreement there is free trade in the EU area, which has a positive impact on the country's economy, besides it, all citizens of our country are granted a visa-free regime. And the most important is that Georgia has a chance to become a member of the European Union.

⁵ Tinatin Tsertsvadze, IPHR, the Road to Georgia's EU Integration. 2018

⁶ GEORGIA AND THE EU INFORMATION CENTER "Myths about the EU-Georgia Association Agreement (AA) and Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA)". 2017

⁷ The Association Agreement (AA) between the European Union and Georgia. <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2496959?publication=0>

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Murman Papashvili

GEORGIA IN THE VATICAN'S ECCLESIASTICAL RELATIONS IN XIII-XVIII CC.

Abstract

The Vatican ecclesiastical relationship with Georgia went through three periods in the named centuries. The crusade laid the foundation, which later developed into bilateral alliance relations and eventually ended with the activities of Catholic missionaries of various orders in Georgia and the Georgian community. The history of Catholic missionaries in Georgia confirms that all their efforts were directed to the Church standing with the people, to show them the way of salvation and to strengthen the Georgians in Christ in the fight against Muslim enemies. They had no intention to impose Catholicism on Georgians. Otherwise the scope would be larger. Of course it was, but we cannot name any facts that were acted against the Orthodox Church. Orthodox sanctities were also sanctities for Catholics. So they were working in the Orthodox Churches without anybody's interference. This event demonstrates that coexistence for the two churches was not forced. The interdependence between them was always peaceful. In other words, this indicated that the Georgian Orthodox Church was in favor of a non-formal union with the Roman Catholic Church. The state subordinate Georgian Church shared the pro-Western policy of the country's political leaders as it aimed to help Georgia to maintain freedom and prosper with the assistance of the West. This, in itself, was conducive to the prosperity of the Georgian Church. It was this political aspect that defined the tolerance of both clergy and Georgians towards Catholicism. For this reason, the Catholicism of Georgians, who were called "French" in Georgia, never meant a change of nationality and was never against Georgians. Georgian politicians and clergy were well aware that the only way to break the isolation of Georgia, to unite with the Christian West of Georgia, to share Western culture with the country, and ultimately, to revive the country, to preserve Christianity in southern Georgia, was through the Vatican.

At the onset of relations. According to the currently available sources, the historically important relations between the Vatican and Georgia originated during the era of crusades. Proceeding from the goal of the current article, we will present the Georgian-Latin relations in the epoch of general European and pure religious movements in the form of postulates: first, the Crusades had penetrated not only into European countries, but also into the religious, military and political life of Georgia. In the Georgian mentality it presented a shared ideal of action against a common enemy that particularly envisaged liberation of the Christ's burial place in Jerusalem from the Muslim control. Georgia was a natural ally of the Latin West in this battle; however,

Georgia tried to act within the borders where her interests could be protected; second, the king of Georgia David IV the Builder (1089-1125) had direct contact with Crusaders. Georgia and Europe were introduced to each other directly on the battle field during the Battle of Didgori. The participation of 200 European knights against the large Muslim coalition in the battle of the world importance (1121) was a common Christian cause attaching to this battle an international importance. After the Battle of Didgori, French Crusaders perceived Georgia as an outpost of the western Christianity. Hence, the leaders of the Vatican and western Crusaders perceived the relationship with Georgia within common Christian and common European context. Third, during the fourth Crusades (1202-1204) against Byzantium, the interests of the Crusaders and the Royal Court of Georgia coincided. It could be assumed that there was certain type of agreed plan between the parties; the first capture of Constantinople by the leaders of Crusaders (July 17, 1203) served as a catalyst in planning the establishment of the Trabzon empire under the influence of King Tamar (1184-1213), which was successfully accomplished after the eventual conquest of the Byzantine capital; the establishment of the Latin Empire, most probably, was more desirable for Georgia than the recovery of Byzantium, since it might have become a more realistic ally in the war against Turk-Seljuks. The basis for this was the idea of crusading by the papacy as the papacy was for protecting eastern Christians. Hence, it was not by chance that Pope Innocent III having Crusades cause in mind “contacted Georgia, that was advancing towards the Great Armenia at the expense of subjugating Muslims”; it is also logical to assume that the seizure of Constantinople, that had been provoked by Byzantium itself, had not been perceived by the Royal Court of Georgia as an exceptional event. Moreover, the Georgian politicians had not seen any religious aspect in it and neither did they see the essence for the historical confrontation between them. Vice versa, neither with the Latin West, nor with its spiritual leader did Georgia have any religious problem. Perhaps the outcome of the above was that Innocent III, who considered himself as the leader of the entire Christian world, especially after the establishment of the Latin Empire of Constantinople, when “...alternative ecclesiastical hierarchy was created....” And though the Greek Church came under the subordination of the Roman Church, this did not urge the Georgian state to bring her church under the submission of Pontifex.

First results. The relations that had developed during the first four crusades clearly demonstrated that there were great spiritual and natural bonds between Georgia and the western Christian world. The Eucharistic union with Roman Catholic Church was retained. The Latins had not touched the Georgian monasteries in Palestine. Moreover, after the Crusaders conquered Constantinople (1204), the Georgians of Athos recognized the Pope’s jurisdiction and started to conduct liturgy night prayer with bread without yeast, as a result the Greeks broke off the contact with them. Though the Georgian monasteries on the Holy Land started to canonically obey the Latin Patriarchate, this fact had not affected their identity. This fact demonstrates that the significant difference between the Georgian and Latin Churches either did not exist or was absolutely ignored. However, it was clear for the Holy Throne that the Georgian Church was following Greek rules. If the bishops of Constantinople and Rome removed each other from diptych in the 11th century, the Georgian Church had not touched it until the beginning of the 17th century. True, mentioning the name of the pope in the diptych did not mean that the Georgian Church was united with the Roman Church, but it clearly showed respect and goodwill towards the Roman Church; “his is that distinguished Georgia from Byzantine Anti-Latinism”. In the

conditions when during the crusades Georgia acts as a natural ally of the Latins, and Byzantines are considered as ‘traitors’, as being a reason for failure, it is obvious that this fact affected popes and instilled in them pre-schism feelings towards the Georgian Church.

Georgia took the burden of the Crusaders. Upon the appeal of Pope Honorius III, the King of Georgia Giorgi IV Lasha (1213-1223) decided to take the side of the fifth crusades (1217-1221). Upon the request of the Pope, Cardinal Pelagio, who actually led the expedition, asked the King of Georgia for military assistance against Egypt at the end of 1218 or at the beginning of 1219. The latter had measured the country’s interests from the religious standpoint and took the burden of the Crusaders. But after the defeat of the Latinos near Damietta (1219), Giorgi IV Lasha decided to partake in those crusades that would be headed by the King of Hungary Andras. We can assume that participation of Giorgi-Lasha in this was predetermined by the increase in the aggression of Muslims against the Eastern Christian World. When the Muslim threat “since the 13th century was knocking at the doors of the Christians ...,” the knight-king considered it as a military-religious duty of Georgia to protect the Holy Land in the east in the role of an ally with the leader of the Roman Holy Throne “...with an honest cross in hand...”. These plans were doomed to fail. In 1221, Giorgi IV Lasha was getting ready for a battle in Syria-Palestine, but due to the wounds that he had received in the war against the Mongols caused his death in 1223.

The relations with the crusaders initiated by Giorgi IV Lasha were continued by his sister King Rusudan (1223-1245). If Giorgi-Lasha failed to respond to Pope Pelagio’s appeal in writing, Rusudan at the beginning of the second half of 1223 sent the Bishop of Ani Davit with a special mission to take letters from Rusudan and Commander-in –Chief Ivane Mkhargrdzeli. In regard to Georgia’s participation in the crusades on the Holy Land, Rusudan was promising the Pope to continue Giorgi IV Lasha’s policy and stated “...since we have already received your order, we are ready to come to the Christians aid with all our army. Personally I intend to participate in the war for the Holy Lands with 40 thousand warriors, as you are aware, many honorable princes and I among them have received a cross”.

Before we make a conclusion on the basis of available sources, we would like to recall briefly the following: as we know, the crusades had deepened the ambiguities, highlighted differences and proved ideological division between the east and the west. Particularly “...the entire conception of the crusades as a religious ideal was essentially alien for the Byzantine mind.” The tragic event of 1204 had added a special impulse to the crusades and made the division between the churches unavoidable. Since then Byzantium considered the west as a hostile bloc, however “... we should not consider as if the Byzantines had finally rejected the Latins”. In this context of Byzantines’ attitude to the Holy Throne, the crusades, had strengthened the feeling of unity with papacy in Georgia and this might be even more understandable if we take into consideration the fact that exactly at this time, Constantinople was the capital of the Latin’s Empire. It is obvious that in such circumstances the Georgian church would not have looked at schism with Byzantine eyes, nor to papal and nor Filioque. Briefly stated, contrary to Byzantium, Rusudan’s Royal Court recognized canonical primacy of the Pope in the east and considered him as the spiritual father of the Christian World. This is obvious in the form that King Rusudan addresses the Pope. “I, humble Rusudan the Queen of Apkhaz, your loyal servant and daughter modestly nod and greet you Most Holy Pope, the father and the lord of all Christians, seated on the pedestal of St. Peter.” From this address we can easily understand that the King of Georgia

considered the bishop of Rome “as the father and the lord of the Christian world”. It is difficult to assume that Rusudan addressed His Holiness in this way due to political reasons, because there was no such need in the time when this letter was being written (1223) and Georgia was still retaining ecclesiastical union with Rome. The fact that King Giorgi IV Lasha and Rusudan were eager to participate in the 5th crusade is a clear confirmation of the above.

When did the churches of Mtskheta and Rome pull away from each other? King Rusudan had not fulfilled the promise given to the Pope either. The invasion of Jalal Ed-Din in 1225 caused the Georgian supreme command to forget about crusaders. The ally of crusaders, Georgia, had been facing the difficulties herself. Under such circumstances, Georgia had come under the focus of Franciscan missionaries working in Syria and Egypt starting from 1217. According to the first sources, Giacomo da Russano was the French missionary who came to Georgia with the mission first in 1221 and then in 1228. But we believe that Giacomo da Russano first came to Georgia on his own initiative to get acquainted with the Christian country that was Crusaders’ ally. In this respect Russano had been greatly impressed by what he had learnt. He highly praised Georgians’ attitude to the Roman Church. His “high praise” was perhaps determined by the fact that King Rusudan definitely recognized the Pope as the head of the Christian world. It is assumed that while Russano was visiting Georgia for the second time, that is, in 1228, King Rusudan wrote a letter to Pope Gregory IX and asked Russano to deliver it to him. This letter did not reach us. Russano arrived in Rome in 1232 and probably gave the Pope the letter from the King of Georgia. According to one reliable source, Rusudan “... demanded that these apostles (missionaries-M.P.) of God be sent [to Georgia]. The Pope was so delighted to hear that that hugged Monk Giacomo.” This is confirmed by the Pope’s letter (16 April 1234) to King Rusudan.

The question when the churches of Mtskheta and Rome pulled away from each other simultaneously triggers two sub-questions: first, can we specify exactly when the churches of Mtskheta and Rome pulled away? For what reason had the Holy Throne been sending missionaries to Georgia since the 30s of the 13th century? We can answer both of these questions in the following way: first, it is impossible to precisely name the date of separation of the Georgian Church from the Roman Catholic Church, because “... we do not have any synodal decision of the Georgian hierarchs by which the unity with the Holy Throne had occurred.” It was a process that conventionally began after 1234, when the Catholic missionaries launched their activities in Georgia, and probably completed in 1329, when the Catholic Church with Roman hierarchy was established in Tbilisi; second, Catholic missionaries were sent to Georgia, not to convert Georgians into Catholicism, but to preach the heretics. We have a strong argument to prove this – it is the Pope’s letter which does not mention that the missionaries were sent to Georgia “to purify the faith and to enforce proven faith,” which should have been the missionaries’ duty. That is what gives us the basis to state that the Holy Throne did not regard Georgia and its church as heretical as Constantinople, but rather as a follower of Greek schism, which was probably due to the fact that the Georgian Church unlike Byzantium was not openly arguing against Rome. Therefore, there was no basis for tense relations between the two churches. True, the missionaries did not try to win over the Georgian Church, but this fact itself revealed the pulling-away of the two churches. The missionaries preached not only the gospel but also the Unia of Catholicism. This political way checked by the Pope meant that the Georgian church could only become part of the world church through the Uniate. Throughout the 13th century, Georgian monarchs played

a crucial role in this process. They used their own ecclesiastical policy and were interested in the unity of the churches only in terms of pre-schism practice. Even without Unia, the Georgian state and its church recognized the superiority of the Roman Cathedral and the supreme authority of the Pope in the church.

First Catholic missionaries. Pope Gregory IX satisfied King Rusudan's request and sent to Georgia 11 Franciscan missionaries, who in the second half of 1234 settled in Georgia. If we take into consideration the fact that "... in the 13th century they had to preach in favor of the crusades ...", we can assume that perhaps they carried out their activities in this direction in Georgia as well. It is perfectly acceptable to think, "... no missionary sent to Georgia thought..." that he would receive the title of the founder of the Catholic Church. "... No pope had sent a missionary or his legate in Georgia in order to establish a Catholic Church." Therefore, "this mission was only intended to strengthen the already living faith, during the crisis or the invasion of various" enemies "and to reinforce ties with the bishops of Rome or to satisfy some of the requests of the Georgian kings, princes and Catholicos."

A year after the Franciscan Fathers settled (1234) in Georgia, the Mongols conquered Georgia (1235). We do not know what the first steps of the Franciscan padres were in the country. Bearing in mind that King Rusudan sent Giacomo da Russano with a letter to the Pope before 1240, we have reason to think that the padres had successfully begun their activities in Georgia. Their activities had not been hindered by the Mongols' conquer either. By itself, Georgia under the Mongol yoke saw the Pope as the only ally against the enemy. On this basis, the country widely opened its doors to Catholic missionaries. It is impossible not to see the doctrinal and notable differences between the two churches. However, no source confirms that the parties had argued on those differences. So, at this particular stage, no dogmatic dispute is detected between the two churches.

Six years after the Franciscan Mission was established (1240), the Dominican Mission was also established in Georgia in 1245-1258. A new flow of missionaries sent to Georgia had to work for the unity of the churches, but what they had reached in this direction is not clear. Bearing in mind the fact that from time to time the Pope would still send missionaries to Georgia, we should assume that the Georgian politicians and clerical hierarchies under the Mongol yoke saw the Pope as a possible ally and thereby created favorable conditions for the missionary activities. As for the unification of the churches, the Georgian Church hierarchies were no longer concerned about it. However, relations between the two faiths in Georgia had not acquired any specific nature. At the doctrinal level there was no debate. Otherwise, the conflict would have been inevitable, and it would have been directly reflected in the missionaries' relation or in the popes' correspondence with the Georgian leaders. This fact has not been confirmed by any sources so far.

Success of Catholicism. In addition to "St. Martin's Georgian Monastery", in the 60s of the 13th century Catholic missionaries founded four other monasteries in Tbilisi. This fact shows that the papacy did not send missionaries to Georgia to establish a Catholic Church. If you look at the essence of the medieval Latin world monasteries, which "... played a key role in the development of Western civilization", the monasteries established in Georgia probably filled the Georgian Orthodox space with Western culture. The undoubted credit for this was the positive tolerance of the leaders of the Georgian Church and Catholics' confessional-cultural relations

with the Orthodox Church in Georgia. In short, it is obvious that the relations between Georgia and the papacy avoided a crisis. Georgians did not want to admit that the Georgian Church was halted at Byzantine schism. There is no mention of this in any letter, and by “joining the spiritual home” with Rome, the Court of Georgia wanted, if possible, to get back to the time of pre-schism period.

The West under the leadership of papacy failed to provide military assistance to Georgia in the struggle against the Mongols. However, this did not affect the activities of the Catholic missionaries. Pope Innocent IV (1243-1254), Alexander IV (1254-1261), Urban IV (1261-1264), Nicholas III (1277-1280), Nicholas IV (1288-1292), Clement V (1305-1314), successively instilled the idea of unification of churches in Georgia, but Georgian politicians did not take it seriously. However, the traditional strife of the popes for the church unity in Georgia had not been a matter of dispute. The Georgian party refused to Uniate. Of course, this could have led to a break with the West, which the Georgian authorities would not like to happen.

One more attempt of Uniate. The main task of many Franciscan and Dominican missionaries in Georgia in 1303-1313 was to prepare and resolve the issue of joining the Georgian Church with the Roman Church. Traditionally the papacy was trying to unite the two churches, which had never been a matter of dispute in Georgia. This was based on the decision of Pope John XXII (1316-1334) of October 15, 1322, to convene the world ecclesiastical congregation to reach the Uniate of the Georgian Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches. This fact clearly indicated that after the rejection of Lyon’s Uniate (1274) in Byzantium, the Avignon Papacy in the east attributed to the Georgian Orthodox Church the significance that was before attributed to Constantinople. To be more precise, the Uniate of the Georgian Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches could also be used by the papacy as a weapon of influence over Byzantium. It is unknown how King George V of Georgia (1318-1346) responded to the appeal of the Pope of Rome. Probably, the idea of Uniate had its supporters in Georgia, but it turned out to be unrealistic. This was because this idea was still cautiously treated and in the similar goals of Rome the independence of Georgian Church was consistently defended. Of course, this could have led to a break with the West, which the Georgian authorities were against to. Therefore, the Catholic missionaries were given a complete freedom. It was not difficult to accomplish in the context of the request of Uniate, and at the same time it compensated for the refusal of the Uniate. In addition, the common interests against Muslims was pushing religious disagreements on the second place, in addition the full tolerance of George V to Catholicism had a political context. This was especially clear when Pope John XXII abolished the Eparchy of Smyrna on 9 August 1328 with the bull “Rex Regum Altissimus” and transferred the said department to Tbilisi; undoubtedly, the idea of the Uniate of the churches of Pope John XXII was closely linked to his crusade plans for the return of Syria-Palestine, supported by the King of France Philip VI (1328-1350) de Valois. On the Pope’s advice, the latter considered it expedient to engage Giorgi VI Brilliant in a crusade against the Turks. In regard to the written proposal of the King of France, Giorgi V implicitly indicated that the prospects of Georgia’s military-political relationship with the Catholic West would depend on whether their foreign policy interests coincided with each other and whether Philip VI’s initiative would be realistic enough. Giorgi V the Brilliant in reality would not reject the idea of Crusaders that was based on practical and active military actions of the Catholic Europe, which had been just the subject of only theoretic discussion.

Hence, the desire of the Unia of churches in the relations between Georgia and the papacy, even with political expedience, was the foundation on which bilateral military-religious and political goals were conceived. In the European world, Georgia was represented by the desire of the ecclesiastical Uniate and a natural ally of the anti-Muslim West.

Continuation of bilateral unformed union. Even after 1329-1507, the activities of the missionaries and the Catholic Episcopal Cathedral in Tbilisi continued in the historically established framework. No one in Georgia regretted it; on the contrary, the missionaries were often invited by Georgian politicians and church leaders. As a result, there was an episcopate in Tbilisi and the name of the 14 bishops carrying out their activities there is also known. This fact clearly demonstrates that the Catholic missionaries productively performed their activities for 180 years. Many Georgians had adopted Catholicism, which had not been denounced and condemned by Georgians. There is no evidence proving contrary to that. This was due to the fact that Tbilisi Catholic Church had its own bishops, who had permanently enjoyed the attention from the popes. This fact also suggests that the Georgians met Uniate ideas with religious tolerance and had maintained a traditionally cautious attitude to them and did not make the Pope's primacy doubtful. Thus, even without Unia, the Georgian state and its church recognized the primacy of the power of the Roman Catholic Church and the Pope. This is how Georgia looked at the medieval papacy. Although Georgia's constant aspiration for the Uniate in church or faith was more a political factor than a sincere religious goal, it was also perceived as a sign of cultural unity in the Middle Ages.

"Ottoman Iron Curtain". From the second half of the 15th century to the third part of the 17th century, Georgia was experiencing the most difficult period from the point of survival. The entire 16th century Georgia was permanently engaged in the wars first with Persia, then with the Ottomans, which became a strong and firm rival of Persia. Both empires rivaled each other in subduing a small, fighting nation that had no allies. All of this had greatly damaged Catholicism in Georgia. This was mainly due to the fact that the Ottomans blocked the road from Europe to Georgia. In the bordering regions Ottoman Pashas vigilantly kept an eye on those who headed towards our country. They had so much blocked the road for the Catholic missionaries that they had not visited Georgia for the entire 16th century. In the middle of the same century, the Ottoman threat was a serious challenge for Europe. Since the Ottomans had got hold of the continental Greece, Hungary and invaded the territories of Venice, "The eschatological formula of the Crusades was restored again: the victory of Christianity demanded the unity of Christians." For Georgia "the Ottoman iron curtain" had exacerbated the problem of seeking an ally in the West. In Georgia the historical memory in regard to the papacy turned out to be very strong. This is clearly evidenced by the restoration of diplomatic links with the papacy by the kings of Kartli Luarsab I (1527-1556) and the fearless fighter against the Ottomans for 22 years Simon I (1556-1569; 1578-1599). The Vatican (Pope Sixtus V and Clement VIII) did not spare diplomatic measures to present Georgia's struggle against the Ottomans to European anti-Ottoman political forces in the context of the international European politics. True, the papacy extended to Georgia nothing but moral support, but among the Georgian politicians involved in the unequal struggle with Muslims even such a support ignited a sparkle of hope.

In anticipation of spiritual help from Rome. The first third of the 17th century turned out to be more devastating for Eastern Georgia. As a result of the campaigns (1614, 1616, 1617, 1625)

of Shah Abbas I (1587-1629), the country had faced extreme hardships. Famous Pietro Della Vale (1586-1652) found the strength and endurance of little Christian Georgia in the struggle against the countless enemies incredible. The sources confirm that desperate laymen and clergymen had been doing their best to establish a Catholic mission in Georgia. In 1616, the Dominican pastor Maria Paolo Maria Cittadini da Fenza who arrived in Tbilisi from Nakhchevan informed Pope Paul V: “The Georgian priests told me that if some of your priests would come to Georgia: they would give them churches and other things immediately. They thought it was a great blessing to teach their boys and brought up them in accordance with our way”. “They experience the utmost respect for our reverend Pope, who is recognized as Christ’s deputy on earth,” he wrote. Based on this, Fenza concludes: “From this information one can clearly realize how great the success of our Roman faith would be among Georgians.” The position of the Georgian clergy was politically reinforced by the attempt of Pope Sixtus VI (1606-1648) to open the way for Catholic missionaries in Georgia. Based on these facts we can conclude: in the existing difficult situation, Georgian clergy expected spiritual help from the papacy, while politicians expected to rebuild diplomatic links with the West through missionaries, and thereby break the isolation. As to the papacy, the initiative of Georgians gave to them the possibility to establish a mission in Georgia, on the one hand, and on the other, to give preference to the spread of Catholicism.

The Theatine fathers in Georgia. In the first third of the 17th century, a new phase in relations between the Holy Throne and Georgia began. The ground for the emergence of the new phase had been preparing since 1604. The new phase revealed bilateral religious-diplomatic interests of the parties. Specifically, since the 20s of the 17th century, proceeding from the aim of establishing catholic missions in the east, St. Congregation “De Propaganda Fide” did a lot to disseminate Catholicism in Georgia. The Georgian royal-principalities through the union with the Papacy, as a European spiritual power, had tried to break through the political isolation and to introduce advanced European ideas into Georgia with the help of the missionaries. Consequently, Georgian leaders were encouraged by the appearance of the Pope’s representatives in any form and instilled in them the hope for the better future of our country.

On December 14, 1628, the Theatines missionaries based in Gori laid the foundation for Georgia’s religious-diplomatic relations with the Papacy and its further expansion. In this respect, the missionaries of the Order of the Theatines had become a symbol of renewal of the Georgian-Western European Union. This is because, for more than 150 years, Georgian politicians isolated from Europe had perceived the catholic padres as some sort of a diplomatic channel linking them to the West, since European politics at that time had acquired a vital importance for Georgia. To this end, King Teimuraz I of Kartl-Kakheti (1625-1633) granted the Theatine padres a complete freedom for their missionary activities in Eastern Georgia.

Thanks to this factor the Theatine missionaries had achieved some success in Gori. Here, in 1632, they built St. Peter’s Church, which immediately became the cultural center. The padres also had a seminary there where the children were taught Latin, Italian, and trained for theological activities. Di Stefano had greatly contributed to this process. As it turns out, he had compiled an Italian-Georgian dictionary and drawn the grammar of the Georgian language. This was the first attempt of the Catholic missionaries in this direction.

With the support of Teimuraz I and Catholicos of Eastern Georgia Zakaria Jorjadze (1623-1630), in a very short period of time, the Theatine missionaries had achieved unprecedented

success in the Kingdom of Kartli. This is evidenced by the fact that by 1632 there were already 17 Theatine missionaries in Gori, but the political situation in Eastern Georgia had soon changed creating insurmountable problems to Catholic fathers.

It is known that the battle of Teimuraz I against Iran ended in defeat. Shah Safi I (1629-1642) appointed Rostom Bagration, i.e. Khosro Mirza, as the king of Kartli. The latter had taken the throne of the Kingdom of Kartli on 18 February 1633. This led to anarchy that reigned in the country for some time and which created difficulties to the missionaries' work. The reign of Rostom, as well as carrying out the policy of Iran in Georgia justified. It became clear to them that Rostom, being the implementer of the anti-Catholic policy under the subordination of the Iranian Shah, could not protect the representatives of the Pope.

Under such circumstances, the Theatine missionaries and their commander decided to move their missionary activities to Western Georgia, in particular to Guria-Samegrelo. This was primarily predetermined by the political objectives of Levan II Dadiani (1611-1657), whose political objectives were oriented toward Europe, that originated back in the 10s of the 17th century. In short, on October 23, 1633, two Theatine missionaries from Gori, Don Arcangelo **Lamberti** and Don Giuseppe Giudice, moved to the court of Levan II Dadiani, the ruler of Samegrelo to carry out their activities.

Having successfully started a mission in Guria principality, in 1640 the Theatines left and moved to Samegrelo where they were given the best conditions. In Odishi Principality in 1634, the chief gave the Theatine fathers (there they worked until 1701) two churches in the village of Tshipuria, lands, a dwelling house, servants and children to be trained. Theatine father, Don Clemente Galano, was astonished that in Tshipuria "... several families built a new church where Latin rules were followed." The padres soon established a school there. "... some of the children were given to them by the chief himself, others were brought by the people who could not feed their children at home. The fathers gladly accepted them and protected them from being sold to the Turks".

In short, during the reign of Levan II Dadiani, according to unconfirmed information, more than 23 Theatine missionaries had arrived in Samegrelo, where they carried out their activities. They were not only missionaries, literally speaking, but they were advisers to the Prince in the issues of economic, political and cultural relations with Europe, and in the issues of management of the country, as well as in the economic issues.

The 70-year activities of the Theatine missionaries in Georgia could be generalized as follows: for the European world of the 17th century, Theatine padres played a valuable role to acquaint Georgia to the European world. Their famous representatives (Don Pietro Avitabile, Don Guiseppe Giudice, Don Clemente Galano, Don Christoforo Casteli, Don Arcangelo Lamberti) in their work (relations, drawings, books) showed to the European readers that Georgia mentality, talent, customs-traditions (despite the differences), the strife towards religious ties with the Papacy had not made these people different from Europeans. More precisely, they thoughtfully with clear indications presented the closeness of the Georgians with Western Europe, which, as is obvious, did not call for detail explanation for their contemporaries.

Progressive senior church hierarchs highly appreciated theological education and moral perfection of the missionaries. Georgian religious leaders of that time wanted to make these virtuous and educated people a moral model for the Georgian people. The role of the Theatine

fathers on the cultural and educational arena is immeasurable. The Georgian young people received education in the schools founded by them in Gori, Ozurgeti, Zugdidi. Perhaps Anton (Antonio) Gueremia had received education at school in Tsipuria (Zugdidi) founded by the Theatines. On December 8 1644, he was received in Rome Congregation College. After 7 years, at the age of 22, he defended a thesis in theological moral. This fact clearly shows that in equal conditions and civilized environment, Georgian talent and gene could reveal the features characteristic for Europeans in the field of education: untiring hard work, resourcefulness, determination, love toward studying, talent and skills to make a name.

For the sake of fairness, it should be stated that the Theatine fathers had been the first in the history to create textbooks for the Georgian language. As already mentioned, such an activity was initiated by Giacomo di Stefano. By the extraordinary assignment of Pope Urban VIII, Francesco Maria Majo wrote the grammar of the Georgian language that was printed in the printing house of Propaganda. This was the first attempt to study the peculiarities of the Georgian language that was very poorly known in the first half of the 17th century.

Capuchin fathers in the second half of the 17th century

Starting from the 60s of the 17th century, a new dynamic process was initiated in the bilateral religious and diplomatic relations between the Papacy and Georgia that with more or less intensity lasted till mid-19th century. Among the characteristics of this process the attempt of the missionaries to convert political and religious leaders to Catholicism should be outlined, the practical outcome of which had to be Uniate of churches. At least the relations between the Vatican and Georgia were focused on it. It is obvious that the Catholic community of Georgia had its own role and naturally, number one task for the missionaries was dissemination of Catholicism among the Georgian population. The implementation of this task was initiated by the missionaries of the Capuchin Order in 1663 in terms of the Decree of June 13, 1661 adopted by St Congregation “De Propaganda Fide”.

Initially the Capuchin padres settled in Tbilisi. They somewhat continued the activities of Theatine fathers in Eastern Georgia that halted in 1638. Now like the Theatines the Capuchin missionaries became somewhat a diplomatic channel connecting Georgia with the West, since in addition to the Holy Throne, could assist Georgian politicians to develop diplomatic relations with other European states. This was vitally important for the Georgian kingdoms and principalities because they were cut off from Europe and had very limited links with the western states. And the breakthrough of this political isolation and the introduction of the ideas of advanced Western science and technology was only possible with the help of missionaries. This traditional European foreign policy of the Georgian states, which was based on the ecclesiastical aspect, was a nourishing source for the activities of the missionaries. In this context, the prospects for their activities largely depended on the goodwill and support of the Georgian secular and clerical leaders.

In 1663, the Capuchin mission established in Tbilisi was successfully launched. King Vakhtang V of Kartli - Shah Nawaz (1658-1675), reinforced the Capuchins in the rights that Teimuraz I had given to the Theatines. Moreover, despite the expectation of the Vatican, by appellation Muslim Vakhtang V bought two houses in the center of Tbilisi and gifted them: one for living and the other for prayer. King Vakhtang showed the utmost respect and attention to the padres.

Despite the great material hardship, with the help of the aforementioned factors, the first steps of the Capuchins were impressive. With the vigorous action of the Prefect Seraphino and Melikoka, the missionaries first began to learn the Georgian language; as a result, they immediately earned the respect of the people, and in one year (1664) they began building a church. After nearly ten missionaries had settled in Tbilisi by 1669, the same year it was decided to establish a Capuchin mission in Gori. The Capuchin mission was founded in Kutaisi in 1669 or 1670, though their activities there did not last long. Continuous bloody inter-feudal wars in western Georgia created problems to their activities, and, naturally, the activities of the fathers ceased. It is also found that in 1677 the fathers of Capuchin were also invited to the Guria principality. The Prince of Guria George III Gurieli (1664-1684) “in addition to the churches and property belonging to the Theatine padres ...” they were promised “... a village with 20 houses and subordinates.”

Father-Capuchin presented to the Propaganda his ten-year activities in Georgia with the following results: they had two houses in Tbilisi and one church, which had been completed by 1670; they also had a house and a church in Gori; they learned the Georgian language, wrote seven sacraments in the Georgian language, opened a school near Tbilisi Catholic Church and trained children in faith and obedience. They taught Latin and Italian, practiced altruistic treatment, and had a large parish.

Because of the traditional attitude of the missionaries to the educational work, they enjoyed great confidence and authority among the people and especially among the youth. Georgian youth, however, “outnumbered the rest of the Orientals ... by their minds, their ability to master all useful disciplines ...”. Since at their school the padres taught Catholic dogmas artistically in Italian and in the most accessible form, this strongly connected “pupils with the Catholic faith.”

Nevertheless, the widespread expansion of the Capuchin activity was hampered by material deprivation. The use of their poor lifestyles in Georgia proved ineffective, as “walking with sacks from-door-to-door to demand food” undermined the authority of the missionaries among the people, particularly among those Georgians who were under their spiritual influence. Georgians had not been able to grasp the philosophy of the Capuchin Order’s begging rule, because Georgians were “... very sensitive to appearance ...”. It seems that this sentiment was based on Georgians’ belief that the Roman Pope would send neither a herdsman, nor a shepherd to Georgia. This perception was probably due to the high authority the Theatines enjoyed in Georgia.

In the Kingdom of Kartli, the activities of the Capuchin father-missionaries spread with new forces during the first period of the reign of George XI (1676-1688). The latter surpassed all his predecessor kings in the protection of missionaries and in veneration of the Catholic Church in Georgia. This fact was directly reflected in the advancement of Tbilisi and Gori missions.

The educational work of the Capuchins had also yielded concrete results. By 1679, the prefect of Capuchin Mission in Tbilisi, Giuseppe da Bogonyiano had sent three boys to study at the Propaganda College. In 1681, “... the son of a prominent Georgian family...” who studied civil sciences in Naples “...requested for the permission to study at [Propaganda] College.” This young man is likely to have graduated from Tbilisi School of Capuchin, where he had learnt Italian. It is also worth noting that in 1686 the prefect of Latin Rita, a 22 -year-old Georgian Catholic Angelo, or Michael, who was educated at Tbilisi Catholic School and was fluent in

Italian, was sent to Congregational College to study. In 1687, King George XI sent one more Georgian boy, Solomon Tumanishvili, to study at Propaganda College.

The success of the father-missionaries by the support of Georgian secular and clergy had acquired a purposeful nature. Capuchin fathers appear to have taken the initiative in their hands and, under their influence, with great zeal, as Vice-Prefect of Georgian Mission, Justino and Livorno of St. Louis had informed the Congregation “De Propaganda Fide”, in 1687 King George XI of Kartli was converted to Catholicism by recognizing “filioque”. According to him, the same year the Great Sul Khan-Saba Orbeliani and the Commander of the Kartli troops Tamaz Kaflanishvili, uncle of King Giorgi XI also converted to Catholicism. The conversion of the King of Kartli, the highest authority, was considered so important by Giustino da Livorno that he called the king the Second St. George. This fact indicates that the Catholic father-missionaries, first of all the prefects of the mission, had acquired high authority in the upper layers of the Kingdom of Kartli and were highly trusted. It is also noteworthy that the knowledge of the Georgian language and the padres’ naturalization played an important role in establishing a close and trusting relations with the high secular circles.

For Georgia, particularly for the Kingdom of Kartli, which was in total isolation, such a connection with the missionaries had a vital importance in its search for relations with the West. It was for this reason that the Georgian secular and clergy explained the educational activities of the catholic fathers not only by religious motifs, but also regarded it as a means of getting acquainted with Western scientific and cultural achievements. A very interesting characteristic of Georgian-European identity had been identified in this context. According to Catholic Father Bernardo Maria da Napoli, Georgians are the most civilized, the most educated, the most generous, the smartest among all the peoples of the East. By the deep observation of the same missionary, the Georgian clergy and laymen had never argued with hostility and hatred over the doctrines distinctive of the two religions.

In 1689-1692, the Capuchin Mission experienced a rise and flourishment in Tbilisi. This was the result of the zealous and pious Capuchins’ tireless work on the one hand, and, on the other, the support of King George XI of Kartli, who was committed to Catholicism. It is noteworthy that George XI provided material and spiritual support to the father-missionaries in the restoration and renovation of Tbilisi Catholic Church (1687-90). This pro-Latin King along with Georgian scholars often visited the Catholic Church and regarded it as an integral part of the common Christian values. Tbilisi Catholic Church itself was a powerful instrument by means of which Georgia’s political relations, mainly with the West, was being developed.

Capuchin fathers in Georgia in the 18th century. In the first quarter of the 18th century, Catholicism reached new heights in Georgia. This was primarily due to the European orientation of the governor of Kartli (1703-1714) and then of King Vakhtang VI (1716-1724). According to the original sources, Vakhtang VI often discussed the issues of Orthodox and Roman Catholic dogmas with Capuchin Prefect Silvestro da Panicale and Reginaldo Lentinelli. Being a highly educated and talented figure, King Vakhtang VI was well aware that the Catholic faith in the Western civilized states occupied a dominant position, and the Latin clergy enjoyed a high educational and cultural level. The authorities’ attitude to Catholicism in this form prepared the grounds for bringing the issue of church Uniate to Georgian soil. It is primarily connected with the name of the representative of the Georgian aristocracy, the Great Sul Khan-Saba Orbeliani,

who was the first Georgian Uniate clergyman. There is an ample evidence today that undoubtedly confirms that Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani is the first Georgian to lead Catholic Europeanism. His plan was to bring the Church Uniate to Georgia with the following benefits: First, Georgia would become open for the European culture, education, military training, technical advancements that were the basis for the country's economic development and unification; Secondly, Unia would help raise the level of culture of the Georgian Orthodox clergy. By doing so, Orthodoxy would not lose its ordinances, but would be enriched and strengthened.

In the first half of the eighteenth century, the Capuchin fathers achieved the following success: first, with their direct support, three Georgians received education at the Propaganda College. Of whom, on March 22, 1732, David Papashvili defended his thesis in philosophy at the public meeting at Propaganda College. On March 21 of the following year, he was ordained a priest on the Latin Typicon. After David, it was Ivane Jiganashvili who occupied a prominent place among the Georgian Catholics, defending his doctoral dissertation in theology on April 29, 1741; second, by 1748, three seats had already been allocated to Georgians at Propaganda College; third, in 1749 a new beautiful Catholic church was built in Tbilisi; fourth, by 1750, the idea of establishing a Latin episcopacy in Tbilisi had matured; fifth, Catholicism was adopted by a Georgian noble Vakhtang Orbeliani and Bishop Christopher Orbeliani of Tbilisi. Alexander V, King of Imereti (1720-1752), Catholicos-Patriarch of Western Georgia Besarion (1742-1769), along with three monks, Rostom Racha Eristavi (1749-1769) and his son George were converted to Catholicism; sixth, by 1755, Catholicism had been adopted by "60 Georgians princes, Georgian Catholicos Antony I the Great (1744-1755; 1764-1788) and 10 high-rank clergy.

Under the rule of King Erekle II of Kartl-Kakheti (1744-1798), who displayed a secret sympathy for Catholicism, the Capuchin padres acquired certain diplomatic functions. In the summer of 1781, the King sent Padre Dominique Trieste with a diplomatic mission to the Pope and the Emperor of Austria in search of financial aid. Unfortunately, his embassy turned out to be unlucky. He died on July 3, 1781 in Pera. A year later, in October 1782, Erekle II sent Padre Mauro from Verona in the West with an embassy to the European rulers (the Pope of Rome, the Kings of France, Sardinia, Naples, Prussia, the Emperor of Austria, the authorities of Venice) asking them to lend him money to build up the army of a European style. This mission was also unlucky. In May 1783, Padre Mauro died in Berdichev.

Studying these embassies convinced us that the Capuchin fathers perfectly understood the importance of the political rapprochement of Georgia and Europe for the success of Catholicism. They also took into account the fact that in the event of practical assistance from the West, Georgia's support to Catholicism would play a decisive role in determining the place of Georgia in European politics. So, the padres used all their skills, energy and ability to make the embassy of Mauro from Verona to Europe successful; however, all ended in vain. One aspect is also noteworthy: Andrea from Palermo, the Prefect of the Capuchin mission, precisely predicted the consequences of the Treaty of Georgievsk and Russia's religious policy toward Catholicism. In particular, Russia, which experienced religious intolerance toward the Catholic faith in its own state, would do everything in its power to subordinate the Georgian Catholic Church to Mogilev episcopate, thereby severing the ties between Georgia and the Vatican.

All that we discussed above can be generalized in the following way: the history of the Catholic missionaries in Georgia proves that all their endeavor was directed toward making

the Church to stand by the people, to show them the way of salvation, and to strengthen the Georgians in their faith in the fight against Muslim enemies. In no way was the conversion of the Georgians into Catholicism a goal in and of itself. Otherwise the scale would have been larger. Of course, conversion into Catholicism also was the aim, but we cannot name a fact that was directed against the Orthodox Church.

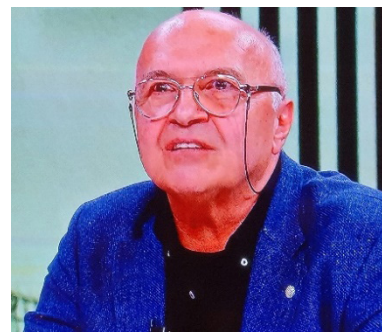
Orthodox Christians and Catholics shared shrines. So, they quietly carried out their activities in the Orthodox Churches. This fact demonstrates that coexistence of the two churches had not been imposed on either of them. Their relationship had always been peaceful. On the other hand, this indicated that the Orthodox Church of Georgia was in favor of a non-formal union with the Roman Catholic Church.

The Georgian Church under the subordination of the state shared the pro-Western policy of the country's political leaders as it aimed at providing freedom and prosperity to Georgia by the help of the West. Naturally, this in itself would have contributed to the prosperity of the Georgian Church. It was this political aspect that defined the tolerance of both clergy and Georgians towards Catholicism. Because of this, the Catholicism of Georgians, who were called "the French" in Georgia, never meant the change of nationality and was never directed against Georgians.

Georgian politicians and hierarchs were well aware that the only way to break the isolation of Georgia, to ensure Georgia's union with the Christian West, to instill the western culture in Georgia, and finally based on this, to revive the country and preserve Christianity in southern Georgia, lay through the Vatican.

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Nugzar Bardavelidze

CATHOLICISM AND CATHOLICS IN GEORGIA

Abstract

A quarter of a century has passed since the restoration of the apostolic administration of the Catholic Church in Georgia. This is an important event of recent history for the Latin-Rite Catholic Church in our country. Only in 1991, after the declaration of independence of Georgia and the recognition of our sovereignty internationally it was possible to open the Holy See (Vatican) diplomatic representation - embassy in Tbilisi. Vatican is the eighth state after Germany, the United States, the neighboring states, which has established a permanent diplomatic relationship with Georgia.

Later, along with the establishment of a diplomatic mission in Georgia and the South Caucasus, the restoration of apostolic administration of Catholic Church was also possible. The Catholic Church, which had been constantly persecuted and oppressed during Russian Tsarism, and later under the Soviet regime, had the opportunity to develop freely as soon as Georgia gained independence. If there were only two registered Catholic temples and two Catholic priests in the entire Caucasus until the 1990s, just almost twenty years later, more than thirty Catholic councils were established in Georgia, and about ten monastic missions started the activities.

In the conditions of Georgia's independence, both Armenian and Assyrian Catholics were given the opportunity to reestablish their Soviet-confiscated right to have Armenian-Catholic and Assyrian-Chaldean Catholic councils. A new Assyrian-Chaldean temple was built in Tbilisi and a center of Assyrian culture was opened.

The Latin-Rite Catholic Church was able to regain its centuries-old niche to become the flagship of education in the Caucasus. Georgian youth receive ordination and conduct productive pastoral service in various regions of the country; all this is the result of the tireless service of the Apostolic Administration and its head, Bishop Giuseppe Pasotto, who, with the support of the Holy See embassy, conducts the mission of shepherd in Georgia and the South Caucasus.

Despite small number of Catholic parish, it played a significant role in Georgian culture and history. During centuries, Catholic missionaries have preserved valuable historical and ethnological material about different parts of Georgia. They were doctors and artists, with their education and spirituality they attracted kings and princes or ecclesiastical hierarchies. They were the most credible people for the kings of Georgia, and they were entrusted important diplomatic correspondence. When the restoration and rapprochement of unity between Georgia and Europe had already become a reality, they were the first envoys between Christian Europe

and Georgia, surrounded by enemies. We are especially grateful to the dozens of Catholic priests who were sacrificed for the Christian faith, who during hardships of the Middle Ages or the New Age devoted themselves to Georgia, the country that sustained the Savior's faith and its church in a hostile environment. The Catholic Church in Georgia is still a faithful advocate of these centuries-old traditions and Catholics in Georgia make a modest contribution to the country's life and European integration processes.

In the Christian world, Georgia is one of the countries where Christian teaching was preached in the first century, and in the IV century following the Roman Empire in the Kingdom of Kartli, and later in Egris, Christianity is already acquiring the status of a state religion.

After the proclamation of Christianity as a state religion, Georgia definitely chose an unambiguously European orientation and was separated from the Eastern world.

From the first centuries, representatives of the Georgian hierarchy of the Principalities of the Church, were closely involved in the life of Christendom. Already at the World Church Assembly of Nicaea-Constantinople, that held in 325, and played a major role in the organizational and dogmatic formation of the new religion, Bishop of Pitiunti (Bichvinta) Stratophile was a delegate.

According to the material preserved in the Vatican archives, the scholar and Catholic priest Mikheil Tamarashvili of Church history, has repeatedly pointed out in his search that High Priests sent from Georgia, also participated in subsequent worldwide church congregations.

After the church split of 1054, especially after the IV Crusade in 1204 and the banish of the Latin from Constantinople in 1263, the Eastern Christian churches no longer perceived the Latin Church as Orthodox. But the international situation, particularly the fight against the Turkish-Seljuks, and subsequently the large-scale expansion of the Mongols, forced the Eastern states to seek help from the relatively strong Western European monarchs. And without the moral support of the sole spiritual leader of the Western world, the Pope of Rome, was unthinkable to medieval politicians.

The outbreak of European crusades, the defeat of the Turk-Seljuks, the capture of Jerusalem in 1099, and the creation of political units by the Crusades, changed the balance of power in the Middle East. The distraction of the Seljuks to Western threats enabled David IV the Builder (1089-1125) to begin the struggle and drive the Turks out of Georgia. In this battle David the Builder had moral and military support from the Crusades. E.g. During the Battle of Didgori (1121), 200 French warriors fought in David's army.

The Fourth Crusade (1204) and the founding of the Latin Empire in Constantinople (1204-1261) were used for the benefit of Kingdom of Georgia. King Tamar (1184-1213) made the Province of Trabzon under her influence (1204), which earlier was part of the Byzantine Empire and promote creation the Vassal State of Georgia in the Trabzon Empire. "The Trabzon Empire, established through the direct participation and support of the Royal Court of Georgia, was one of the reliable ally of Georgia's foreign policy." [Essays in Georgian History, T 3, p.333

At the beginning of the thirteenth century, the situation in the Middle East was complicated, and the existing crusading states there had difficulty repulsing the onslaught of the Muslim military coalition. To maintain their realm, the Crusaders needed the support of Georgia. In 1221, Pope Honorius III addresses with a letter and appealed to the King of Georgia George IV of Lasha (1213-1223) to support the "holy land". Later, the Roman popes also turned to

King Rusudan (1223-1245) for help. The invasions of the Khwarazmians and later the Mongols prevented the Georgians from launching a campaign to assist the Crusaders. On the contrary, taking into consideration the difficult situation in Georgia, King Rusudan of Georgia requests Pope Honorius III and later Gregory IX to help them. Rome accepted the request of the King of Georgia, and sent a special mission .

In 1240 the monks of the Dominican Order founded St. Martin Monastery. It is not even possible to trace the location of this monument today, but we think that its purpose and function were not as religious, as diplomatic. At that time, as nowadays the throne of the Holy See can also be considered as monasteries, but their main mission was diplomatic activity. In fact, the founding of St. Martin's Monastery in Georgia marks the beginning of a new phase in the history of the Latin rites Catholic Church. Ivane Javakhishvili was quite convinced that "the issue of joining the Roman Church was more political rather than religious" for Georgia. This view of the great scientist was also confirmed by recent history.

In the 14th century, considering exactly the same international political situation, George V (1318-1356) was able to persuade Pope John XXII to move the Catholic Archbishopric from Smyrna to Tbilisi, which existed for almost 150 years. The Catholic Episcopal Cathedral existed in Western Georgia in Tskhumi (Sukhumi). In the XIII-XV centuries, the Latin Episcopal Cathedral and monasteries in Tbilisi, as well as in Tskhumi, also served as diplomatic missions of the Holy See and served as a bridge between Georgia and Western Europe.

Due to the conquest of Constantinople and Trabzon by the Ottomans in the second half of the 15th century, the communication with Rome is minimized because of the difficulties in communication with them, but from the first half of the 16th century this relationship moved into a new phase. Queen Ketevan had been detained in Iran since 1614. In 1620, Ketevan was imprisoned in Shiraz, where he and his Christian entourage were represented by the Augustine monks of the Shiraz mission who were spiritually encouraging the queen. After the martyrdom of Ketevan Queen in 1624, the Augustine monks were able to transfer the remains of the martyred queen to Goa (India). In 1628, Augustine's father, Ambrosio Duch Anjoush, brought the sacred parts of Ketevan the Martyr to King Teimuraz I of Kartli (1589-1663). As a token of gratitude, Teimuraz I gave the Augustinian monks a plot of land in Gori and allowed them to establish their own monastery.

The Catholic Congregation for Propaganda of Faith, that was founded by the decree of Pope Gregory XV in Georgia 1622, played a key role at the launch of Catholic missions. Its purpose was to train missionaries and publish Christian literature for missions. According to the order of Teimuraz I in 1626-1629, Nikoloz Cholokashvili was sent as an ambassador to the Pope Urban VIII in Rome. With the support of the Holy See, together with Stephen Pauline, he participated in the publication of the first Georgian printed books in 1629. The Monks of Theatine Order arrived in Georgia with Nikoloz Cholokashvili and founded their mission in Gori. Subsequent missions of the Theinites also appeared in the principalities of Samegrelo and Guria. Since the 17th century, relatively large group of the followers of Latin rites have emerged in Georgian kingdoms, and the Georgian community of Catholic believers has played a significant cultural and trade-financial role in the country's life.

Since 17th century the number of the people baptized under Latin rite has been recorded by the missionaries who were sent from Georgia to Rome.

The formation of the Catholic community

As we have already mentioned, Catholic believers in the Latin Rite had been living in Georgia since the 13th century, though exact statistics are not available. There are various historical sources that give us scant information about how many households in the various royal settlements of Georgia, at various times, were adherents of the Latin Rite. For example, if there was a Catholic mission in a particular city, Tbilisi Grami , Tskhinvali, Gori or Oni, the Councils of believers in Latin Rite were formed quickly, but because of historical-political cataclysms and fluctuations in political orientation, these councils quickly returned to the cathedral of Georgia or the Armenian Church if the Catholic mission was abolished and left without a doctrine.

Since the first half of the seventeenth century, when Catholic missions in Georgia revived, the number of Georgian believers in Latin rule rose relatively rapidly. In 1667, eight Catholic families lived in Tbilisi. However, many other believers appear to confess to the Catholic priests, but 25 students studied at mission school.

By 1676 the number of pupils reached 50 at the Tbilisi Catholic School, latine rites Catholic Church. At the same time, Latin rites Catholic Churches existed in Gori and Kutaisi. There was also a Catholic parish in Imereti Kingdom like Kutaisi.

At the same time there were two temples in Gori that were previously occupied by the Orthodox and later King Vakhtang V Shahnavaz (1658-1675) returned it to the Catholics. According to the historical sources, in 1669 more than 300 children were baptized by Capuchin monks in Gori.

The Georgian's sympathy to the Roman Catholic Church was considered by Officials of the Ottoman Iranian, and later Russian empires as a strive towards the Europe and independence.

Relatively accurate data about the number of Catholic believers can be found in the 19th century. By 1802 , 30 Catholics had been residing in Tskhinvali, where there was not even a Roman Catholic church, they wanted to build a temple, but the Russian authorities did not allow it. At this time, 12 pupils studied at Tbilisi Catholic School.

By 1814 there were 55 Catholic households in Tbilisi, and by 1830 the number of Catholic families had reached 92. In the early 20s of the 19th century, there were 30 Catholic households in Gori who started constructing a new temple. The Catholics in Imereti were comparatively in better condition, where the last Georgian king, Solomon II, also gave the Catholics a plot of land to build a church and a small village to feed their families. As for Akhaltsikhe, there were 450 Catholic households in the early 19th century.

In Georgia in 1818 (it is implied the provinces of Tbilisi and Kutaisi, southern Georgia was still part of the Ottoman Empire NB) there were 9,000 Latin Catholics. This information is provided by the Capuchin priest-nun Amade Piemonteli to Propaganda fide.

By the end of the 20th century, the number of Catholics in Georgia had grown rapidly, due to two reasons. The first reason was the annexation of southern Georgia as a result of the Russian-Ottoman war of 1828; Thousands of Georgian and Armenian Catholics were residing on the deprived territory for the Ottomans. The second reason was the resettlement of Europeans in Georgia. After the Warsaw Uprising of 1830, Tsarism deported several thousand Poles fighting for independence in the Caucasus.

The mass settlement of Catholics continued in the 20th century. After the end of World War I, hundreds of Assyrian families fled to Tbilisi. There were many Assyrian-Chaldean Catholics Among them.

According to the census carried out in the Russian Empire in 1897, 20,000 Georgian Catholics lived in Tbilisi and Kutaisi, including the Sokhumi and Batumi districts (1.9% of the total population).

In 1913 a census was carried out again and it was found that the number of Catholics in the districts of Tbilisi and Kutaisi increased by 10,000 and reached 30,000 (the total number of population was 2.6 million). But according to the statistics, Georgian Catholics are still listed, not Roman Catholics in general. Though, there was quite a lot of non-Georgian Catholics. Among the foreign-Catholics living in Georgia Polish communities surpassed other communities, in addition to the Polish, there were German, Italian, and French Catholics. Armenian-Catholic community comprised more than 20,000 Catholics..

If in about 15 years the number of Catholics increased by 10,000, and this growth was proportional to the overall growth of the population at that time, the number of Catholics in 1897 and in 1913 constituted 1.5% of the population of both province on the territory of Georgia, but In the districts of Artvin and Ardagan, Catholics made up 5% of the total Christian population, mostly Catholics of the Armenian rite.

Catholic community in the XX-XXI century

According to the census of the 1989 ,5.5 million people lived in Georgia, we consider that the nominal number of Catholics should have been about 50,000.

According to the census conducted in 2002, Georgia's population decreased by one million and one hundred thousand and amounted to 4.4 million. 89% of them considered themselves Christian. Orthodox Christians are the most numerous confession among Christians, about 84%. The Armenian Apostolic Church has 3.9% followers, the number of Roman Catholic reached to 35,000, while the number of Catholics living in Abkhazia is not included in it. The decline in the number of Catholics was caused by the recent years immigration, where catholic parishes of different ethnicities almost left the country and moved to the historic homeland or European developed countries in search of better living conditions.

Nowdays, in Georgia, there are about 20000 armenian rite catholics and 1.5 thousands Assyrian-chaldean rite catholics, except latin rite catholics who use georgian language, held church service in their native languages,. In all, there are more than 50 Catholic churches and chapels in all three rites.

Georgian-Catholic Church of Istanbul

In 1844, Russian autocracy banned padres of catholic church to conduct service in georgian language and demanded them to enter the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Tiraspol instead of the Holy See. Because of that the Catholic mission in Georgia did not obey the order of Russian officials, in 1845 the Catholic Fathers of the Capuchin Order were expelled from Georgia. Abati Petri Kharischirashvili who emigrated from her homeland, did his best to establish a Georgian church in abroad..

On February 10, in 1861, the Holy See permitted Peter Degirashvili to build a church in Istanbul and establish a congregation for persecuted Catholics. Under the pro-European policy of Sultan Abdul-Aziz, it was possible to acquire land in the outskirts of Istanbul and to establish a Georgian-Catholic church there.

The Georgian Catholic fathers wisely and purposefully took the advantage of the tolerant situation of the Ottoman Empire and in just a few years the Istanbul Monastery became an important Georgian church. The printing house, which has been in existence for 60 years, has been in operation since 1870 and has published In 1870 years the printing- house was founded and during 60 years published about 200 books in Georgian, French, Turkish German, English and Greek languages. There was a library and reading room in the monastery. More than 80,000 books and historical documents are preserved in the fund of this library. Theological Seminary was established near the monastery where Mikheil Tamarashvili, Domenike Patsadze, Ivane Gvaramadze, Andria Tsinamdzgvishvili, Konstantine Saparishvili, Shalva Vardidze, Mikheil Tarkhnishvili were brought and educated.

Since foundation the Georgian church in Istanbul it has become a powerful center of Georgian culture. The clergy working there were not limited to religious activities. “The ethno-scientific activity of the Georgian intelligentsia and the clergy, oppressed by the Russian policy, has been widely spread. Although it was a Catholic monastery complex, there was no religious restriction on Muslim or Orthodox Georgians. “

Some Georgian Catholics were able to emigrate in order to maintain their national and religious identity. Soon we will celebrate the 160th anniversary of Georgian Catholic Church in Istanbul and thanks to the national and world-view of its founders, created spiritual and cultural center that gathered Catholics ,Orthodox and Muslim Georgians, representatives of various political parties and public organizations. Also the altar of the main church of the monastery, which is decorated with the image of Svetitskhoveli and St. Peter’s Catholic Basilica, symbolizes the unity of the Eastern and Western churches.

By this expression of Christian unity, Georgian Catholics for a century preceded the spirit of the Second World Vatican Council. With its unique status and way of life, Istanbul’s culture of living became the flag-bearer of the national liberation movement, a small Georgia abroad.

Italian diplomat Eugenio Dalgio writes the book “Georgians in Constantinople”. The Residence of Istanbul is not only a theological institution, but it is also political, as far as faith and politics are connected to each other. From the very beginning until today, the priests of this church have not been careful enough to prevent their community from danger and full of the hope for a bright future they have fulfilled their duty in the fight for the freedom of Georgia, turning this church into a national place.

The priests working in Istanbul did not neglect the process that took place in Georgia. Moreover, they sought to contribute to the country’s success.

The priests who returned from Istanbul to the Georgian tabernacle, along with the clergy, were actively involved in national and educational activities, helping them to bring closer to Georgian public figures.

With the outbreak of World War I, the Georgian church of Istanbul became one of the important centers of the Georgian liberation movement. The Georgian National Democrats, the Social Democrats, with the help of the leaders of the Georgian church in Istanbul, tried to use the influence of the Holy See to gain relations and support of the European states.

It was precisely the Georgian church of Istanbul that became the shelter for the Georgian refugee government in March 1921, at that time the entire church was the shelter for the Georgians, persecuted by Bolsheviks . Each room had three or four beds, and the treasure was hidden in the basement.

While immigrating, refugee government members continued their relationship with the Holy See and sought to gain the support of the Catholic Church, and they consider such an act as a firm guarantee of the support from European states'. In the instruction sent by the leader of the Menshevik government N. Ramishvili to the central committee of the Menshevik government, acting illegally in Georgia, is clearly stated, that the immigrant government members in France were closely connected with Vatican. They even had correspondence with the Pope and even had their own representative.

Another notable fact, eminent scientist and politician Mikhako Tsereteli, who emigrated in London, 1924, translated "Gilgamesh", which was later printed in Istanbul Catholic church.

At present, the Sunday Mass is celebrated in French and Turkish languages in Georgian church of Istanbul. Georgians and Armenian Catholics who live in Istanbul are attending the Mass. An Adult Education Center has been opened in the church, Istanbul for the children of Georgian immigrants. On certain days, Georgian Protestants from various denominations who live in Istanbul also receive free worship at the temple.

Catholic Church in Georgia 1921-1991

The conquest of Tbilisi by the Red Army on February 25, 1921 was very hard period for Catholics. The prior of St. Peter and St. Paul church, visitor of Caucasus- Michael Antonashvili died (1854-1921). The Catholic clergy do not accept the occupation and repression. On May 26, 1921, on the Independence Day of Georgia, Father Konstantine Sapparishvili, who had been engaged in theological and educational activities in Gori by that time, led his students under the Georgian national flag and joined the anti-Bolshevik demonstration in the city center. All other clergymen of the Catholic Church were distinguished by their disobedience to the Soviet authorities, so the repressions that had begun in 1924 killed them all [Bardavelidze N., *Simply Catholic*, mag. "Solidaroba", N # 3 (12) 07., 2007., 37].

After Sovietization, Georgian emigrants abroad tried to continue their relations with the Vatican in the struggle for their country's independence and to exercise great authority of the Catholic Church.

Along with the expansion of the anti-religious campaign and the confrontation with foreign countries after the Sovietization, the political situation changed so that the Holy See could no longer send an apostolic administrator. The priest Imanuel Vardidze was secretly entrusted with this duty, who was the prior of St. Peter and St. Paul church. Archival materials show that Vardidze was closely associated with the US, German and Italian consulates in Tbilisi. With their help he was able to expand charities, open schools, orphanages and homeless shelters.

The priest Emanuel Vardidze was the prior of St. Peter and St. Paul church since 1921 till 1966, at certain intervals. His active work did not go unnoticed and soon he was banned from charity. Later he was even arrested. Emmanuel Vardidze was imprisoned and exiled six times for various terms in 1921-1946 for his religious activities and disloyalty to the Soviet authorities.

Father Konstantin Sapparishvili was exiled to the Solovki prison camp in 1927-1936. It was a system of rigid regime camps set up on the territory of former monasteries, where its chiefs joked - "Here is not the Soviet, but the Solovkian government." [Д/Ф „Власть Соловецкая – Свидетельства и документы – 1988“.]

In 1927, Father Shio Batmanishvili appealed to the head of the Georgian government, Filipe Makharadze. He delivered a letter from Constantinople's Catholic church, explained the situation and asked for permission to select the ten talented young believers who wanted to receive a theological education and stay in this monastery in order not to leave the Georgian spiritual and cultural place abroad in the future. Philippe Makharadze accepted father Shio's request. The process of gathering the aspirants for theological studies began and it was time for departure, the head of the local 'cheka' who was in confrontation with the head of the government, ordered to vanish the whole delegation forever into unknown direction. [Saparishvili K. Private Diary, 27].

All the clergy of the Catholic Church were killed in the repression of the 1930s, with the exception of Emmanuel Vardidze and Constantin Saparishvili. They were simply "lucky"; They were already exiled to Solovka, but they continued the religious service in the northern labor camp. We found out from Constantin Saparishvili's memories that near the huts they would hide a bowl and a plate in the hollow of a tree, and stole them for an hour before leaving for work and secretly were holding a holy liturgy. When the camp was set up in line, they were already in communion –the first who were standing in line

Repression in the Soviet Union reached summit in 1937. In 1937, under the new Soviet law, the executive committees of the local councils demanded religious associations to pay the increased land tax without any delay. Otherwise they would be deprived of temples and monasteries. These economic sanctions took place during the terrible repression and total agitation-propaganda. A large part of the population was intimidated, and others became indifferent towards the religious.

Only St. Peter and St. Paul church remained active, whose congregation truly showed the heroism. For example members of the German parish sold cows to collect tax money. Later, although the tax seemed to be reduced, it was still quite high for a small congregation, they could no longer pay this tax. After the outbreak of World War II and the deportations of the Germans, the Assyrian congregation took the responsibility for a "lion's share" of tax payments.

Since 1937 till 1990, in the whole Caucasus, St. Peter and St. Paul church remained the only Roman Catholic church of Latin rite. The second temple, which remained in Akhaltsikhe district, was not closed though it was left without a priest, the local population took care of it. This temple was located in the small village of Skhvilisi, a border town where no one could come without a special visa under the conditions of the border control of that time. The rest of the Catholic temples were closed and inappropriately used. In some places there were arranged clubs and a village warehouse where wheat was kept. In the Ascension Church of St. Mary was opened the gym. There was a warehouse in the Gori Temple, and in the 1970s, young people from a local university set up a student disco club. Until 1990, a research laboratory was operating in the Batumi Cathedral. Kutaisi Cathedral was relatively lucky - firstly it was used as a warehouse, then transferred to the Philharmonic Hall, renovated and converted into an organ music hall [Bardavelidze N., N # 3 (12) 07., 2007., 38]

After World War II, the attitude towards religion has changed in the Soviet Union. The war against fascism was declared as a patriotic, universal, and holy war. Religious organizations also call on the local population to fight against the enemy. The churches helped the front with their savings. By Stalin's order, a Council of Religious Affairs was founded in 1943, and

later was instructed to be the mediator between secular government and the outlaw religious organizations. After the war, began official registration of religious organizations. According to the archival material and registration, in 1946, there were 53 Orthodox churches in the Soviet Republic of Georgia, 4 Armenian Apostolic Church, 22 synagogues, 2 mosques, and one active St. Peter and St. Paul Catholic Church in Tbilisi and one registered church, but in fact, inactive in the villages of Skhvil.

Archival materials reveal that in the southern Georgian villages, where the Catholic population resided, religious councils were semi-legally operating, despite Soviet bans. Faithful Catholics (mostly women), in the late night, secretly entered temples, that were locked down and converted into communal warehouses, pray the rosary. The statue of the Lurd Blessed Virgin Mary hidden away from the temple was taken in turns by the families and prayed all night. Children and men often participated in prayers. [Bardavelidze N. Catholic Church of Georgia, Brief Chronological Information, coll. "Religion and Society" N 3, 2004, 65].

In the late '50s, the so-called. The "warming period" was replaced by a strict anti-religious policy of the early 1960s. According to the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Khrushchev's sudden decision, a wave of anti-religious repression swept across the country. Within a few days, 10,000 out of the 15,000 active religious organizations registered in the Stalin era were shut down. The anti-religious campaign started again in the media. The Catholic and Protestant churches were cruelly oppressed.

The Brezhnev era in the Soviet Union is known as the "era of Stagnation". Nothing serious happened in the country in these two decades. Church life was also marked by such stagnation. In its annual report, the Council of Religious Affairs comforted the party authorities of the country that church life was jurisdictional and that the number of believers did not decrease or even increase. The threat to the priesthood was not the Ministry of Internal Affairs, but the financial inspector, who was strictly controlling the income from religious rituals. The Underaged were not allowed to participate in church service and catechisms, which became a problem for Catholic churches. But most importantly, in case of the a violation of these requirements, the offender would no longer be arrested or exiled. They were just fined. The maximum punishment for the priest was the deprivation of the registration document.

The "Era of Stagnation" for the Catholics was an act of self-preservation, keeping an existing parish and a temple. Nothing important was going on at that time, and even wouldn't happen.

A comparative revival has taken place since 1975 - after the Soviet Union had signed the summary act of European security strategy and co-operation, so-called 'Declaration of Helsinki'. After signing the 'Declaration of Helsinki' it started the legal battle for protecting human rights, concious and freedom.

Since the 1970s, weekly prayers have been held at the Tbilisi Catholic Church in the national parish languages - in German, Polish, Assyrian, Armenian, Georgian. And the Sunday liturgy is in Russian and Latin languages. In January, the tradition of holding Christian Prayer Week was established.

1978 was a turning point not only for the advancement of the Catholic Church, but also for the Soviet Union and for the whole world. Cardinal Archbishop of Krakow, Carol Voitla became

the 264th Pope, he would continue the work of John XXIII and Paul VI, would be loyal to the spirit of the Vatican II World Council, adopted a new name John-Paul.

The first message of John Paul II to the millions of Catholics to the east of the Iron Curtain would be his historical phrase - "Don't be afraid!" The Pope's appeal has given unprecedented power to Catholics being under pressure by communist regimes, including a small congregation in Georgia.

Since the 1980s, the activity of Catholic believers in southern Georgia has become prominent, with all existing Catholic buildings being cleaned and groomed. There is no trace of collective farm. Believers began slowly repair them. In fact, believers were gathering, praying, and attending church celebrations. The government faced a new reality., In the language of law it was called "unregistered but actually religious organizations." In the territory of the Republic of Georgia, with such status, only the former Catholic parishes were mentioned, as no other activity was found in other confessions.

Although the churches being left without religious site were closed, Soviet propaganda was in full opposition to the Catholics, calling them "Vatican agents", in the villages of southern Georgia, where Catholic believers resided (no matter they were Latin or Armenian site) almost everyone kept his faith, Catholic traditions. It has to be said that the tradition of performing the prayer of Savard together, despite 50 years of repression and intermittent church life, has kept for Catholics, living in Georgia, their confessional identities.

In the late 1980s, the activity of Catholic believers reached to the peak, but in 1987 the process of returning the seized temples began. The village of Turtskhi (1989), Arli (1989), Khizabavar and several other Armenian-Catholic temples were returned to the Catholics. In 1989, the parish was transferred the Vale Catholic Cathedral.

On her way to the independence In June 1989, on the initiative of prominent artist Zurab Tsereteli, Mother Teresa, who was in Moscow- visited Georgia. The visit of the Nobel Prize laureate and world-renowned charity nun was a recognition of the Georgian community's national spirit and a gesture of solidarity. It was also the best way to break the current information vacuum about Georgia. At the Tbilisi Sioni Cathedral, Mother Teresa attended the Divine Liturgy held by the Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia. His Holiness Ilia II awarded Mother Teresa with the Order . During her visit to Tbilisi, Mother Teresa founded the mission of her charity Order.

In Tbilisi, Cardinal Agostino Kazaroli, Secretary of State for the Holy See, and Cardinal Aquile Silvestrin, the Prefect of the Congregation for the Eastern Churches visited several times the nuns of Mother Teresa's Order. On November 8, 1999, Pope John Paul II attended the opening of the House of Mercy in one of the old districts of the city of Avlabar.

The fact that the Pope spent the night in Mother Teresa's Relief House during her visit to Tbilisi was symbolic.

Pope Benedict XVI strongly criticized Russian aggression and called on their government to cease aggression against Georgia in 2008. In August, the Pope made three appeals for the protection of peace in Georgia and the return of refugees. In August, the Italian bishops donated a million euros to help refugees in the Gori region. Later humanitarian aid increased greatly.

It should be credited to Pope Benedict that, since 2010, Latin American states supported the non-recognition policy of the republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia despite Russian pressure.

Visits of the Pope's to Georgia in 1999 and 2016 should be considered as an act of international support and solidarity to Georgia. These visits are of historical importance, as it was the first visit to the post-Soviet space for both popes and helped to raise our country's international awareness.

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MODERN EUROPEAN CHALLENGES

Abstract

The problem of Islam in Europe in all its aspects and completeness is currently one of the most acute and urgent topics, it is given special attention in political circles and international clubs. As Islam is not only a religion, it is a quite strong ideology and like every ideology with its certain features, which are usually expressed in: society, nationality, nation and defines their activities and of course the rule of their lives, relations between the society and political force with a different ideology. Muslims in Europe are, first and foremost, immigrants whose influx into the European continent over the past 20 years has seriously changed its demographic picture and political situation. While speaking about the demographic picture we have to highlight that the birth rate in Muslim population is much more than the Europeans and if we consider the already high number of Muslim refugees plus their birth rate we can say that in a couple of decades Europe will face Islamisation. However, it does not mean that the refugees have to suffer from negative attitudes, harassment, and discrimination.

Key Words: Islam, Religion, Migrants, Refugees, Europe, Challenge

Introduction

Several periods can be distinguished in the modern history of migration flows to Europe. First the beginning of the twentieth century, after the First World War, however the influx of Muslim immigrants was very small. The second flow can be considered the period after the Second World War, as a result of post-colonial development. Since many European countries urgently needed cheap labor to restore the post-war economy, their governments stimulated the influx of foreign workers from countries.

The next period began in the late 80s. A new stream poured into Europe, due to several reasons and acted in a quite new way, turning migration into the central social problem of our time. The above-mentioned facts and the demographic factor - the decline in fertility of Europe; and economic, a new TNC strategy related to the transition to the neoliberal policy of monetarism; and geopolitical - the collapse of the socialist bloc and the USSR with the corresponding political and economic consequences. (L'Harmattan, 2004)

Europe is currently home to an extremely diverse landscape of political Islamic movements. This diversity is even greater than in most Muslim countries, where ideological Islamic expression is often limited by the official ideology of the state. In Europe, these movements are often mobilized in defense of European Muslim interests; they work for the recognition of Islam or as its spokesperson in dealing with European states or with the majority of Muslims who are not concerned with political Islam. These movements have been present in Europe for a long while now (between 20 and 40 years for most of them) but their daily realities are still not well known to European policy-makers, neither at the European, national nor local level.

Statistics of Migrant since 2017

In 2017, a total of 4.4 million people immigrated to one of the EU-28 Member States, while at least 3.1 million emigrants were reported to have left an EU Member State. However, these total figures do not represent the migration flows to/from the EU as a whole, since they also include flows between the different EU Member States. Among these 4.4 million immigrants during 2017, there were an estimated 2.0 million citizens of non-EU countries, 1.3 million people with citizenship of a different EU Member State from the one to which they immigrated, around 1.0 million people who migrated to an EU Member State of which they had the citizenship (for example, returning nationals or nationals born abroad), and some 11 thousand stateless people. (Condrad Hacket, 2017)

Relative to the size of the resident population, Malta recorded the highest rates of immigration in 2017 (46 immigrants per 1 000 persons), followed by Luxembourg (41 immigrants per 1 000 persons). For emigration, the highest rates in 2017 were reported for Luxembourg (23 emigrants per 1 000 persons), Cyprus (18 emigrants per 1 000 persons), Lithuania (17 emigrants per 1 000 persons), and Malta (15 emigrants per 1 000 persons). (Migration and Migrant Population Statistics, 2019)

Now about the situation about 2018, by 1 January 2018, it was the following: the number of people residing in an EU Member State with citizenship of a non-member country was 22.3 million, representing 4.4 % of the EU-28 population. Here, we have to highlight that, foreign citizens are younger than nationals. An analysis of the age structure of the population shows that, for the EU-28 as a whole, the foreign population was younger than the national population. The distribution by age of foreigners shows, compared with nationals, a greater proportion of relatively young working age adults. On 1 January 2018, the median age of the national population in the EU-28 was 44 years, while the median age of non-nationals living in the EU was 36 years. (ibid)

It is worth to notice that participating in the construction of common European space, EU Member States; besides the development of their state migration policy also has a great impact on the development of community migration policy standards. EU countries have different migration policy experiences. They are still independent players in the field.

Demographic Threats of Europe

The intensive process of transforming migrants issues into an important factor in the economic development of European countries. And it must be emphasized that the demographic situation has become one of the main reasons. For 200 years, the birth rate in Europe has been slowly and steadily declining, and in the past 20 years the region has stopped reproducing its population, moving to an active “demographic retreat”. (Utkin A. 2003)

Demographers assess this process as a pronounced state of the demographic crisis, manifested in a widespread decline in the number of indigenous populations and state-forming nations. According to UN statistics, 494 million people aged 15 to 65 lived in Europe in 2000, and by 2050 the number will be reduced to 365 million.

This crisis has a stable reason. The life span of 15 European countries at the beginning of the 21st century amounted to 14-15 children per 10 women, which is one third lower than the sufficiency threshold. All European countries belong to the group of countries with a low level of fecundity, in which the average value of the coefficient of total fecundity is 20% less than the

norm, and taking into account the decreasing number of births, it is 30–40%. (Chetvernikova O, 2005)

The fertility of migrants moving here exceeds the fecundity of Europeans by two to three times, so that their number in Europe will double in 20-30 years, which will exacerbate ethno-demographic problems. In addition to the number of Muslim migrants, the number of Europeans who accept Islam is growing: there are already hundreds of thousands of them. There are even extreme forecasts of Western analysts, according to which the adoption of Islam by Europeans under the influence of migration processes in 50 years can make Europe the main center of the Islamic religion. Very characteristic in this regard is the situation in the UK. If in 1981 the number of Muslims (immigrants from Pakistan, India and Bangladesh) was estimated at 750 thousand here, now there are about 3 million, and the number of births in the UK itself is at least 50% of this number. According to forecasts, by 2050 there will be no “ethnic majority” in Britain; it will be washed away by interethnic marriages and the import of foreign labor. (Mikheyev B, 2002)

Dual Consciousness

It is with the new generation that the evolution of the behavior of European Muslim communities is associated. The consciousness of young Muslims is duality. On the one hand, they are more affected by European culture; speak the language of the country of residence perfectly. But, on the other hand, their religiosity is manifested in a stricter faith, understood as a return to the original purity of Islam and sometimes taking the form of a fanatical belief. An interesting situation is emerging: young people feel at home in Europe and strive to openly occupy the European intellectual and social space, but precisely to be reckoned with as Muslims and to be able to remain faithful to deep Islamic values. The essence of this is expressed by the formula: “live your faiths precisely in Europe.” With more active participation in all areas of European society, Muslims are becoming more and more established as carriers of other religious and cultural values. Their mood was well conveyed by one of the educated French Muslim activists: “Today I affirm my difference, which is my identity here in France, and I want to be respected precisely as a Muslim”. (Lathion S, 2002)

Characteristics of Migration Flows

The official number of migrants is usually recorded during passport control by the Border Police. Counting the number of illegal migrants is a serious problem - a migrant entering the country without a passport or visa means he or she is trying to enter the country without going through border control because he fears that he will be arrested and sent back. The number of such migrants is known only when they are detained after their entrance, later while their living in the country. The registration of irregular migration flows can determine the realistic trend of migration. The more effective is the border control system, the greater the chance is to detain and register illegal migrants. In this regard, the systematic search and rescue project Mare Nostrum was launched by the Italian government in October 2013, which helped to clarify the migration statistics. Mare Nostrum was launched in response to two mass drownings off the Italian coast that cost around 600 lives. It was a dramatic reversal of the Italian government’s previous policy that blocked immigrants at sea and often forced them to return to North Africa. After a year in which the Italian government plucked more than 100,000 shipwrecked refugees, it was scrapped and replaced by a new project, operation Triton, which is manned and managed by Frontex,

the European Union's external border protection agency. Triton costs less than a third of Mare Nostrum, but its boats only patrol an area within 30 miles of the Italian shore and do not launch pro-active search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean. (Freeman Colin, 2015)

Even though the first generations were still linked to their countries of origin, there was nonetheless a profound Europeanization of Islam already taking place, largely due to the younger generations born and educated in Europe. Although they were practicing Muslims and came from a Muslim culture, members of this new generation severed their identification of Islam with their parents' country of origin, and increasingly thought of themselves as French, British, German or Belgian. This re-conceptualization of Islam coincided with the emergence of claims to equality of treatment with their fellow citizens of European origin.

Suffering from Human Discrimination

Policies aimed at supporting increased economic, social and political participation of Muslims in Europe take place against a backdrop of growing prejudice and discrimination directed towards Muslims. Some of the prejudice that Muslims face is part of a "generic anti-immigrant" prejudice, which is directed at European postwar non-western immigrants. At the same time, there is evidence that they also face a "specific anti-Muslim" prejudice which "has developed as a result of stereotype generating processes in the last couple of decades". (Strabac Zan, Listung Ola, 2008) Analysis of the 1999–2000 European Values Study suggests that even before 11 September 2001; levels of anti-Muslim prejudice across Europe were higher than anti-immigrant prejudice. (Strabac & Listung, 2014) The analysis finds that this prejudice is not related to poverty but does decrease with increased levels of education. (ibid) While the level of prejudice directed towards Muslims is greater than that directed at immigrants, the analysis of the European Values Study finds that it is the same type of prejudice as that directed towards immigrants. This means that policies aimed at addressing racial and ethnic prejudice should also lead to lower levels of anti-Muslim prejudice.

Discrimination Effective action in addressing discrimination was identified in the Tampere Council Conclusions as to the second element of an effective integration policy. Article 13 of the EC Treaty (now Article 19 TFEU), as introduced by the Treaty of Amsterdam, provides a legal basis for the Council to take appropriate action to combat discrimination on "sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation". (Open Society Institute, 2010) In 2000 the EU adopted two Directives on discrimination. The Directives recognize that discrimination undermines the achievement of the objectives of the EC Treaty, including the attainment of economic and social cohesion and solidarity. (Council Directive 2000) The first Directive prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race or ethnic origin in employment, education, housing, social protection, and access to goods and services. (ibid) The Directive, however, does not cover discrimination on the grounds of nationality. Furthermore, conditions relating to the entry and residence of TCNs are outside its scope. Racial discrimination is said to undermine the Union's goal of creating "an area of freedom, security and justice" and "to ensure the development of democratic and tolerant societies which allow the participation of all persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin".

The second Directive covers discrimination on the grounds of "religion and belief, disability, age or sexual orientation", but is limited in scope to covering discrimination in employment.

(the Employment Directive 2000) The Council proposed a new Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons, irrespective of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation in 2000. (Proposal for a Council Directive 2008) If adopted, this would extend the protection from discrimination on the grounds of religion and belief, to social protection (including social security and health care), social advantages, education, as well as access to and supply of goods and services, such as housing and transport.

The Charter of Fundamental Rights was first proclaimed in 2000. While the Charter exists separately from the EU treaties, the Lisbon Treaty amends article 6 TEU, and provides that the Charter has the same legal value as the other EU treaties. The Charter contains 54 articles grouped into seven chapters: dignity, freedoms, equality, solidarity, citizens' rights, justice, and general provisions. Except for chapter five (citizens' rights), the Charter applies to all individuals in the EU irrespective of nationality. The rights in the Charter apply to both the actions of the European institutions and Member States when they are acting to give effect to EC law. The Charter does not extend the competences of the EU but instead provides a framework to protect individual rights within the Union and its Member States in those areas where the EU has competence. Of particular relevance in the context of social inclusion and integration of Muslims is the Charter's prohibition of discrimination, including discrimination on the grounds of religion and race (article 21). Furthermore, article 10 recognizes the right to "freedom of thought, conscience, and religion", which includes the right "to manifest religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice, and observance". This is further reinforced by article 22, which places an obligation on the Union to "respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity". However, article 53 allows for restrictions on the exercise of rights and freedoms in the Charter, where a restriction is "necessary and genuinely meet[s] objectives of general interest recognized by the Union or the need to protect the rights and freedoms of others". (Open Society Institute, 2010)

When Germany opened its borders to a large number of refugees and accepted these people, the right-wing protested it and demanded from Germany to protect the country from Islamization. For example, Frauke Petry, one of the leaders of the party from 2015 to 2017, explained in a 2016 interview with German newspaper Der Spiegel that "The immigration of so many Muslims will change our culture," and insisted that such a significant cultural change "must be the product of a democratic decision supported by a broad majority." We can say that due to such kinds of speeches caused the anti-refugee sentiment and in the country increased the number of attacks on migrant shelters and anti-migrant propaganda spread throughout the country. (BBC, 2015a; BBC 2016b; BBC, 2016c; Hill, 2016)

EU-MIDIS II shows that over one quarter (27 %) of Muslim respondents experienced harassment because of their ethnic or immigrant background in the 12 months preceding the survey, with another 2 % having been physically assaulted on this basis in that period. Some Muslim respondents (1 %) experienced physical assault by a police officer because of their ethnic or immigrant background during the 12 months preceding the survey (2 % did so in the preceding five years). Key findings and FRA opinions Generational differences can be observed. About one fifth (22 %) of first-generation respondents say they experienced harassment motivated by hatred, compared to more than one third (36 %) of second-generation Muslim respondents. (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2017) These incidents of intolerance and violence have

demonstrated Germany's radicalization and anti-refugee sentiment. Afterward, in order not to violate the situation, some politicians called for changes in refugee policy.

Conclusion

The volume of the issue is that first of all we deal with the two difficult aspects such as politics and religion and their directions and approaches, and then with their cooperation and influence on each other. The second is coming to Islam itself as a religious system with its doctrinal theology, worship system, legal structure, characteristics, etc. Islam is closely connected with an ideological world-view which is its part. The actuality and main point of Islam are that it deals with various aspects such as ethnical, national, economic, institutional, physiological and as well as with everyday life.

However, with all this attention the mentioned issues that are of fundamental importance usually remain in the shade or are simply circumvented. As a rule, each of the aspects of this problem is considered separately, and more often attention is concentrated on the consequences of the phenomenon, and not on its causes. If one talks about reasons, then some objective conditionality always hides in the foreground, hiding a real, well-thought-out strategy. Our task, in this case, is to consider the assertion of the Islamic world in Europe and try to understand the characteristic of this process, and what directly determines the policy of the ruling European elite in this matter and to what extent it meets the real interests of the European peoples themselves. But we have to remember that all religions ask for tolerance and patience and Islam is not an exception. Despite the numerous refugees and asylum seekers Europe has to have a more tolerant approach and be more patient toward them because these people were made to be refugees by the certain political actors and if Europe fails in birth rate and demography it is not their fault as well.

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THE ISSUE OF TURKEY'S MEMBERSHIP IN EUROPEAN UNION AND ITS IMPORTANCE FOR GEORGIA

Abstract

The European Union is an economic union of European states. The member states of this union have similar values and high standards of democratic norms.

The Republic of Turkey is the only country in the Muslim world that has openly stated its desire to have relations with the European Union and made an official application for membership in 1959.

The EU Charter does not restrict any country from becoming a member if it shares the values of the EU Member States and meets the standards set out in the "Copenhagen Criteria".

Whereas the Republic of Turkey has been waiting for the EU decision for several decades now, the fact of delaying the response for membership, is often perceived as a political rejection from Turkey's side and not a single issue is named as a reason, including religious differences. But it has to be said that there are a number of issues that actually hinder Turkey from joining the EU. These include the number of population, building democratic institutions, and human rights.

Turkey's opportunities of joining the European Union is quite low, but if the challenge is accepted by the EU and Turkey becomes a member state, it will only have a positive impact on its economic, social and political life.

And such a big step forward for the neighboring state will automatically have a positive impact on Georgia: Georgia will be a direct neighbor of the European Union. This will be a hopeful and drastic push for the young Georgian state to move steadily along the path of development and to actually implement the reforms it has begun.

What is the European Union itself?

The European Union's roots come from the 1952 Treaty of Paris, which established the "Coalition of European Coal and Steel". Its founding members included Belgium, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and France. In 1957, the six founding countries signed the "Treaty of Rome" establishing the "European Economic Community" in 1958 and the "European Atomic Energy Union". Subsequently, all three of these unions were called the "European Community".

Since November 1, 1993 European Community has been known as European Union (EU). Its creation is explained by the "Treaty of Rome" as follows:

Article 2. The aim of the Union is to facilitate the harmonious economic activity in the area of consolidation of the common market and to harmonize the economic policies of the Member States and to promote a more equitable expansion, stability, improvement of life and closer relations between the Member States.

According to the Treaty of Rome, any European state has the right to join the European Union, for which the values are acceptable and meets the standards of democracy. According to the so-called Copenhagen Criteria, "the candidate country must achieve the stability of institutions

that will guarantee democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights and the protection of the rights of minorities.”

The most valuable asset that European Union has developed during its existence, has been the Principle of Free Crossing of Borders ie free circulation of goods, free movement of persons, services and capitals, the so-called “Four Freedoms”. Free Crossing of Internal Borders is regulated by Schengen Agreement signed in 1995.

Since the creation of the EU, many countries have expressed a desire to closely cooperate with it. The EU leadership itself is also working intensively on further enlargement prospects, one good example of which was to increase it by 10 more members in 2004.

The Beginning of Turkey-European Union Relations:

As for relations with Turkey, the issue is a bit different and has a lot of specifics; European Community has not opened its door to Turkey for many years. It all started with the fact that soon after the creation of the European Economic Union, in July 1959, Turkey made its first application for membership in the Union. The same year the union offered an associate relationship. The bilateral negotiations ended on September 12, 1963, with the signing of the “Ankara Agreement” (“On the Establishment of an Association between the Republic of Turkey and the European Economic Union”). This agreement began the history of Turkish-EU relations. The Agreement entered into force on December 1, 1964.

“The Ankara Agreement” included a plan to create a customs union that would bring the parties closer together in the economic and trade spheres. At the same time, the Union had to support Turkey financially, for which special protocols had to be developed.

After the first financial protocol, covering 1963-70, Turkey was granted a loan of an amount of 157 million ECU by the European Economic Union. Already in 1972, the Union’s share in Turkish imports increased from 29% to 42% compared to 1963. The second and third financial protocols were signed in 1970 and 1977, respectively. On November 23, 1970, an additional protocol was signed, which was a step towards establishing a customs union.

According to the agreement, the European Economic Union should have abolished tariffs and quantitative barriers on imports with Turkey. The additional protocol also allowed free movement of human resources between the parties. This is why the basis of Turkish migration processes towards European countries has been founded.

The additional protocol added significant advantages to Turkey’s agricultural imports to the countries of Economical Community. In 1971, for example, the highest rate in the history of these relationships revealed; Turkey’s agriculture received a 92% benefit. Although several countries of the Union produce significant quantities of agricultural products, such as Greece, Portugal and Spain, Turkey remains one of the privileged trading partners under the preferential trade agreements with the Mediterranean countries.

In 1980-83, Turkey’s relations with the European Union deteriorated significantly. Due to the military coup, the European Economic Union has decided to freeze relations with Turkey and block the fourth financial protocol. Relations became regulated only after the restoration of civil authority and economic reforms in 1983. However, approval of the fourth financial protocol was still delayed.

Application for EU Membership:

On April 14, 1987, Turkey applied to join the Union. According to Article 237 of the Agreement of the European Economic Union, all European countries have the right to do so. The Turkish application was sent to the Inquiry Committee, which in turn sent the matter to the departments to find out the possible consequences of Turkey's accession to the EU and was instructed to gather all the necessary information and documentation.

The candidate country should be close to the norms of democracy and common development in the EU member states. However, the commission had to be sure that the admission of a new member would not create additional problems. Analyzing both of these cases, the following picture outlined: First, Turkey was a huge geographical region, with populations exceeding the respective number of member states, and second, its level of development was significantly lower than that of the total European. These two factors have proved to be a disadvantage for Turkey on the road of convergence with the European Union.

In the report of the commission, prepared on December 18, 1989, was stated that "it would not be useful to start negotiations with Turkey under the current conditions". The commission cited both economic and political reasons. Also, the "negative effect" of the dispute between Greece and Turkey and the "situation on Cyprus", however, the EU has indicated that cooperation with Turkey should continue, foster its convergence with Europe and assist with the rapid completion of political and economic modernization in the country.

Bilateral cooperation gradually deepened, and on 6 March 1995 the EU and the Turkish Association Council decided to move to the final stage of establishing a customs union and renewing financial cooperation. The Council also decided to explore new areas of relations and to intensify political dialogue.

On December 13, 1995, it was decided to establish a customs union. This Agreement entered into force on 1 January 1996. On the institutional level, an advisory body - the Joint Customs Union Committee - was set up. In Turkey, this was considered an important event. After returning from Brussels in 1995, Prime Minister Tansu Ciller solemnly declared: "Turkey has signed a historic agreement with the European Union." In Turkey, it was said that Tansu Ciller did what Ataturk did in his time, when he addressed the Asian and the Muslim country towards Paris and all of Europe.

At the same time, one of the representatives of European Union, Alain Juppe declared_ in European Union's viewpoint, the progress achieved in Turkey is not sufficient as human rights abuses continue to take place in the country, the publication of newspapers, prosecution of journalists and representatives of the intelligentsia are banned, the deputies are put in prison because of the so-called public demarche of Turkish parliament.

Despite the remarks, Ankara expressed satisfaction; The Turkish press wrote that after the signing of the Customs Union, financial and economic life was dramatically revived. Turkey, however, said they were not fooled by vain hopes and that material assistance would lead the country to the EU itself. For this to happen, Turkey had to pursue reforms.

After the Customs Union entered into force, Turkey abolished all tariffs on imports of industrial products from the EU. The allocation of state subsidies to increase the competitiveness of products has been banned. A special body was set up to control this. However, it was permissible to assist the economic development of the low-developed regions of Turkey.

Turkish legislation in terms with state monopolies had to be refined, which did not allow discrimination against products produced in Turkey and the European Union. In the coming years, Turkey's barriers towards economic relations should be removed.

Since the creation of the Customs Union, in 1996, Turkish imports from EU countries have increased by 34.7% compared to the previous year, amounting to 11.477 billion dollars. Imports from EU countries were 52.9%, while exports from Turkey were 49.5%.

By establishing the customs union and links with Turkey, the European Union has shown to the Islamic world that religious difference is not a hindrance to integration. This was an important moment for Turkey, as it was often argued about the difference between civilizations that Turkey is a country of different cultures and that it is a greater threat to Europe. The dispute has become more intense after the publication of the theory of the "Clash of Civilizations" by famous American scientist Samuel Huntington. According to this theory, Turkey's political orientation does not conform to the cultural norms of the country's population, Turkey is a split country in this respect. In addition to its proximity to explosive hazardous regions, there is also a volatile situation in the country that could grow into disagreement at any time.

In 1996, there was an unpleasant moment in bilateral relations; Turkey strained relations with Greece, which also affected relations with the European Union. On July 15, 1996, the General Affairs Council approved projects foreseen in the MEDA program for 12 Mediterranean countries, including Turkey. But on September 19 of that year, the European Parliament's resolution blocked the idea of implementing them in Turkey. This resolution was mainly due to the human rights situation in Turkey. The document "Program for 2000", elaborated by European Commission led by Jacques Santer, actually excluded Turkey from the EU enlargement process, despite acknowledging the satisfactory work of the Customs Union and Turkey's ability to comply with EU norms in the political and economic spheres.

Before that, it was the Luxembourg summit of December 12, 1997: Turkey had been waiting to be nominated a candidate country at the summit, but the negative result had caused discontent among Turkish officials. Political elites have been talking about a slowdown in relations with Europe. After the Luxembourg summit Prime Minister of Turkey, Mesut Yılmaz did not receive an invitation at the dinner for EU leaders and openly expressed his dissatisfaction. He accused the Chancellor of Germany, Helmut Kohl in anti-Turkish attitude which caused a diplomatic crisis between two countries.

Greece's opposition to Turkey's EU membership is quite understandable, and Germany's opposition to Turkey's candidacy was largely driven by the influx of Turkish migrants to Germany. The Turkish diaspora in Germany was already several million and caused some internal problems for Germany.

The process of entry of Turkish migrants to Germany was based on a bilateral agreement concluded in 1961. As demand for black workers in Germany has increased, the country's government has decided to attract cheap labor from developing countries and has announced an open door policy. This was followed by an agreement with Turkey, under which Turkish workers would be sent to work temporarily in West Germany. The process of continuous withdrawal of Turkish labor began not only in Germany but throughout Europe. The presence of temporary workers in Europe has acquired a permanent character.

By the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, 10 European countries counted 3 116 860 Turkish immigrants (except illegally migrated workers).

In informal conversations, the leaders of the European states point to the religious difference between Turkey and the European states. One of the Europeans who said this openly was Jacques Atal, a former adviser of the French president. He said: "The main obstacle to Turkey's entry into the EU is the religious difference - Islam."

Often the term Europe itself is the subject of dispute; is it merely a geographical term or a union of common values. Even by the second definition, they often do not see Turkey's place in the "Christian Club". The dispute has become even more actual since the second half of the 1990s, when pro-Islamic forces came to power in Turkey. They forced Europe to think again before taking any decision.

Turkish President Turgut Ozal saw the reason in Muslim: "The real reason for not accepting is that we are Muslims, they are Christians, but they do not say it openly."

Former Prime Minister Tansu Ciller said: "European culture is based on Christian-Greek-Roman synthesis. We have already demolished one wall, we cannot build a new wall. Let's not go through religious divisions. Turkey is one of the guarantees of its democratic system and stability of values. Europe needs stability. The East is of great strategic importance to the West ... Our European allies now regard Turkey as a buffer country which is situated between important regions from the strategic point of view for Europe. Considering Turkey as a buffer region permanently is a reasonable decision, however I have serious doubts whether Turks would accept this situation".

The next EU Summit was held in Cardiff on 15-16 June 1998. The decision of the Cardiff Summit was made in a relatively mild tone, but it still meant rejection for Turkey. The main outcome of this summit was the approval of the "European strategy" developed by the European Commission.

In September 1998, the first technical discussion was held between the EU Commission and the Turkish authorities to find out the details of the implementation of the "European Strategy", which confirmed Turkey's readiness to cooperate.

Ankara noted that the upcoming EU summit in Turkish-EU relations would be crucial. Indeed, amid tense relations, the situation has turned positive. At this summit - on December 10, 1999, Turkey, along with other countries, was recognized as a plenipotentiary candidate for EU membership. After that, Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit flew to Helsinki for an official dinner. He had waited for a long time to accept an invitation in the rank of prime-minister of a candidate country. This decision was welcomed by the US President Bill Clinton.

Turkey took obligations on the mandate of a candidate-country, which it would fulfil. They included the release of four Kurdish women. In 2004 Turkish Parliament made a decision to release Orhan Dogan, Hativ Dikol, Salih Sadak and Sakharov Prize Laureate Leila Zane from ten years imprisonment.

After the enlargement of the EU in 2004, the possibility of Turkey's membership was renewed, but the position of the European countries cannot be reconciled because of their different attitudes. For example, Claudia Rozzi, who is in charge of human rights in the German government and head of the Turkey-Germany friendship group, said she would support Turkey's EU membership bid because Germany needs a strong Turkey. At a press briefing Claudia Rozzi came

up against Angela Merkel's proposal only agreeing with Turkey's privileged partnership with the European Union: "Turkey occupies many places in the European categories. I don't understand why Turkey sometimes belongs to Europe, sometimes not," Rozzi said. She highly praised the recent reforms in Turkey and noted: "I could not even imagine a period when the death penalty would be abolished in Turkey."

Angela Merkel began her European tour with France when she became Chancellor of Germany (November 2005). She held her first official meeting with President Jacques Chirac. At a news conference after the talks, she also touched upon Turkey, noting that Turkey's relationship with the European Union is very important, but she said negotiations would take a long time. The German side is very careful about this.

The President of France, Jacques Chirac has repeatedly expressed support for Turkey's acceptance in the European family. He said: "Turkey's presence with us is in the interests of Europe."

USA also supports Turkey's acceptance in European Union. Its support is of great importance for Turkey. USA President George Bush (junior) stated about Turkey that the country is the power for Europe and moreover, Turkey's membership would be vital to furthering the relationship between Islam and the West. George W. Bush views Turkey as a bridge between civilizations: "The future of freedom in the Islamic world must be determined by the citizens of this country and not by others."

The UK also agrees to Turkey's accession to the EU.

Interestingly, some World Bank data show that Turkey's economy is larger than that of many European countries. For example, Istanbul's economy far exceeded that of the four new EU member states, which was nine times more than Bulgaria's. According to some prognosis: "In spite of the crisis of 2001 year, in accordance with that year's data, Turkey had purchasing power worth of 445 billion dollars. This means that if Turkey becomes a member of the European Union, it would be the sixth among the member states in terms of economic size."

The data shows great prospects for the Turkish economy. But even with such great economic potential, the achievements in terms of democratic reforms have been relatively unsatisfactory.

Real Obstacles of Becoming a Member of European Union:

One of the main obstacles of Turkey's accession to the EU is **the number of population**, named unofficially. At present, its number is estimated at about 75-80 million. Based on demographic studies, the number of Turkey's population is expected to increase in the near future. If the current growth rate is maintained, its number may approach to 100 million in the next ten years. In that case, Turkey would be the most densely populated country in Europe. But even its current number worries the EU's leadership. By joining the Union, Turkey will have the right to influence the EU's decision by quotas depending on the number of population. But European countries do not want to grant this right to Turkey (owning ten quotas). Europe cannot easily submit to transfer such huge leverage to the country.

The 2004 EU Summit in Brussels was a surprise for Turkey. This summit, in turn, offered Europe new frontiers and new political realities, and Turkey's place and role in this reality were not as important as they expected in Ankara. The membership of the Greek part of Cyprus was

painfully perceived in Turkey (the new package of EU requirements for Turkey in 2002 included recognition of Cyprus's independence, which has not been met so far), as Greece would have more than one vote against Turkey in the union.

EU Common Market Commissioner made an interesting statement after the enlargement. He noted that some Eastern European countries (Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine) and Turkey might be excluded from the list of candidates. Other EU officials stated that after Bulgaria and Romania joined the Union in 2007 (negotiations were also on Croatia's membership), the European Union was going to take a time out and spend about 10-15 years thinking and weighing the future.

Although Turkey is a candidate country, no political decision has yet been made on its becoming a member of EU. Successful democratic changes in the country in the fields of economics, education, law and other spheres cannot resolve the issue of Turkey's recognition as a European country and its integration into a European civilization.

Such developments between the EU and Turkey have prompted a number of Turkish statesmen to make a skeptical statement. In 2002, for example, the chairman of Parliament, Ömerİzgisaid that Turkey had an alternative in other area except the EU. In this statement, he actually supported the opinion of Secretary-General of the National Security Council Tunjer Kilinj - "The EU is not the only alternative for Turkey."

While accepting President of the Turkish-American Federation EgemenBağısand his associates, Ömerİzgisaid: "It is possible that Turkey is not the choice of EU, but Turkey has options elsewhere besides the EU. Of course, these areas cannot be shaped by forms of alliance whose members, as Kilinj says, also include Iran. But Turkey around its axis always has the choice to have great power in a way that does not contradict the ideology of its system. "

According to R.T. Erdogan: "The European Union is a community of honor for us and we want to contribute to its diversity. Otherwise, civilizations can clash. Turkey will be a big gain for the European Union. We will make efforts to meet the Copenhagen criteria. "

One of the obstacles to Turkey's accession to the EU is the **Cyprus problem**. It goes beyond the Turkish-Greek relations and is the subject of international discussion.

The EU has repeatedly emphasized that military settlement of relations with its neighbors does not comply with European norms. Turkey's non-recognition of the Greek part of Cyprus is undemocratic.

The Cyprus issue escalated after a rebellious National Guard in 1974, in agreement with the Greek military junta, ousted President of the Republic of Cyprus, Archbishop Makarios, and decided to incorporate the entire island into Greece. In response, Turkey sent troops into its northern part. After that, Turkey is trying to establish itself more firmly here. The population was exchanged internally: 45-65 thousands of Turks living in the South moved to Northern Land occupied by Turkey. The capital city of Nicosia is also divided.

The plan to divide the island was worked out earlier. There were plans to join Cyprus with Greece (Enosis) and Turkey (Ataksima). "Enosis Option" was opposed by Turkish nationalism the so-called "Ataksima Method". This reflected an expansionist attitude towards Cyprus aimed at dividing the island into two parts - for Greeks and Turks, respectively, in areas of influence, what would then be followed by the creation of two states. That would either end with the unification with Turkey and Greece or a federation-based arrangement with the principles of state "identity" would take place.

The leadership of the Turkish community of the island declared the “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus” in 1983. It was not recognized by any country except Turkey itself. The UN has imposed international economic sanctions on it.

After lengthy negotiations, it was agreed that the matter would be settled in accordance with international law; That was to study the opinion of the population on the island, that is to conduct a general referendum on the island and to regulate the issue according to the results of the survey. However, EU membership issue for the Greek part of Cyprus was already decided. As many experts stated, the Turkish part of Cyprus was given a good opportunity to become a part of a civil society.

The referendum was appointed in 2004. The results were exactly what the international community would have expected: the Greek part of Cyprus did not want to merge with the Turkish part, as this would have created additional problems for them. And the Turkish part itself has refused to unite. The unique opportunity to resolve the Cyprus problem was not used. With the unification of Cyprus, a large part of the Turkish population would have been given wide opportunities for economic development. So, on May 1, 2004, only the Greek part of Cyprus celebrated EU membership.

Another issue, which is a subject of constant dispute between Turkey and the EU, **is the establishment of standards of democracy in Turkey and bringing Turkey’s legislative base in harmony with European legislation.**

One of the last reform packages was initiated by President R.T. Erdogan and was supported by a large part of the population in a referendum on September 12, 2010. R.T. Erdogan called this the victory of “Turkish democracy” and noted that a new era had begun in the country’s life. Reforms have affected the constitution, weakening the influence of the military forces, which has led to huge disputes within the country, the constitutional court and many other areas. EU officials have openly expressed satisfaction with the reforms implemented and hoped that the reforms would be irreversible and would address the issues of human rights, democratic elections, other articles of the constitution, such as nationality issues and more.

The Importance of Turkey’s EU Membership for Georgia:

Turkey’s acceptance in EU will be a major event in the country’s political life. This, if allowed, will also have a major impact on EU life: Turkey will become one of the decision makers and these decisions will affect the future of Europe.

One thing that can be said for sure is that Turkey’s accession to the European Union will undoubtedly lead to the democratization process in other Muslim countries, since Turkey is considered one of the leaders and role models of the Muslim world, due to the already achieved results of its development.

This fact can have great consequences for neighboring Georgia too: Being adjacent to EU as a neighbor on land, will be a great stimulus for both economic and political processes. Georgia will find itself in much more favorable conditions than it was before and will be able to benefit from all the outcomes that the EU offers to its member and associate states. Important and decisive in these processes is that both the EU and Turkey itself are ready to assist Georgia in resolving all of its challenges, and this support is backed up by numerous agreements or

direct statements made by political leaders. The fact that both sides are openly expressing their readiness for political support is a very important fact.

Turkey's accession to the EU since the Association Agreement between Georgia and the EU has come into force, it will make the implementation of all the points of association much more tangible and will greatly stimulate the process of building democratic institutions that the country so desperately needs.

As for the challenges in this regard, we should expect that the Russian Federation will try not to allow this to happen. For Russia, being a NATO member in Turkey's immediate neighborhood and closer to the EU's borders would also be unacceptable. Russia does not want to live in such close proximity to the developed world, as it is a threat for Russia to be overwhelmed by the wave of protests thus making processes unmanageable. Russia will use every opportunity to prevent Turkey and Georgia from joining the European Union.

Conclusions:

EU membership is one of the most important tasks facing the foreign policy of the Republic of Turkey. Turkey has been unsuccessfully seeking to gain EU membership for years, thus giving opportunities to skeptics to debate.

Religion as an obstacle of EU membership is considered completely wrong by not only Turkish experts, but also the experts of other countries. Religion may have been one of the reasons why the European community is reluctant to include a Muslim state in its ranks, but the main reason, we think, is the population of Turkey. The leaders of European Union are truly concerned with the issue of the number of population, since in case of receiving membership, Turkey will be able to hold important leverage and will influence the decisions of EU. The ancient European countries that founded EU, will not allow Turkey to take decisions instead of them.

We think that if Turkey's population did not exceed the average number of European state's population, Europe would not be intimidated by the experiment and Turkey would already be an EU member state. But if this fact still happens, it will be a major event for Turkey as well as for its neighbouring Republic of Georgia.

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EUROPEAN NEIGHBORHOOD POLICY AND THE PERSPECTIVE OF EU ENLARGEMENT

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The association agreement is an international agreement of Georgia concluded within the framework of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) initiative. The European Union signed a similar agreement with Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova.

European Commissioner Stefan Füle said in 2014: “First of all, “far more than a set of rules and regulations” to say very briefly, Association Agreement is a future investment”¹.

The association agreement was signed on June 27, 2014². The Parliament of Georgia ratified the Association Agreement on July 18, 2014. It was fully implemented on July 1, 2016. According to the association agreement, Georgia is obliged to bring its legislation closer to the EU legislation, to implement political association and economic integration. Article 78 of the Constitution of Georgia stipulates that all constitutional bodies are obliged to carry out their activities in such a way as to promote the full integration of Georgia into the European Union³. Nowadays the reality calls for geopolitical developments and highlights the importance of EU law and the Association Agreement is essential, since it recognizes the territorial integrity of Georgia, however, according to the principle of territorial validity of the Association Agreement, it can only be applied to Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region is possible only if the Georgian authorities gain full control over these territories⁴. The Association Agreement envisages approximation and not harmonization with EU legislation⁵ It is worth noting that according to the association agreement, Georgia is recognized as an Eastern European country. The European perspective that emerged for Georgia under the Association Agreement has moved to an important stage today, Russia’s initiation of a large-scale war in Ukraine and the offer of Ukraine’s EU membership candidate status allowed Moldova and Georgia to become members of the European family earlier than expected.

Since its establishment, the European Union has gone through seven stages of enlargement. The first enlargement took place between 1960 and 1974, when Great Britain, Ireland, and

1 Kardava E., Association agreement - a special international agreement with specific characteristics, Sergo Zorbenadze anniversary edition - Sergo Zorbenadze 90, 2019, p. 172

2 Association Agreement between Georgia, on the one hand, and the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Union and their member states, on the other hand, 27/06/2014, <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2496959?publication=0>

3 Constitution of Georgia, Departments of the Parliament of Georgia, 31-33, 24/08/1995, <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/30346?publication=36>

4 Association Agreement between Georgia, on the one hand, and the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Union and their member states, on the other hand, 27/06/2014, <https://matsne.gov.ge/ka/document/view/2496959?publication=0>

5 Kardava E., The importance of DCFTA in the process of associating with Europe, Bulletin of the Caucasus International University, Tbilisi, 2017

Denmark joined the European Union. In the second and third enlargements, the member of the EU became Greece, Spain, and Portugal. The fourth one was in 1995 when the three countries of the European Free Trade Area - Sweden, Austria, and Finland - became the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth members of the European Union.

The goal of the fifth enlargement of the European Union was to develop the countries of Eastern and Central Europe freed from Soviet rule and to achieve Western European living standards through admission to the European Union. For this purpose, 10 countries joined the European Union in 2004.

The sixth and seventh enlargements happened in 2008, and two more countries, Romania and Bulgaria, joined the EU. In 2013, Croatia became a member of the European Union.

As a result of these processes, until January 1, 2020, the European Union consisted of 28 full-fledged, independent states, whose common goal was the desire for prosperity and economic progress, and 508 million citizens lived in it.

The Association Agreement is a result of the European Union's Neighborhood Policy (ENP), an important part of the EU's foreign policy, in which Georgia is one of sixteen partner countries. It enhances the prosperity, stability, and security of the enlarged EU and its neighbors⁶.

The perspective of further expansion of the European Union was considered to happen in 2025, however, in 2019-2020, certain member states expressed their desire to leave the European Union. The United Kingdom, which was a member of the European Union for 47 years, left the European Union on January 1, 2020. With the withdrawal of the United Kingdom, the number of EU members has decreased to 27. In 2020, the rift between Poland and the European Union deepened when European Union officials criticized the Polish Supreme Court, which declared that European Union law does not take advantage of Polish national law in some legal matters. Brussels has warned Warsaw that the reforms pose a threat to Polish democracy. French European Minister Clément Bonne called the Polish Supreme Court's decision an "attack on the EU" and warned that there was a "danger" of Poland's de facto withdrawal from the EU bloc. The prospect of EU enlargement has become more active in 2021. Currently, the EU candidate countries are Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Turkey, while Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo are potential candidates.

In May 2021, the foreign ministers of Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova signed a memorandum in Kyiv on the establishment of the "Associated Trio", which aimed to combine efforts for cooperation with the European Union. In July 2021, the presidents of Georgia, Ukraine, and Moldova, in the presence of European Council President Charles Michel, signed a joint declaration at the Petra prison in Georgia and confirmed that the three countries are united by the goal of joining the European Union.

On February 9, 2021, the European Commission and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Affairs published an annual report on Georgia's implementation of the Association Agreement in 2020, which gives a detailed picture of implemented reforms in certain directions. The report emphasizes that, despite the crisis of the Covid-19 pandemic, Georgia has consistently followed the direction toward Westernization. Particularly, the country has successfully continued to implement its obligations under the

⁶ Representation of the European Union in Georgia, https://www.eeas.europa.eu/georgia/evrokavshiri-dasakartvelo_ka?s=221

Association Agreement, including convergence with the EU legislation and the implementation of European standards for the protection of human rights⁷.

The process was further accelerated in parallel with the invasion of Ukraine by Russian military forces in February 2022. On February 28, Ukraine, which is in a full-scale war with Russia, applied for European Union membership. This was followed by the submission of applications from Georgia and Moldova.

On July 23, the European Parliament decided to grant Ukraine and Moldova the status of EU candidate countries, as for Georgia - the European perspective.

Accordingly, Georgia turned out to be the only country of the “Associated Trio” for which the European Commission issued a different recommendation.

Due to the changed political reality and the unprecedented support of the European Union, all three states of the “associated trio” for the first time in the history of the European Union have a great chance to become members of the European family at an accelerated pace.

⁷ 2021 Association Implementation Report on Georgia https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/92853/2021-associationimplementation-report-georgia_en

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GEORGIA AND THE PROSPECTS OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

The paper deals with Georgia's European choice and the key stages the country had to go through before signing the European Union Association Agreement – TACIS, the European Neighborhood, Georgia's contribution to the implementation of the Eastern Partnership programs and their significance and consequences for the country.

Georgia has been cooperating with the European Union since it gained independence in 1991. This cooperation started with the Agreement of Partnership and Cooperation and continues with the Association Agreement.

In 1992, the European Union officially recognized Georgia's independence. They started cooperation that was not intense at first and was limited to humanitarian and technical assistance.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the post-Soviet republics faced enormous political, economic, and social problems. They required any kind of assistance. The EU launched the TACIS Program (technical assistance to the commonwealth of independent states) for Post-Soviet independent states involving Georgia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Armenia, Moldova, Mongolia, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. In 2007, the TACIS program was replaced by the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). Through this program, the EU ensured the implementation of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. Since 1995 Georgia has been using the Generalized Scheme of Preferences (GSP) of the European Union.

Later, relations between the EU and partner countries became part of a more formalized, politically active and rapidly growing relationship. The main purpose of the TACIS Program was to share know-how and experience of the UN organizations with partner countries. In Georgia, TACIS activities were intended to support the overall strategy of the EU, strengthening its independence and moving towards a market economy and well-developed democracy.

Through the implementation of various programs, TACIS has contributed to the development of civil society and a market economy in Georgia, including training of newly appointed judges; structural reforms in the energy sector; institution building of the Parliament, support to the Department of Statistics, training of civil servants, the development of small and medium-sized businesses in Kutaisi and Tbilisi; training of customs officers, the introduction of new accounting standards in commercial banks, the development of a tourism strategy. The program helped Georgia provide maritime security at the ports of the International Petroleum Corporation, built the corridor for the TRACECA Program and a railway ferry between Poti and Ilyichevsk, installed the fiber-optic system for railway communication and the signaling system, supported the development of cross-border cooperation and the gas distribution network, implemented the Tempus Program for the development and restructuration of the higher education system, established the Georgian-European Policy and Legal Advice Center and the

Regional Environmental Center for the Caucasus, etc. Between 1992 and 2006, Georgia received the European Commission support worth 131 million for implementing various projects within the framework of the TACIS Program.

On April 22 1996, the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) between Georgia and the European Union was signed in Luxembourg. The agreement established a legal framework for the further development of relations between Georgia and the EU. The agreement was signed by the representatives of the EU member states and the presidents of the European Commission and Georgia. The agreement came into effect in 1999.

The agreement covered a number of areas of cooperation. The parties undertook obligations to work together to achieve certain political, economic and social goals. Although the agreement did not specify criteria for intermediary or final purposes of cooperation (for example, the necessary criteria for joining the EU), it envisaged a continuous process of approximation and harmonization with the EU standards. (1)

According to Article 43 of the agreement, Georgia has undertaken an obligation to gradually bring its legislation into line with EU law. The article lists the areas that should be harmonized with the law: investments, customs law, commercial law, banking law, company accounts and taxes, intellectual property, employee protection at work, financial services, competition rules, state procurement, environmental protection, consumer rights, indirect taxation, technical rules and standards, nuclear legislation and transport, etc. Article 44 of the agreement specifically speaks about the approximation of legislation in the field of competition.

Harmonization of Georgian legislation with EU law was an important part of the agreement. On September 2 1997, the Parliament adopted a resolution according to which all the laws and regulations adopted since the 1st of September are to comply with EU standards and norms. In 2000, the Governmental Commission on Partnership and Cooperation between Georgia and the EU was established. Together with other functions, it was tasked to promote the approximation of Georgian legislation to the one of the European Union. With the participation of the relevant ministries and agencies, the Commission developed a harmonization strategy approved by Presidential Decree No. 613 of 14 June 2001. On May 8 2004, the Government of Georgia adopted the National Program for Harmonization of the Georgian Legislation with EU Law. The Government members were tasked to develop national individual (sectoral) action plans to implement the program. In order to implement and monitor the agreement, joint institutions were set up.

The European Neighborhood Policy/ENP

On November 18 2002, the EU Foreign Ministers Council and on December 12-13 2002, Copenhagen Summit of the European Council expressed willingness to deepen EU relations with Russia, Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus and the southern Mediterranean countries and also welcomed the proposals of the Secretary General of the European Commission and the Council of the European Union, and the EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy.

The Neighborhood Policy intended to support the process of political, economic and cultural rapprochement between the EU and its neighboring countries. Through its Neighborhood Policy, the EU promoted democracy, stability, and prosperity across its borders.

The European Neighborhood Policy was pursued in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan since 2004.

In November 2006, the Agreement on the Georgia-EU European Neighborhood Policy Action Plan between the Government of Georgia and the European Commission was finalized which promoted the implementation of the strategic objectives of the cooperation and the corresponding political and economic priorities. The Action Plan was adopted on November 14, 2006.

The European Neighborhood Policy has made a significant contribution to deepening cooperation between Georgia and the European Union and has facilitated the process of economic reform and the establishment of state institutions in the country.

The Eastern Partnership - EaP

The Eastern Partnership (EaP) initiative, as a new format for cooperation with the eastern neighbors of the UN (Azerbaijan, Belarus, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Ukraine) was originally developed by Sweden and Poland. The Russian-Georgian War of August 2008 accelerated the process and triggered the positive attitude of the EU towards the initiative to a certain extent. In December 2008, the European Commission was tasked with submitting proposals related to the initiative.

On December 3 2008, the European Commission published the so-called communication on the Eastern Partnership that was approved at the European Council meeting on March 19 2009.

Cooperation within the Eastern Partnership developed in both bilateral and multilateral formats. Bilateral cooperation aimed at further deepening of cooperation between the EU and each of the partner countries, ensuring the establishment of new, broader contractual relations by concluding Association Agreements. The goal of multilateral cooperation was to create a new format that allowed for cooperation and dealing with challenges in the field of common interests. Such a format was aimed at developing cooperation processes in the region through joint projects in the fields of security, migration, trade, transport, energy, environment, etc.

Institutions of Cooperation established within the Eastern Partnership: Civil Society Forum

On November 17 2009, on the purpose of promoting active cooperation between non-governmental organizations of the partner countries and the European Union, the EaP Civil Society Forum (CSF) was established in Brussels within the framework of the Eastern Partnership Initiative. It currently has five working groups. The four of them are similar to the thematic platforms of multilateral cooperation of the Eastern Partnership while the decision to establish the 5th thematic group (Social Partnership and Solidarity) was made at the third meeting of the CSF in Poznan, Poland on 28-30 November 2011. The activities of the CSF is carried out by a Steering Committee consisting of 18 members. The members are the coordinators of each working group, the National Facilitators from partner countries, as well as representatives of the European Union and international NGOs. The Steering Committee Secretariat was established in Brussels. Civil Society Forum sessions are held annually. The monthly recommendations for the EU and partner countries are elaborated at the forum sessions. The national platforms have been set up in each partner country to facilitate the work of CSF.

There are currently 126 local and international non-governmental organizations in the Georgian National Platform. After six years of its establishment, the platform has been transformed from the meetings of the civil society representatives into the institutionalized policy forum that unites the EU and Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) by sharing their ideas and best experience and aims to promote the process of European integration in the eastern neighborhood of the UN (2).

The Parliamentary Cooperation Assembly (Euronest) that works within the Eastern Partnership was set up to strengthen cooperation between the members of the European Parliament and the Parliaments of partner countries in Brussels on May 2-3 2011. The Assembly unites 10 parliamentarians from each of the EU Eastern Partnership countries (Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova) and 60 MEPs.

On February 13-15 2013, the meeting of the Committee on Political Affairs, Human Rights and Democracy of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly was held in Tbilisi and on December 8-10 2019, the 8th Annual Session of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly – “Future Visions of the Eastern Partnership” was organized. During the session they discussed various issues of energy security, future plans and geopolitical challenges of the Eastern Partnership, as well as various topical issues of cooperation between the EU and the Eastern Partnership countries.

The European Union Association Agreement

Georgian experts assess the EU Association Agreement differently. The majority of them think that the agreement is the most extensive, complex document that has ever been prepared for cooperation with other institutions and international organizations. It defines certain institutional frameworks, the rules of conduct, norms and models not only for the Georgian government but also for the ordinary members of the society – civil servants, businessmen, entrepreneurs, youth, etc. This is not just a declaration of commitment of the Georgian government. It is a document of the commitment of the Georgian society to adhere to this model and the code of conduct. The second problem is whether the society is fully aware of the above-mentioned. It is difficult to discuss and evaluate the agreement and its short-term and long-term consequences in detail. (3)

Signing the European Union Association Agreement is undoubtedly a positive fact but one of the major problems worth noting is that the Georgian political forces are using it for internal political battles and speculation which, on the one hand, exaggerates expectations of the society and, on the other, causes the sense of nihilism. The editorial policy of the mass media should also be greatly condemned in this respect, not to mention the statements you often hear from some European officials that the association does not mean the membership of the European Union. However, the Association Preamble states that the common desire of the parties is to further develop, strengthen and deepen their relations in an ambitious and innovative way; the Association Agreement will not limit the way for the future progressive development of relations between the EU and Georgia.

Negotiations between Georgia and the EU over the text of the Association Agreement were in progress for three years. It was signed on November 29 2013. The Government of Georgia implements the Association Agreement and the Association Agenda on the basis of the Annual National Action Plan. (4)

The process of implementation of the 2014 National Action Plan by Georgia was positively assessed at the first Association meeting held on November 17 2014.

The National Action Plan of the Association Agreement and Agenda 2015 between Georgia and the European Union was approved by the Decree # 59 of 26 January 2015 of the Government of Georgia.

The Association Agreement is an agreement between the EU and the countries that are not members of the European Union. Cooperation includes political, trade, social, cultural and security strengthening areas. The legal basis for such an agreement is Article 217 of the agreement on the functioning of the European Union that was incorporated into the Treaty of Rome establishing the European Economic Community (EEC) and provided a means for further relations with the United Kingdom. The first countries to sign the association agreements with the European Union in 1960 were Greece and Turkey.

Today the associated members are Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Canada, Lebanon, Morocco, Mexico, Tunisia, South Africa, Chile and others - 17 countries including non-European ones. (5)

What does the Association Agreement mean to us?

In return for the associated membership, the EU imposes obligations on partner countries to carry out political, economic, trade and judicial reforms. The associate members have free access to some or all of the EU markets including the agricultural market. They also receive financial and technical assistance.

The Association Agreement often includes a free trade treaty. A free trade area is a type of integration the participants of which are not responsible for customs duties, a restriction on quantity regulated by the international agreements. This is a higher degree of integration than the preferential agreements. The members of a free trade area retain the right to determine their trade agreements with third countries. They are free from customs duties, trade barriers and have increased export opportunities. Their infrastructure and service industry develop rapidly.

The Association Agreement is a key instrument to bring the countries involved in the Eastern Partnership Program closer to EU standards and norms. It consists of four main parts dealing with a common foreign and security policy, law and internal affairs, a deep and comprehensive free trade area. The fourth part covers a number of issues including environmental protection, science, transport, and education. (6)

The Association Agreement for the countries involved in the Eastern Partnership program including Georgia differs in many respects from the agreements the UN offered to a number of other countries. We mean Europe's promise regarding a deep and comprehensive free trade area. Under this agreement, the countries involved in the Eastern Partnership Program declare their readiness to introduce the elements of EU law related to trade, customer rights, and environmental regulations. The countries that have signed the Deep and Comprehensive Trade Agreement will have to adopt approximately 350 EU laws within a period of ten years.

The agreement recognizes Georgia's European aspirations and choices and notes that Georgia and the EU member states have historical relations and shared values on which the UN is based on - democracy, the protection of human rights and freedom, and the rule of law, that are also the corner-stone of political association and economic integration. It states that Georgia, as an Eastern European country must be guided by these values and promote their establishment. However, the association does not mean joining the European Union. (7)

What has changed since signing the agreement in terms of resolving issues that are particularly painful for us (for example, in terms of conflict resolution)?

It should be noted that the original draft of the agreement did not include a separate article on peaceful resolution of the conflicts. It was incorporated in the document as a result of the efforts of the Georgian negotiating delegation. Accordingly, the agreement gives enough attention to the most important issue for Georgia. The parties reaffirm their commitment to a peaceful resolution of the conflict with full respect for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders. Particular attention is also paid to the joint efforts that should be made for the post-conflict rehabilitation and reconciliation. A peaceful resolution of the conflict will be one of the main topics of political dialogue between the parties, as well as with other relevant international actors.

The parties recognize the importance of the six-point ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008 and its subsequent implementing measures, with joint efforts, in accordance with the Non-Recognition and Engagement Policy, the Geneva International Discussions and the principles of international law, safe and dignified return of all internally displaced people and refugees to their places of residence and effective international engagement including the involvement of the UN if necessary. The parties shall promote a gradual rapprochement in the field of foreign and security policy, including a common security and defense policy. The parties state that foreign troops should be deployed on their territory with the consent of the host state in accordance with international law. The parties shall also enhance practical cooperation in the field of conflict prevention and crisis management, in particular, with regard to Georgia's possible participation in the operations of EU military and civilian crisis management and relevant training.

As for visa liberalization, which Georgian citizens were eagerly awaiting, the agreement intended the promotion of citizen mobility, but visa liberalization was considered as an independent process within the framework of cooperation with the EU. One of the key preconditions for achieving the visa-free travel in the EU-Georgia visa dialogue format was the effective implementation of the Visa Liberalization Action Plan. Georgia has achieved some success in implementing the Action Plan. On February 2 2017, the European Parliament approved visa liberalization for Georgia. The visa free travel that was the result of the implementation of the VLAP by our country has enabled the Georgian citizens to travel in 22 EU member states, 4 non-EU and 4 Schengen candidate countries (except the UK and Ireland) for 90 days in every 180 days.

The visa-free travel for Georgia caused different reactions among the EU member states naming mass migration as the main threat. The Georgian citizens have enjoyed visa free travel for several years but now Georgia and its government are facing a new challenge or discussing the revision of the visa suspension mechanism. Of course, even the announcement of a possible cancellation of the visa-free travel, let alone its actual cancellation, negatively impacts the country's image and is detrimental to Georgia's interests. In addition, this may lead to the strengthening of the political and public forces being skeptical about the UN in the country. (8) Therefore, the government should give more information to its citizens on possible consequences of visa violations. They should work hard to create new jobs to solve the problem of unemployment to make their citizens see Europe as a travel destination and not as a place of illegal employment.

Finally, a number of our citizens believe that Georgia will become a member of the European Union. According to EU requirements, the country wishing to join the Union must meet all the criteria, although during previous enlargement they often turned the blind eye to the requirements when accepting new members which shows that is not enough to fulfill the criteria set by the EU. Their political will is also required that depends on political conjuncture. In any case, European integration is a step forward for Georgia on the European path and, regardless of whether we will be accepted or not, we should try to live and act in accordance with the European standards perceiving people and their well-being to be the primary concern and goal.

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INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION FACTORS

Abstract

International organizations carry out many activities in the field of conflict resolution. In case of conflicts or potential conflicts, their scientific analysis and diagnosis should be carried out. International organizations should consider the following important factors in their work: Analysis of the political system of the conflicting parties, their components, links and interactions: identifying and determining separate conflicts, identifying major conflict trends; extrapolation of conflicting events (the possibility of its future development; synthesis of conflicting events, their interaction. Without considering these factors, it would be impossible to regulate them in Georgia and other conflict regions. International organizations should more actively use mediation in conflict resolution. It is very important to identify and know possible conflict escalation indicators applying short and medium term forecasting research methods.

Conflict management, ways of regulating and resolving it, has always been considered the most difficult field. This problem is particularly crucial in the 21st century, the beginning of which brought the worst wars and conflicts to the humankind.

The issue of peaceful world has concerned mankind for centuries. Will the prophecy of the great philosopher Immanuel Kant, that man will eventually establish eternal peace, be justified? I think it's possible in the distant prospect. However, it should be noted - despite the fact that for more than two centuries, humanity has undergone two world wars and dozens of regional armed conflicts, we have grounds to think - Kant's prophecy, which was considered by some people as a part of fantasy and utopia, is at least partially true.

The states founded on the principle of liberalism and democracy do not engage themselves in war against one another, and even today, international confrontation is characterized by more diverse, relatively mild approaches and tendencies. However, large and powerful states avoid the obvious use of "hard power" and often refer to the "soft power" phenomenon in international relations.

In our opinion, this trend is further reinforced by the fact that adherence to the norms of international law has made the work of international organizations effective in the field of conflict resolution. As it is known, international law states the initiator of aggressive war and aggressive conflicts to be outlawed. The initiatives of the UN to use military force to resolve conflicts (eg. Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq, etc.) have become real. A separate area - "International Humanitarian Law" - has also been developed, which includes treaties, conventions and other acts to protect human rights during conflicts. Norms and rules of international law limit the possibility of conflict and war, and in case of starting the conflict, establish rules of compulsory conduct, prohibit the use of weapons, protect peaceful population, as well as material values.

In such conditions, the role of international organizations in conflict resolution is increasing. These organizations address a wide range of activities and procedures aimed at extinguishing

conflicts and restoring peace. Under the auspices of international organizations and with the participation of the European Union, funding was provided for an extremely important research on conflicts in general and in particular conflicts in the South Caucasus [see : Gurgenidze V.P. “The Role of International Organizations in Conflict Management and Resolution”. Tb, 2014, p.11].

At the beginning of the 21st century, the work of international organizations in the field of conflict resolution and regulation has become relatively sophisticated, purposeful and scientifically perfect.

Under the auspices of international organizations, the UN program conducts scholarly study and analysis of conflicts. The object of particular research is to identify the essence of conflicts, and to manage, resolve or transform them. Stages of conflict and geography of conflicts are defined, conflict impact strategy is developed and conflict impact mechanism is refined. Nonviolent methods of conflict impact are elaborated, as well as plans for further liquidation of conflicts - ways to eliminate material and social damage.

In order to prevent the conflict from becoming a “de facto” unexpected event, the following preventive measures and objective factors need to be taken into account: existence of an effective legal and normative framework is necessary, which introduces basic legal norms of conflict prevention and regulation at the legislative level. The above mentioned legal norms should operate on the level of both the political system (the state) and international relations. In the first case, the basis of such a legal system is the constitution of a particular country and the relevant legislative acts, and in the second case, the prevention, regulation and settlement of conflicts at a higher level should be actively pursued by international law and by the statutes and programs of international organizations.

The mentioned process is more or less underway, but not with appropriate activities and pace. In this process it is necessary for all parties to take active participation in all conflicts or possible conflicts under the auspices of an international organization.

There is a need for the subjects of the political process, the parties to the conflict or the possible conflict to be prepared in order to comply with the relevant legal norms. It is essential to identify, define potential conflict zones at all levels and monitor them; and later to take action for their localization.

We are actively working on these problems and will soon publish a work that will provide an innovative approach to the author’s view on these problems.

All of the issues and paradigms listed above should be the subject of scientific research for the international organizations. Qualitative and quantitative methodological research of this problem (phenomenon) should be carried out in quite limited period of time, with maximum utilization of the research design and its analysis.

Thus, in case of conflict development or potential conflict, it is necessary to carry out the scientific analysis and diagnostics. These processes include:

Identifying the causes and motives of the conflicts;

Defining the real subjects (parties) of the conflict and their supporters (political forces, states, groups of states) driven by their own political interests;

Identifying and revealing the level of conflicting attitudes of expectations, parties to the conflict;

Evaluating the nature and essence of external conditions of a conflict.

We completely agree with the view of the researcher A.N. Chumakov about the fact, that the most important stage of conflict regulation, management and resolution is institutionalization, legitimization, structuring of the parties and reduction. [See :Чумаков А.Н. Управление и урегулирование конфликтов. М., 2018, стр.48/Chumakov A.N. Conflict Management and Resolution. М., 2018, p. 48]

In our next publication, we will certainly share the abovementioned, proper opinion of A. N. Chumakov and at the same time will analyze our own view on these paradigms.

What is represented by each above mentioned paradigm:

Institutionalization of the conflict implies identification of general principles and rules of its resolution;

Within the framework of legitimacy, the parties to the conflict are prepared to be ready for recognizing and subsequently enforcing existing international legal norms and rules;

Structuring involves defining the interests of the conflicting parties (subjects);

During the process of reduction, the conflict or its dangers should be gradually neutralized and brought to a lower, less dangerous level.

The ideas and recommendations listed above for conflict prevention and regulation can be successfully applied by international and regional international organizations.

In general, it should be mentioned, that studies on these problems have established two general principles of conflict management and regulation: gradual and synchronous, and a very important phase of realization based on these principles [see the work of mentioned author].

The gradual principle allows the parties to prepare for conflict resolution and settlement after adapting to each other, implying the establishment of relationships and the gradual slowdown of conflict tension. In the process of implementing these initiatives, events should be stabilized, violent actions should be neutralized, dialogues should be initiated and negotiations should be prepared. Often these actions are either not taken by the international organizations or their effectiveness is too low. Next step of the process is the start of negotiations and implementation of the reached agreement.

Existing political, legal, and sociological literature has outlined several ways of conflict regulation and resolution during the past decade:

- Prevention of the object of conflicts;
- Changing one object by the other;
- Dividing the object of conflict between the parties;
- Avoiding one part of the conflict;
- Changing the positions of one or both parties to the conflict;
- Changing the characteristics of the object of conflict;
- Changing conditions on the subject of conflict based on new information;
- Deployment of peacekeeping, military contingent in the conflict zone;
- Reaching a consensus on the basis of a joint decision of the parties to the conflict;
- Resolution of conflict by the forceful methods.

International organizations use all the above mentioned conflict regulation and resolution instruments in practice. We are trying to systematize them in order to increase the effectiveness of the work of these organizations in regard to Georgia.

We believe that international organizations should take into account historical, psychological, economic and ethnographic researches conducted in Georgia during the process of conflict management, prevention and resolution. In addition, it is very important to actuate a gradual action system of conflict forecasting, which is not implemented and if it is, at a minimal level. This action does not take into account such important factors as:

- Analyzes of the political systems of the conflicting parties, identification of their components, relations and interactions;
- Identification and separation of key factors of conflicts;
- Identification of development directions of major conflict trends;
- Extrapolation of conflicting events (its future development opportunity);
- Synthesis of conflicting events and their interaction;
- Identification of the complex development of political systems;

It is nonsense to resolve two major conflicts in Georgia without envisaging the above mentioned factors.

It is worth emphasizing that today the activities of the international organizations from the perspective of conflict management prevention and forecasting in Georgia relate only to monitoring this process.

Implementation of conflict forecasting operation and envisaging the mentioned factors requires the use of certain methods. Providing all these factors, we believe that the following methods should be actively used in conflict forecasting:

- Extrapolation method;
- Analogy method;
- Scenario method;
- Expert evaluation method;
- Conflict modulation method.

We understand that conflict management, prevention and forecasting is a protracted, long process. It is characterized by the specific procedures, but for Georgia, for its territorial sovereignty, it is extremely undesirable and catastrophic. We have noted that conflict resolution involves its management, in order to resolve disputes and disagreements in a peaceful way.

Decision-making is one of the key phenomena in conflict management process. We are well aware that a quick, inconsiderate, unforeseen and unexpected decision-making is inexpedient, wrong, but to put it mildly, delay can also be detrimental in the current situation.

It is complex and multi-stage in the conflict management process, as a technological process. The main direction and the ultimate goal of action are determined according to the decisions made. The contextual and organizational-structural features of the decisions are determined by the character of the state and public-political spheres in which realization of the given decision is envisaged.

Control and supervision in conflict management can be defined as monitoring the implementation of a decision made. Management control is needed to ensure that all parties to the conflict have comprehensive information on how the decision made is implemented, whether the decision made and its accomplishment is in compliance with the main purpose and objective - conflict regulation and resolution.

We disagree with some conflictologists and representatives of international organizations who believe that in some cases it is necessary to exacerbate the situation in conflict management process when it is necessary to accomplish any political task. [See: Gurgenidze V.P., Tsereteli N.D. The Role of International Organizations in Conflict Management and Resolution. Tb, 2012, p. 20-21]

They believe that international organizations working in the field of conflict resolution and settlement often have to realize that they strive not for resolving conflicts but for exacerbating and revealing them so that the problem is widely acknowledged by the international community and that effective measures are taken to resolve it.

Such a practice, if it is actually implemented by any international organization, is completely inadmissible and abolishable, because intensification and escalation of the conflict can become a source of provocation of massacre for opposing parties that can result in the terrible tragedy. The principle of “end justifies the means” cannot be applied here.

Applying this method in the current conflict situation can actively promote unmanageable processes at any stage that practically will not be subject to positive control.

It is well known that conflict intensification and activation play important role in conflict management, which means revealing the covert conflict in order to resolve it in a non-violent way. There are two important concepts in the conflict management conception: conflict intensification and conflict escalation. In the first case, the conflict develops non-violently, and in the second case violence prevails.

The hidden or latent conflict does not appear at the superficial level and, as mentioned above, may require detection in order to prevent it effectively. But for detection, it is necessary to study the essence, causes and nature of the conflict at the scientific level. In order not to get a deplorable result, international organizations should only act in this direction and not with the methods discussed above. Although the approach we share does not require scarce material and moral resources, ultimately spending these resources and finances will be adequate, justified and far less than advanced, irreversible and uncontrollable. Our proposal is, of course, very modest and is announced on the request level. Georgia and its population are grateful for the efforts that Europe and its international organizations have made towards it.

Georgia clearly remembers the position and approaches of Europe in the early 20th century, especially the active actions of Germany and its organizations, as a result of which Georgia retained its territorial integrity and did not lose a significant part of Kartli and Adjara.

Open conflict is distinguished by the fact that it has deep roots, is easily recognizable, and its resolution needs long time and effective actions to be taken.

Superficial conflict has a weak foundation and in most cases does not have deep roots. Such conflict is simple and easily noticeable. Its solution does not require a long period of time and great political effort. Such conflict can be resolved on the level of negotiations in a short period of time.

Conflict suppression engenders new problems in the future. The conflicting situation implies not only its settlement but it also can cause a serious problem. Conflict turns into violence when there are no appropriate channels for having dialogue or expressing disagreement, and the clear example of this is the unsolved, ongoing conflicts in Georgia:

- No attention is paid to contradictory idea, covert dissatisfaction and accordingly, they are not led to the desired way:

- Sense of instability, injustice and fear has been settled in the society.

At the present stage, the tendency of escalation and intensification of the conflict is evident when the country suffers from political destabilization, political system fluctuations and destructive events. This view is strengthened by the events that have developed not only in Georgia but also in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Moldova over the last twenty years. Therefore, the primary task of these countries is to establish stability at the domestic political level, and we believe that the task of the international organizations involved in conflict resolution is to consider the nuances.

Thus, the conflict resolution process manages the conflict, and by managing the conflict the contradictions of the parties to the conflict are resolved and the degree of tension is shifted to positive. It should also be noted that international organizations are not actively assisting the parties to the conflict and hardly contribute to seeing the conflict process in a new way. We cannot say that international organizations, together with the parties involved in the conflict, are not looking for joint directions for problem regulation and resolution, but we consider, that these actions can be more effective and positive. Through more active involvement and participation of international organizations, bitter conflicts can become less destructive and can be resolved relatively easier.

International organizations, where possible, should more actively and convincingly promote improved communication between the parties to the conflict. In this respect, it is true that conflict management involves the mediation of conflict itself, since in practice international organizations sometimes successfully and often unsuccessfully apply mediation techniques and methods in the process of conflict resolution. The role of the mediator of international organizations should be revealed when the opposing parties are close to the condition of sitting down at the negotiating table.

Throughout the conflict, the conflicting parties may find the positive potential, approach and willingness to mediate that will facilitate constructive dialogue and through the promotion of mediator come to conflict settlement and resolution.

We believe that the involvement of international organizations in the process of mediation adds the effectiveness and persuasion to conflict management and achievement of ultimate results.

By means of mediation, international organizations should be more actively advise opposing parties to resolve existing conflicts themselves, instead of allowing other institutions and individuals to resolve them and make decisions on their behalf, what is less effective, less positive and in many cases unacceptable, considering the existing experience.

In our opinion, mediating function of international organizations is not, and should not be a process loaded with legal elements that will identify the guilty party and then impose sanctions. Such circumstances will lead to tension among the parties, negative attitudes, and descending motivation to resolve the conflict.

Mediators or groups of mediators of international organizations should facilitate the active participation of the parties in the negotiation process, make the parties to the conflict to feel that they are the main participants in the problem resolution, and mediator is just a means in the process of conflict resolution.

In the mediation activity of the international organizations there should be no biased approach or support to one side of the conflict or search for right and wrong.

All parties to the conflict should be interested in the mediation of international organizations. This is a necessary process for all, considering, that in case of success, all parties will win.

At the modern stage mediation of the international organizations, as a means of conflict management and resolution is the most neutral and we think the most objective form.

Thus, the logical outcome of conflict management and resolution is generally aimed at resolving it, while the process of conflict management limits violence and prevents it in the future in order to promote constructive positive change in the actions of the parties to the conflict.

In a conflict situation, where the potential conflict still is not led to the stage of escalation, it is really essential to gain trust between the parties. It is very important to work deliberately on any incident so that the parties can go through small tests of trust and restore the relationship even by taking short steps. At this stage, by means of careful negotiations, confidence and motivation are restored first in a minimal dose and later at full capacity, finally having an important impact on the process.

In order to prevent conflict escalation and its turning into violence, international organizations, in agreement with the conflicting parties, should establish and fund specific sociological groups that will thoroughly study and understand the socio-dynamics of existing conflict development and identify and analyze their key elements. In particular:

- Anticipate the intentions, plans and future actions of the parties involved;
- Identify their strengths and capabilities;
- Determine the stages and peculiarities of the conflicts taken separately;
- Identify the existing contradictions;
- Determine action plans in accordance with the current situation;
- Study the previous conflict situation and monitor the given processes;
- Establish relationships and contract with potential conflicting parties;
- Find new ways and directions for conflict prevention.

All the above mentioned should be taken into consideration in terms of prevention in the process of negotiation. At the same time it is very important to identify and know possible conflict escalation indicators by using short and medium-term forecasting research methods.

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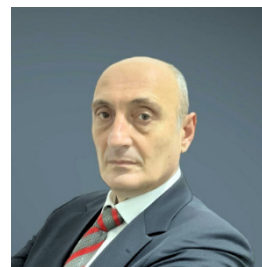
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR AND THE NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR REGIONAL COOPERATION BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE COUNTRIES OF THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

Abstract

The article discusses the geopolitical and geoeconomic perspectives of the South Caucasus countries (Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia) against the backdrop of the Russia-Ukraine war.

The relevance of the work is determined by the global processes taking place in the modern world.

According to the paper, within the framework of the concept of restoration of the “Great Silk Road,” it is necessary to expand the existing transport corridor connecting Europe and Asia (TRACECA),¹ and interstate projects for the transportation of oil and gas (INOGATE),² which includes the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan, Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum, and Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway projects and is the reason of the successful operation of these projects.³

According to the opinion expressed in the paper, the geographical area of the participants in these processes should be expanded by involving the new states.

In addition, new energy projects must be prepared, which will help to reduce Russia’s influence over the European energy market and increase the inclusion of alternative sources, which will become the basis for increasing the role of the South Caucasus.

This offers the countries of the South Caucasus a new opportunity to further deepen cooperation with the European Union.

1 See more: <http://www.traceca-org.org/en/technical-assistance/>

2 See more: <http://www.inogate.org/?lang=en>

3 Pazhava E, Georgia-Turkey energy cooperation at the modern stage Journal of Business Engineering. pp. 103-107.

Keywords: Europe; South Caucasus; Georgia; Azerbaijan; Turkey; Armenia.

INTRODUCTION

Russia-Ukraine war and the new world order

Russia's declaration of war against Ukraine on 24 February 2022, proved that Russia's imperial ambitions are still relevant in the 21st century. Russia still has ambitions to restore the Soviet past.

Russia's ambition is to change the generally recognized principles of international relations, create a new geopolitical situation, and establish its own rules of the game, the civilized world must not allow this ambition of Russia to be realized, otherwise, it will create even more problems (puzzles) for the world in the future and constantly face new problems.

Russia's ambitions to change the world-recognized principles of international relations, to create a new geopolitical situation, and to establish its own rules of the game should not be allowed by the civilized world, otherwise, it will create lots of problems around the world, and may lead to the fatal consequences.

Russia's aggression in Ukraine has created a new reality not only in Europe, but throughout the world, and in this regard, the countries of the South Caucasus are no exception.

New opportunities for cooperation between the European Union and the countries of the South Caucasus

Since all three countries of the South Caucasus are members of the Eastern Partnership Initiative of the European Union. Georgia is additionally a candidate country for Association Membership.

Against the backdrop of Russian aggression, the prospects for cooperation between the countries of the South Caucasus and the European Union in the aspect of the regional dimension are of an important issue to us.

In this regard, the European Union has already taken the corresponding steps. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev signed a Memorandum of Understanding.⁴ The parties agreed to double the import of gas from Azerbaijan until 2027.⁵

In addition to energy cooperation, against the backdrop of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the countries of the South Caucasus have a chance to become a regional transport and logistics hub.⁶

Since international carriers are actively trying to diversify cargo routes, Georgia itself has a chance to become a regional transport and logistics hub.

The opening of the Trans-Caspian corridor will help to create new trade opportunities for the countries of the Caucasus and Central Asia. The development of the corridor will increase the economic potential of the countries represented in the region and will contribute to the development of logistics and transport hubs.

4 Statement by President von der Leyen with Azerbaijani President Aliyev. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/STATEMENT_22_4583

5 Radio Free Europe. Azerbaijan Says Will Increase Gas Exports To Europe This Year By 30 Percent. 2022. <https://www.rferl.org/a/azerbaijan-increase-eu-gas-exports/32029812.html>

6 Tolordava G. It is very important for Georgia to become a transport and logistics hub. Internet portal BMG. 2021

RESEARCH RESULTS

As a result of the presented research, it is possible to:

Further deepen the relationships between the European Union, Turkey, The countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia;

Increase the role of the countries of the South Caucasus at the international level;

Deepen regional and international cooperation⁷

Actively involve the region in the implementation of new economic and energy projects;

Implement promising initiatives at the regional and international levels.⁸

CONCLUSION

According to the presented work, it can be concluded that against the backdrop of Russian aggression, the prospects of cooperation of the South Caucasus countries with the European Union will increase;

And Russia's ambitions to change the globally recognized principles of international relations are unrealistic and unpromising against the backdrop of the recent development of events:

On the other hand, the energy crisis caused by the Russia-Ukraine war allows the volume of energy projects to increase, and in addition to the European Union, Turkey and the South Caucasus countries, Central Asian countries will also be involved in it;

Besides, South Caucasus countries have a chance to become regional transport and logistics hubs.

As for Armenia, it is possible for them to be included in the energy projects, though they need foreign policy revision.

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THE CONFLICT IN UKRAINE AS A FACILITATOR OF NORMALIZATION BETWEEN TÜRKİYE AND ARMENIA

Abstract:

The war in Ukraine has attributed a new meaning and significance to the normalization of relations between Türkiye and Armenia on many counts. Türkiye has economic and political expectations from the latest diplomatic talks. For Ankara, Russian support is also an asset. From the Armenian standpoint, economic forecasts accompany political objectives and military expectations. Improving relations with Türkiye will go beyond a bilateral scheme by having an impact upon the conflict with Azerbaijan. The new diplomatic process is also important for Yerevan in a context of re-appraisal of relations with Moscow.

Russia, for its part, supports the new dynamic of Turco-Armenian *rapprochement*. One reason is the increased importance of stability in the Caucasus. Ankara-Yerevan tensions and especially Baku-Yerevan clashes jeopardize Russia's dominant position in the region -its war against Ukraine makes its position even worse. Russia also needs to maintain good relations with Türkiye especially because of a variety of factors including the latter's particular diplomatic position in the war in Ukraine.

Introduction:

Since January 2022, Türkiye and Armenia are in a new process of normalization. A month earlier, with the appointment of "special representatives", the two sides confirmed their intention to engage in diplomatic processes and improve their relations. The new format is revealing. By adopting it, both Ankara and Yerevan have indicated their willingness to engage in direct and high-level negotiations with each other. Besides, the personalities charged with the task (a senior political figure in Yerevan and a highly experienced diplomat on Turkish side) demonstrate the importance that the two capitals place on the latest initiative.

On various occasions, both representatives have affirmed their objective of "full normalization" of relations. Such declarations rather lead to suspicion, in light of the deep-seated issues that have marred the relations between Ankara and Yerevan for decades -especially the

grievances that followed the deportation of Ottoman Armenians during the World War I. The historical burden on Turco-Armenian relations has made the full normalization quasi-impossible.

In such a context, it would be highly ambitious to expect rapid and meaningful progress in political and economic fields. Yet, some -although limited- achievements are encouraging. Press reports indicate that the land border between the two countries, closed since April 1993, will gradually open as a consequence of negotiations between special representatives. It is in the same framework that Türkiye recently agreed to lift the embargo on airfreight traffic with Armenia. Direct (passenger-carrying) flights that were running before the Nagorno-Karabakh War are restored. While exploring how Kremlin's "special military operation" in Ukraine has impacted the new dialogue between Ankara and Yerevan, one can tend to believe that more is to come. For Türkiye, the initiative is not only timely, but it also fits into the politico-strategic context (I). Besides, Armenia has a new perspective vis-à-vis Türkiye (II) and valid reasons to re-evaluate her relations with Russia (III). Last but not least, Kremlin has its own reasons to support the Turco-Armenian normalization (IV).

1. Normalisation: A timely move by Ankara in an appropriate politico-strategic context

Türkiye recognized the sovereignty of Armenia in 1991, less than two months after the declaration of independence. Nevertheless, establishing good neighbourly relations with the latter has been an elusive foreign policy objective for Turkish policy-makers. Despite the recognition, the two states could not open diplomatic representations on each other's soil. Worse still, as a reaction to the Karabakh War between Azerbaijan and Armenia, Türkiye blocked its border with Armenia in 1993 after the latter's establishment of control over the Azerbaijani region of Kalbajar (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Türkiye). Ever since, Türkiye and Armenia have been involved in various diplomatic initiatives to no avail.

The most solemn diplomatic move between Yerevan and Ankara, made in 2008, has gone down in history as a disappointment although it had paved the way for the signing of Zurich Protocols at the ministerial level. The signing ceremony garnered international attention especially due to the attendance of the United States Secretary of State, European Union High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, along with French and Russian Ministers of Foreign Affairs. During this process of *rapprochement*, even the Turkish and Armenian leaders had come together through a World Cup qualifier -an event that was called as "football diplomacy". Yet, optimism has faded in time and Turco-Armenian declarations of good intentions were not followed up with policy change. National parliaments' failure of ratification have prevented the implementation of the protocols. As of yet, the two countries have not established diplomatic relations.

Türkiye has indeed many reasons to show interest in normalizing relations with Armenia. In fact, such a process could lead to economic opportunities for both countries. Opening the border will certainly be beneficial for Turkish economy, especially for its eastern regions (Giragosian, 2021). Improved trade relations and investments can bolster economic growth and generate employment opportunities for both nations (Movchan, 2022). Normalisation will also fulfil Turkish foreign policy objectives by contributing to regional stability and solidifying her position of actorness in the Caucasus. Besides, it will partly deflect the international pressure due to the tragedy of 1915: Although the process is not expected to lead Türkiye to recognize the

genocide, it will still show that she can engage in a constructive dialogue with a state despite the heavy burden of the World War I legacy.

In this context that a new initiative of normalisation started in December 2021. This time, Turkish and Armenian governments preferred to appoint special representatives. This reciprocal move unambiguously indicates the importance that both capitals attach to a new round of negotiation process. Serdar Kılıç, an experienced diplomat who has held key positions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, represents Türkiye. He is known in diplomatic circles particularly with his sustained endeavour against the recognition of the Armenian genocide by the US Congress during his ambassadorship in Washington. Armenia's Special Representative Ruben Rubinyan, an experienced politician, is the vice President of the Armenian National Assembly -where he formerly chaired the Standing Committee on Foreign Relations.

Delegations led by Messrs. Kılıç and Rubinyan held four rounds of negotiations between January and July 2022, once in Moscow and thrice in Vienna. An outcome of symbolic value that the new diplomatic process has generated was a face-to-face meeting between Turkish and Armenian heads of the executive on the sidelines of an European Union (EU) summit in October the same year. More practical results concerned the resumption of direct flights between the two countries -after an almost two years of hiatus. The opening of the land border for third-country citizens' crossing, along with the lifting of air-cargo transportation also count among the progress achieved through the negotiation rounds. In February 2023, the land border opened to allow Armenia's earthquake aid to Türkiye for the first time since Turkish Red Crescent's expedition of humanitarian relief supplies destined to the 1988 Spitak earthquake victims (Reuters, 2023; Yıldız, 2023).

At present, there are two reasons for being -cautiously- optimistic about where the special representatives' diplomatic endeavours can lead. One of them concerns Azerbaijan. That the process is launched after the Second *Nagorno-Karabakh War*, during which Türkiye has supported her Caucasian ally, seems hardly coincidental. After 1992, Türkiye has related the normalisation with Erevan to a negotiated settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue and the withdrawal of Armenian forces from the region. The fact that the War ended with Azerbaijan's victory and the subsequent control over most of Nagorno-Karabakh significantly unburdened Turkish diplomacy and made the new series of diplomatic negotiations between Ankara and Yerevan possible.

What is more, Armenia and Azerbaijan have engaged in several negotiation schemes. Between December 2021 and August 2022, Aliyev and Pashinian met four times in Brussels with the presence of the European Council's President Charles Michel. In October the same year, Azeri and Armenian heads of executive met on the sidelines of the EU's European Political Community summit in Prague as well. Later the same month, Putin hosted them in Sochi. Many ministerial-level meetings between Baku and Yerevan have complemented these initiatives throughout 2022. Although Baku-Yerevan dialogue has proved fruitless so far, Turkish government observes the process with particular attention in the new context of negotiations with Armenia.

Another reason touches upon Russia's aim to maintain good relations with Türkiye. Despite intermittent foreign policy divergences, both Ankara and Moscow carry on political cooperation. In fact, they have a special and sophisticated relationship where strategic interests meet. Relations between the two states gained a new dimension following the "special military

operation” in Ukraine, although Turkish foreign policy choices have not always favoured Russia. Interestingly, Ankara has managed to condemn the war while keeping diplomatic channels open with Kremlin and providing political and military support to Kyiv (Gözkaman, 2022). Hence, in the wake of the conflict, Türkiye supported the United Nation General Assembly’s (UNGA) condemnation of Russia over its invasion of Ukraine. In April 2022, she was one of the 93 states that voted in favour of a UNGA resolution which preconized Russia’s suspension from the United Nations Human Rights Council. In September the same year, Turkish Foreign Ministry stated its objection to Russia’s annexation of four Ukrainian oblasts -Donetsk, Kherson, Luhansk and Zaporizhzhia- and depicted the decision as a “grave violation” of international law. Moreover, as a justification of the will to “remain on the side of the Ukrainian friends”, Ankara did not shy away from providing combat UAVs to strengthen Ukrainian air defence system to the detriment of Russian military forces.

Despite this rather ill-disposed attitude vis-à-vis the Russian government, Turkish foreign policy has been able to accomplish diplomatic success by obtaining Moscow’s consent on two particularly sensitive issues. One of them is about the brokering of a “grain deal”, where the United Nations has also played a part in the successful completion of negotiations. Signed on 22 July 2022 in Istanbul, the *Initiative on the Safe Transportation of Grain and Foodstuffs from Ukrainian Ports* allowed the delivery of Ukrainian grain -along with foodstuffs and fertilizers- from Odesa, Chornomorsk and Pivdenny seaports to international markets (France 24, 2022; Euronews, 2022b). The deal was highly important because the Ukrainian cereals had remained blocked in the Black Sea ports for several months due to the Russian invasion. Again, in November 2022, Turkish diplomacy was successful in persuading the Russian executive to return to the agreement a few days after they had decided to abandon it. The second important diplomatic success concerns a prisoner exchange, made possible with initiatives taken by Ankara. In an interview to the American public media outlet PBS, Turkish president declared that Russia and Ukraine reached an agreement to free 200 prisoners (Le Figaro, 2022).

These two achievements reflect the position of Ankara as a mediator in the conflict and illustrate its capacity of holding a sustainable dialogue -with both Russia and Ukraine- that can pave the way for diplomatic success. Here, the point that deserves underlining is that Türkiye is the only member state of NATO that can go thus far in keeping communication channels open with Russia. All these considerations demonstrate the importance of Ankara for Moscow and justify the assumption that Russia has a clear interest in supporting Turco-Armenian negotiations. From this perspective, there are reasonable grounds to maintain that Ankara aims to seize the opportunity and make the maximum progress in its relations with Yerevan.

2. The change of perspective in Armenia vis-à-vis the normalization

Public opinion can legitimize or constrain foreign policy decisions. If a large percentage of the public supports a particular foreign policy approach, politicians may be more likely to pursue that approach in order to maintain voters’ backing. Domestic support can also influence the level of cooperation with other states. The higher a popular endorsement of a foreign policy decision, the more policy-makers will pursue diplomatic efforts. In Armenia, the public support to the normalization has grown in time and offered a favorable environment for taking concrete steps to improve relations with Türkiye. The opinion poll conducted in Armenia in

early 2022 by a US-based institute indicates the existence of a strong popular support for the improvement of relations with Türkiye. Those who believe that bilateral relations between the two states should be established represented 70% of the respondents¹ -with the proviso that Türkiye does not hinder the Armenian objectives in Nagorno-Karabakh (International Republican Institute, 2022).

The above-mentioned popular support has found its reflection in the political sphere as well. Yerevan's will to rebuild diplomatic channels with Ankara made its way following the elections of June 2021. That the government of Pashinyan has not put forward 'preconditions' to start the special-envoy-led diplomatic negotiations clearly indicates the will, in the Armenian capital, of making progress towards the normalization. Economy has certainly been an important factor that drove the Armenian authorities to accept a new round of negotiations with their Turkish counterparts. Opening the border with Türkiye would provide significant benefits for both countries, especially for Armenia, with an immense increase of the trade volume. Tourism will also have a positive impact upon Armenian economy. Economically speaking, it seems reasonable to maintain that the timing of the negotiation rounds has been convenient as well. Following the "special operation" launched by Russia, the economic growth forecasts on Armenia fell from 5,3% to 1,5% (Agha, 2022; IMF, 2022). Authorities in Yerevan may have thought that improving relations with Ankara would help maximize their national interests by mitigating the negative consequences of the war in Ukraine.

The current context of conflict with Azerbaijan has also played in favour of the new round of diplomatic negotiations between Türkiye and Armenia. Clashes between the two states have intensified since the latter has started. There is a fear that Azerbaijan will further use Russian invasion of Ukraine as an "opportunity" to obtain tactical gains on the ground. Already before Russia's "special military operation" in Ukraine, Azerbaijan had been accused of intimidating Armenia via military means and coercive diplomacy methods (Fults & Stronski, 2022). In March 2022, Armenian and Nagorno-Karabakh authorities accused Azerbaijan for the two disruptions of natural gas to the enclave. Later on, despite the fragile peace talks that convened the following month under the auspices of the European Union, Armenian media outlets have reported various crossings of the "Line of Contact" by Azerbaijani forces in spring and summer periods. In August, Armenia called on the international community for help to take measures and to activate necessary mechanisms for stopping Azerbaijan's "aggressive attitude and actions" (Radio France Internationale, 2022).

The clashes of September and November 2022 have all the more intensified the feeling of insecurity in Armenia. During the military confrontation of September, the number of casualties that the two sides suffered reached 286 -the highest number since the Nagorno-Karabakh War of 2020 (Euronews, 2022a). Just a week before a new border conflict started in November, Messrs. Pashinian and Aliyev had pledged to refrain from the use force in a summit hosted by V. Putin in Russia. Besides, when the two leaders were accusing each other for responsibility, they were hours away from peace talks in Washington that the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken would host. Such intermittent military crises awaken the fear of a new Armenia-Azerbaijan war that would do a serious harm to the precarious stability in the region -a fear that is far from being baseless, since the War of 2020 claimed the lives of more than 6,500 people. Many diplomatic

¹ 1071 people were interviewed by phone during the survey.

initiatives -with the involvement of various international actors- have not proved effective for bringing Baku and Yerevan to hammer out a compromise.

Armenian concerns about Azerbaijan may also relate to a recent diplomatic progress that Vladimir Putin and İlham Aliyev made on the day that Russia recognized the breakaway republics -eastern Ukrainian provinces- Donetsk and Luhansk: The signing on the *Declaration on Allied Interaction between the Republic of Azerbaijan and the Russian Federation*. The forty-three-point declaration puts a strong emphasis on political and military fields while covering a broad range of areas. It seems difficult to believe that the timing of the move is coincidental. Because the agreement was adopted by the two states only two days before the “special military operation”, one has the right to believe that the head of Russian executive has sought Azerbaijan’s backing of the operation. For the authorities in Yerevan, such an attitude may be problematic, especially in a context that their country will need Kremlin’s support in the post-Karabakh-War period where regional stability is still out of sight as portrayed above.

Under these circumstances, the normalization with Ankara may be useful for Yerevan. One can point out the significant probability that Türkiye will deny -or, at least, seriously restrict- military assistance to Azerbaijan as long as she will remain engaged in the normalization talks. Recent history shows how crucial this kind of assistance can be: During the Nagorno-Karabakh War of 2020, the equipment with Turkish unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) played so decisive a role on Azerbaijan’s victory that President Aliyev awarded the senior figures of the UAV-producing company with the *Karabakh Order*². Armenian authorities may also have considered the possibility that their Turkish counterparts could have an impact on the limitation, if not the cessation, of Azerbaijani military operations.

3. Armenia-Russia relations: Yerevan at the crossroads

Strong relations between Russia and Armenia can be observed in various fields. On economic and commercial grounds, Russia stands out as a major partner of Armenia. The latter’s foreign trade figures for 2020 are telling: More than 26% of exportations were destined to Russian markets and almost a third of importations originated from Russian territory (WITS, 2020). Investment is also an indicator of how important a place Russia occupies in Armenia: Around 40% of foreign investments (nearing an amount of \$2 billion) are of Russian origin (ARKA News Agency, 2022). Besides, Armenia is a member of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) since 2015. As a platform that provides a framework for stronger economic and commercial ties among its five members (Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia), the EEU can naturally be considered of high importance for Yerevan’s development plans. It is also important to underscore that Russia has a peculiar place in this “Union”. Although the organization’s name emphasizes economy, it certainly matches Russia’s intentions to extend her political power over the ex-Soviet territory by capitalizing on the economic needs of the member states.

Russia occupies a significant place in Armenia’s energy sector as well. Armenia is the destination of significant Russian investment of energy infrastructure development including the construction of power plants and pipelines. In a similar vein, the agreements that Moscow and Yerevan have concluded touch upon a broad range of Russian resources such as natural gas and

² Aliyev awarded Mr. Selçuk Bayraktar, the architect of the drone, together with his father Özdemir Bayraktar and brother Haluk Bayraktar. They were consecutively the Chief Technology Officer, Chairman of the Board, and General Manager of Baykar Teknoloji (Azvision, 2021; Başaran, 2021).

nuclear fuel. Gazprom is the exclusive supplier of natural gas to Armenian consumers (Interfax, 2022a). Besides, Russia has some 85% share of the natural gas used in Armenia's thermal energy production. The totality of the fissile material used in Metsamor Nuclear Power Plant is provided by Russia as well. As the International Energy Agency reports, Armenia's dependence rate on Russian fuel for generating electricity approximates 70% (2022). Such a high level of energy dependence provides Russia with a high potential for political leverage in Armenia.

For long time, there have been grounds for both states to see each other as strategic partners. Armenia has been a member of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), since its inception, with the clear awareness that Russia would always remain as the prominent actor there. She has also secured substantial military support and security assistance from Russia. The two states have not only maintained close military ties after the dislocation of the USSR, but also committed to ensure their respective security. The post-Cold War period has thus seen a profound strategic partnership between the two states, as the *Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance* of 1997 illustrates. The document envisages "reciprocal use of military facilities and installations" in case of a threat to the security -or an "armed attack" on the soil- of the contracting parties. It also stipulates the possibility of "joint defence" to maintain peace or ensure "mutual security" (United Nations, 1997).

The *102nd base* in Gyumri that houses around 3.000 Russian troops is another evidence of close military ties. The base offers to Kremlin a valuable strategic advantage of permanent military presence in the Caucasus and an institutional proof of commitment to the security of Armenia. The Russo-Armenian military cooperation has intensified in recent years, as military exercises and weapons trade demonstrate. This process has provided Armenia with the possibility to benefit from Russian military technology and have access to military equipment -including tanks, armoured vehicles, and air defence systems. This strong presence provides Russia once again with a particular position in Armenia's foreign trade. As SIPRI reported in 2021, Russian arms sales accounted for 94% of Armenia's major arms importations between 2011 and 2020.

Foreign policy convergence between Moscow and Yerevan is consistent with this picture. Regional stability is one of the common items that stand out. Nevertheless, the two sides do not seem to share the same approach to the long-standing Armeno-Azerbaijani conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh. It goes beyond the scope of this study to present the historical development of the territorial dispute that has its roots in the pre-Soviet period. Yet, it seems important to underscore that the conflict has entered a new stage with the forty-four-day war that fundamentally altered the status quo of the post-1994 period: Azerbaijan regained control over most of Nagorno-Karabakh. Kremlin has not intervened militarily in the clashes, much to the dismay of Armenian authorities. Putin has affirmed that the collective security scheme whereby Moscow should provide military assistance to Yerevan in case of attack concerns only Armenian territory and not the Nagorno-Karabakh region (Markedonov, 2020). Indeed, he did not mean complete inertia: Kremlin could broker a ceasefire agreement in November 2020 and dispatched a force of interposition to the region. Thus, since 2020, around 2.000 Russian troops are present in Nagorno-Karabakh to supervise the ceasefire.

Since Russia's "special military operation" began, Armenia resents the presence of Russian peacekeeping forces. Many analyses point to the fact that Azerbaijan has "seized the

opportunity” and mounted pressure not only on Nagorno-Karabakh but also on Armenia.³ The border clashes that erupted in September 2022 between the two countries illustrate this point. Pashinian has been vocal in criticizing Moscow’s failure to act as a mediator during these clashes. In the same vein, he reprimanded CSTO’s inaction -Yerevan had called on the security organization to intervene in the conflict (La Libre Belgique, 2023). The Prime Minister also depicted Russian military forces in Karabakh as “silent witnesses of Azerbaijani aggression”, with the conviction that they were disregarding Azeri forces’ endeavour to remove Armenian populations from the region. Official reactions from the Armenian capital also concerned the blockage of Lachin corridor -the only route that connects Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia- by Azerbaijani nationals. Thus, Kremlin was once again in the line of fire for its inaction (Radio Canada, 2022). To note, the disruption worsened with the Russian military barricade whose objective was to prevent further escalation of the protest movement (Human Rights Watch, 2022).

It is on these grounds that the government of Yerevan refused to host the CSTO’s planned military exercises in January 2023. It is not difficult to relate this decision to Armenian government’s view that the organisation has failed to provide their security for Pashinian had openly declared Yerevan’s perspective in November 2022:

In the last two years, a CSTO member-state has been attacked by Azerbaijan at least three times, and actually, till now, we have not received any reaction from the CSTO regarding Azerbaijan's aggression, which is a big blow to the CSTO's image (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2022).

It would not be wrong to assume that the new context has also led to a profound re-evaluation of Yerevan’s relations with Moscow. Yerevan did not opt for reprimanding the war that Russia has been waging in Ukraine. In addition, Armenian policymakers have for long believed that their strategic cooperation with their Russian counterparts would guarantee the status quo in Nagorno-Karabakh. Their assumption was that the de facto Armenian administration in Nagorno-Karabakh suited Russian interests as well. Now, the realities are different. In the current context, a pro-Russian stance strongly risks to create a significant handicap for Armenia’s relations with the West (and particularly with the European Union). Besides, as the director of a Yerevan-based research centre opines, if Putin decides to carry out a new military operation in order to make up for his failure in Ukraine, he could ask for “loyalty” from -and put further strain on- traditional allies such as Armenia (Giragosian, 2023). This sounds all the more problematic in light of a recent G7 meeting communiqué:

³ See, inter alia, Oxford Analytica (2022), "Azerbaijan to push Karabakh as Russia looks elsewhere", Expert Briefings. 14 December, <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/OXAN-DB274678/full/html>; Deutsche Welle (2022). Azerbaijan used Russia's weakness in Ukraine, expert says, 14 September. <https://www.dw.com/en/azerbaijan-has-used-russias-weakness-in-ukraine-expert-says/a-63121660>; Fults, A., Stronski, P. (2022), “The Ukraine War Is Reshaping the Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict”, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 25 April. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/04/25/ukraine-war-is-reshaping-armenia-azerbaijan-conflict-pub-86994>; Tétrault-Farber, G. (2022). “Putin calls for calm amid deadliest Azerbaijan-Armenia clashes since 2020”. Reuters, 13 September. https://www.reuters.com/world/armenian-russian-defence-ministers-discuss-nagorno-karabakh-after-flare-up-2022-09-13/?utm_source=dailybrief&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=DailyBrief2022Sept13&utm_term=DailyNewsBrief; Glantz, M. (2022). “Amid Ukraine War, Armenia and Azerbaijan Fighting Risks Broader Conflict”

United States Institute of Peace, 15 September. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/09/amid-ukraine-war-armenia-and-azerbaijan-fighting-risks-broader-conflict>.

“We call on third-countries or other international actors who seek to evade or undermine our measures to cease providing material support to Russia’s war, or face severe costs. To deter this activity around the world, we are taking actions against third-country actors materially supporting Russia’s war in Ukraine.” (European Council, Council of the European Union, 2023).

4. Turco-Armenian Normalisation: An opportunity that Russia can hardly disregard

Russia, for its part, is sympathetic to the new diplomatic contacts between Türkiye and Armenia. Kremlin has welcomed the political will in both countries and expressed its willingness to provide support and assistance “in every possible way” by highlighting the interests stemming from the stability and economic prosperity of the region (Armenpress, 2022). The fact that Moscow was the first lieu of meeting for Turkish and Armenian special representatives is in line with this perspective that the Russian executive portrays. A number of reasons explain this attitude. First, regional stability will mean a more prosperous Armenia that will become a stronger economic partner of Russia. Armenia is a landlocked country bordered by Georgia, Azerbaijan, Iran, Türkiye and the Azerbaijani exclave Nakhchivan. Its commercial connections to the outside world are thus limited. Growth in Armenian economy is in line with Russian interests. Here, the nexus between new routes and economic development is noteworthy. Kremlin estimates that the construction of railroads and highways that will connect Armenia to Azerbaijan can result in highly significant investment opportunities for Russian investors -Kremlin estimates that the additional revenue that “peace” can generate can be as high as \$5 billion.⁴

For Russian policymakers, the importance of opening up new routes in Caucasus does not arise exclusively from expanding the breadth of trade opportunities with Armenia. They also actively explore and endeavour to develop means to circumvent Western sanctions over its invasion of Ukraine. One of them relates to the compensation of losses by installing new supply chain routes. To reiterate what an experienced reporter rightfully put, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan have been crucial in supporting Russian economy by deficit by allowing the transport of consumer goods through their territory (Nechepurenko, 2023). A better access to these three markets can provide Russia a better access to Türkiye and even markets to Iran, Middle East and beyond to North Africa and Asia. The high-level declaration with Azerbaijan and Iran on the development of the International North–South Transport Corridor illustrates this point and gives Moscow the right to remain optimistic about the future despite the Western sanctions. According to the September 2022 report of Interfax news agency, the three states set a common objective of expanding the volume of cargo transit to 30 million tons by 2030.⁵ Russian economy will certainly profit from the opening of Turco-Armenian border, since it will boost her trade with Türkiye and facilitate her access to the regions mentioned above.

Despite some diplomatic showoff, Russia can not hide the erosion of her power in the region. Since the “special military operation” in Ukraine, military deficiencies have become

⁴ Alexey Overchuk, Russian Deputy Prime Minister of Russian Federation, stated this figure during the 9th Russian-Armenian Interregional Forum in Yerevan (NEWS.am, 2022).

⁵ The declaration was made by Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak, Iranian Roads and Urban Development Minister Rostam Ghasemi, and Azerbaijani Deputy Prime Minister Shahin Mustafayev following their first International North–South Transport Corridor meeting in Baku (Interfax, 2022b).

obvious in the fifth largest army of the world.⁶ Several reshufflings in the army evidenced the problems of the army's command structure. Hypersonic missile technology could not conceal the obsolescence of many war materials. Many viable reports have pointed to the lack of supplies (military troops were not only under-equipped, but they were even under-nourished). Disorganized military troops and a chronic inadequacy of reinforcement also raise a significant risk of failure. It is therefore not surprising that the estimated number of dead and wounded on the Russian (military) side is around 180.000 (L'Obs, 2023).

It would therefore not be wrong to assume that Russia needs of stability in the Caucasus more than ever. Turkish-Armenian rapprochement, as a contribution to regional stability, goes beyond the frontiers of the two countries. It has ramifications upon Azeri-Armenian relations as well. Political and military tensions jeopardize the dominant position that Russia aims to maintain in the region. Thus, the question of stability has become all the more sensitive because of the protracted war in Ukraine. It is also important to note that Moscow, claiming a central position in the resolution of the Karabakh conflict, has attached an even greater importance to defusing conflicts in the Caucasus.

An improvement of the relations between Ankara and Yerevan will also have ramifications over Kremlin's regional projects that have gained a particular importance in the context of the war in Ukraine. Western sanctions have made it necessary for Russia to find new markets for its exports and alternative transport routes. This necessity puts Caucasus in a peculiar position. Russia will have a better trade and transport access to the region (and beyond) as long as Ankara, Baku and Yerevan will maintain non-hostile relations towards each other. The opening of Turco-Armenian border will not only increase the trade volume between Russia and Türkiye, but it will also offer new transportation line for both countries. Thus, for Kemlin, stability in Caucasus is more important than ever.

Another important point that merits attention is the politico-diplomatic competition in the region. The West, particularly the US and the EU, have also been actively engaged in the Caucasus region, with clear purposes of supporting democratization, economic development, and conflict resolution efforts. Initiatives of this sort have not gone unnoticed by Kremlin and unproblematic between Moscow and Western capitals -as Georgian and Ukrainian cases have clearly illustrated in the past 15 years. For the European Union, a perspective of normalisation between Ankara and Yerevan is more important than ever, in search of a greater stability in the Caucasus when there is no clear end in sight to the "special military operation" in Ukraine. Because the political will to make progress is manifest both in Ankara and Yerevan, it would be a fatal error for Moscow to oppose the normalization efforts, allow the West to exhibit itself as a diplomatic actor in Caucasus and reap the ensuing benefits. Russia has historically played a dominant role in the region. Besides, as mentioned earlier, she has strong economic, political and military ties with the countries in the area. As the CSTO and the EEU illustrate, these connections have been amplified via institutions, where Russian preponderance is manifest. In a pure logic of zero-sum-game, Russia would hardly let her "enemies" significantly challenge her position of superiority in the region by opposing the Turco-Armenian normalization.

⁶ In 2022, Russian army was the fifth in the ranking by active military personnel (Statista, 2023).

By way of conclusion

Any diplomatic initiative to resolve conflicts is a positive step towards regional (sometimes global) peace and stability. Indeed, only time will tell whether the special-representative-led negotiations will end up in a meaningful improvement in Türkiye-Armenia relations. Several factors will be determinant. Preserving the momentum, maintaining the willingness of political actors to engage in constructive dialogue, the level of trust, items on the negotiation agenda are the ones that easily come to mind. The path to a longstanding peace is definitely long, since Türkiye and Armenia have had a complex and difficult relationship -with deep-seated issues related to territorial disputes, genocide recognition, and regional security concerns. More than a decade ago, they had signed protocols on the establishment of diplomatic relations, opening of the common border and the establishment of a joint historical commission. Yet, it has not been possible to bring them into force.

Because there is not a ground to address historical grievances at present, the two sides have adopted a rather pragmatic stance to make progress -as much as possible- on issues that are more “treatable”. Yerevan did not impose the recognition of *Medz Yeghern* as genocide by Ankara. The “disappointment” due to the inadequacy of Russian support during -and in the aftermath of- the war of 2020 impelled the Armenian policymakers to reconsider the high-level dependence on Moscow. For Yerevan, the necessity to re-evaluate this dependence has become all the more meaningful after 24 February 2022. Azerbaijan’s victory in the Nagorno-Karabakh War of 2020 had already lifted a major obstacle for Turkish diplomacy to engage in a dialogue with Armenia. The new strategic environment has further valorized Ankara’s right decision to appoint a special representative. As for Putin’s Russia, the Ukraine quandary goes deepening. The lesser the conflicts near its borders, the better. A more stable Caucasus will guarantee benefit in many ways. Supporting a negotiation process that will be beneficial for Armenia, where decades-long alliances are questioned, is commonsensical.

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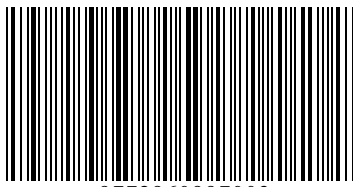
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