Some Aspects of the Geopolitical Strategy of Georgia
(On Politicization of the Kartvelological Studies)

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Introduction

Every normal country has its geo-strategy, according to which geopolitical interests are defined. On the basis of the latter, geopolitical strengths are defined and the strategy is worked out. Some authorities, having excessive ambitions, build their strategy to the detriment of the vital interests of other countries and peoples.

Traditionally, the following are regarded as basic geopolitical strengths: the strategic value of the given land, the ability of the society/country and self-identity of the population (in general, demographic data).

Cf. The basic criteria of geopolitical strengths are regarded to be: strategic territory, outlet to the sea, natural resources (minerals, supply of fresh water...), financial strength, the level of development of economy and technology, political stability, the level of social integration, number of population, ethnic homogeneity and national consciousness.

In order to secure the long-term control of the areas of their interest, aggressive geopolitical players, as a rule, primarily try to change the demography of the region of their “interest” for their own benefit. The plan may be of two kinds: the barbarous form is genocide; whereas the manipulation of public opinion is the comparatively civilized one.

Due to geopolitical interests, the manipulation of public opinion occurs in two directions:

- Regulation of the self-identity of the population in the geopolitically interesting region;
- Manipulation of the opinion of the rest of the world concerning the population of the geopolitically interesting region (by means of misinformation).

In the present paper, on the basis of scholarship, the Russian schemes of manipulating the mood of Georgia’s population and the attitude of other peoples of the world towards Georgia are analyzed.

First of all, a brief overview of the history of Georgia in the geopolitical aspect should be presented.

Geopolitical retrospection: Eurasia, Caucasus

In the world’s geopolitical space, Eurasia occupies the central place. In Eurasia, one of the regions of outstanding strategic importance is Caucasus and in Caucasus – Georgia, as the junction between modern sea, overland and energy resources routes.

At different times, Georgia was an object of struggle for Persia, Byzantium, the Arab Caliphate, Mongolia, Ottoman Turkey, Russia...

For the geopolitical space of the region since ancient times the Greater Caucasus mountain range, as the natural boundary, has been of tremendous
importance. Cf. according to ancient Romans, the **Caucasus Mountains are the boundary between the civilized and the barbarian worlds** (Pliny).

The Georgians (The Kartvels) represent the autochthonous population of the Caucasus. Since immemorial the main passes of the Caucasus and other principal routes of Transcaucasia were controlled by Georgians. Along with this, Georgia **since the early centuries to the present days has been the outpost of Christian culture and consciousness.** In fact, these two distinct functions define the regional essence of the Georgian state.

Various empires always tried to "get a share" in carrying out this control. Sometimes when the Georgian state was deprived of this historical role, namely from 1801 to 1990 the geopolitical strengths of Georgia were in fact controlled by Russia.

In the 1980s, as a result of the geopolitical struggle with the West, the Russian empire (the Soviet Union) weakened. Against this background, in Georgia the National-Liberation Movement strengthened, which headed by Zviad Gamsakhurdia went into power by the legitimate way. On the basis of the nation-wide referendum of March 31, 1991, the legitimately elected government restored the independence of Georgia on April 9, 1991.

The great geopolitical players were presented with a “fait accompli”: Georgia put on the agenda the necessity for change in the geopolitical situation in the Caucasian region. In particular by the “Act of Restoration of Independence” of April 9, 1991, the population of all regions of Georgia showed the entire world: **whole Georgia wishes to control its own geopolitical space independently.** In parallel, the Supreme Council of the Republic of Georgia declared the Russian troops, present in Georgia, as occupants.

Transcaucasia is one of the main directions of the aggressive geopolitical strategy of Russia. Naturally, **Russia was not resigned to the outlook of going away from Georgia in 1991 either.** In spite of the successful referendum and the declaration of the act of the restoration of independence, in 1991-93, Georgia was forced to remain in the Russian geopolitical space. Namely:

Under the **Malta Agreement (03.12.1989)**, Eastern Europe and the Baltic countries were involved in the geopolitical field of the West, whereas Caucasia, Ukraine, Moldova and Central Asia remained in the actual ownership of Russia.¹

At the turn of 1991-1992, **the legitimate authorities changed by force** in Georgia. In the geopolitical space "assigned" to it, Russia also overthrew by force the legitimate powers of Azerbaijan and Ichkeria.² Afterwards, by provoking conflicts in Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali area, the Russian military troops drove away from these historical Georgian lands the majority of the autochthonous population (Georgians, Abkhazians not supporting the Kremlin...).

In spite of this, Shevardnadze’s authorities removed the occupation status from the Russian military troops. Furthermore, the conqueror was declared as a **friendly country** and in the so-called Georgian-“Abkhazian”, in fact: **Georgian-Russian conflict zone, the Russian army was charged with the peacemaking mission.**³

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² Noteworthy, certain forces to the present day are hushing up the essence of this event and refer to the military coup staged by the Kremlin in Georgia as "Civil War".
³ E.Shevardnadze participated in many agreements against Georgia; see e.g., the meeting of Shevardnadze and Baltin on November 3, 1993, on a Russian ship in Poti port; on Shevardnadze’s some other treaties; on other materials see also: T. Putkaradze, From Absyrtus to Gamsakhurdia, or in the Desert of the Present, Tb., 1999; T.Putkaradze, Imerkhevi Speaking Land, Kutaisi, 2007; T. Putkaradze, Ethnolinguistic Terms and the European Charter on the Languages of Minorities, Kutaisi, 2005.
From 1993, a new stage of the Russian expansion begins. After genocide and overthrowing of the legitimate authorities, the time comes for the Russian capital: **Russia in the main gets control over Georgia’s strategic strengths.**

The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and the Baku-Tbilisi-Batumi routes are of vital importance for the West, cf.:

Eastern Europe for the USA and Western Europe was more a question of dignity and security, whereas **the resources of Central Asia and the energy carriers of Transcaucasia** were of paramount importance for them and Turkey too:

Only if Russia leaves Transcaucasia, Europe will be energetically independent.

After Shevardnadze’s 10-year rule, these and other factors soon led to the necessity of a certain correction of the **geopolitical balance** in Transcaucasia:

By supporting the “Rose Revolution” in 2003, the West considerably strengthened in Georgia the Euro-Atlantic powers. As a result, the role of the authorities of Georgia, as geopolitical players, increased. In Russia this strengthened even more the wish to gain back influence in Transcaucasia, which resulted in the aggression of August 2008: **a stage of Russian revenge.**

**Thanks to the United States and the European Union,** the Russian aggression was stopped at the outskirts of the capital Tbilisi. This historical event brought with it many negative and some positive results for Georgia:

A lot of citizens of Georgia (of Georgian and Ossetian origin) were killed and thousands of Georgians were turned into refugees. Georgia in fact lost more territories (the Dali/Kodori Ravine, i.e. Upper Abkhazia, the Akhalgori district, the Georgian villages of the Tskhinvali region, village Perevi of the Sachkhere district...); Georgia was weakened and great damage was done to the military potential. The probability of the division of the Georgian state by means of the “separatist” forces manipulated by Russia grew.

In addition, with the recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia by Russia a real danger emerged that North Caucasus may become an outpost of constant chaos, terrorism and radical Islam.

The restoration of **the occupant status** regarding the Russian troops by the Georgian authorities and the increase of the activity of the European Union in Transcaucasia should be regarded as the positive and **fair result** of the August events.

**What does Russia Wish Today?**

After the Russian-Georgian war of August (2008), **the Kremlin is controlling** a greater part of Georgia. At present **Russia still controls** a great part of Georgia. Russia of Putin-Dugin-Medvedev is not content with this. The aggressive authorities of Russia wish to get control not only over Transcaucasia but entire Eurasia as well. It should also be noted that for the purpose of the complete isolation of Georgia Russia works actively in the direction of Russian-Armenian-Iranian and Russian-Azerbaijani-Armenian-Turkish relations too. **Multilateral geopolitical vectors take shape** in the region, which complicates the prospects of Georgia’s pro-Western course even more.

**It is clear:**

In 1801-1917, 1921-1990, Russia unlawfully and without alternative enjoyed **geopolitical control** over Transcaucasia and now it cannot tolerate the appearance of other great geopolitical players in the region.

**For more than two centuries, the Georgian nation wishes to establish good-neighboring relations to the Russian people,** but the present authorities of Russia also by all illegitimate methods are trying to satisfy its **geopolitical ambition** at the expense of the vital interests of Georgia.
The Georgian nation will never put up with the infringement of its vital interests.

Russia is aware of this. Therefore, it permanently tries to change the demographic situation in Georgia and, by the manipulation of the demographic strength, to establish a foothold in Caucasus for ever. In particular:

- In the 19.-21. centuries, first by the so-called Muhajirism and then by the Russian-Georgian war of 1992-2008, Russia committed genocide on Georgians and the anti-Russian-minded Abkhazians in the historical region of Georgia Abkhazia.\(^4\) At first, within the artificial boundaries it created there the Abkhaz Autonomous Soviet Republic. Now it tries to finish this process though the formation of a satellite “state”, which instead of the basic population exiled from Abkhazia, Georgians, will be inhabited by pro-Russian Abkhazians, migrant Armenians and newly settled Russians.

- In the 20.-21. centuries the Russian authorities managed to settle from Ossetia (North Caucasus) to Inner Kartli: the Tskhinvali-Java area. The Ossetes supported them and for whom they illegitimately and illogically created the so-called “South Ossetian Autonomy”. Now they try to base on this artificial formation Kokot'si's Russian-language “state”. About the history of the question, I would like to note briefly that in the soviet period as well as at present in the nominal autonomy too (called the Autonomy of North Ossetia, real Ossetia), the Kremlin is in fact killing Ossetian language and culture. E.g. in Ossetia, there is no possibility of receiving secondary or higher education in Ossetian language and the prospects of revival and development of Ossetian culture are almost absent. The active policy of Russification is under way in Ossetia too. In parallel, the Beslan tragedy demonstrated that the Kremlin is committing the genocide of the Ossetes too, along with that of the Chechen-Ingush.\(^5\)

- Over the last 150 years, on the order of the Russian imperial authorities the politicized linguists, ethnologists and historians have been distorting the real language-cultural and ethnic-political history, thereby trying to declare great part of the Georgians as non-Georgians and their historical homelands as non-Georgian lands. To achieve this goal, the authorities of the Russian empire work in three directions:

1. By the propaganda of pseudo-scientific provisions in Georgia they try to change the national identity of at least parts of Georgians. E.g. persons financed by Russia have tried, to the present day unsuccessfully, to persuade the Svans that their mother tongue is not Georgian and that they are not Georgians;\(^6\)

2. By the powerful information propaganda, they try to convince the entire world that Acharans, Megrels, Laz, Svans, Khevsurs, Meskhs, Tushs etc. are not Georgians. According to their evidence, in the state called Georgia these “ethnic groups are oppressed” by Georgians (Kartlans) as they have no written culture. By the so-called “Kartization”, the language of the “conqueror” Georgians is imposed on these “peoples”; the world must help these “oppressed ethnoses”;

3. With “scholarly studies” of dubious value, they try to persuade the world’s elite circles that there is no single Georgian culture; that Georgia is a small empire; that in the past Georgians (Kartlans) conquered and to the present day continue “to oppress the peoples having unwritten languages”: Meskhs, Acharans, Abkhazians.

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\(^4\) In spite of Muhajirism, the Georgians of Achara escaped the genocide.


Megrels, Laz, Svans etc.

After creating such a background, with the aid of the political forces, they wish to give autonomy to Georgian regions and divide Georgia the so-called federation-confederation method.

In a word, with the inadequate terminological evaluation of the events and distortion of the essence of facts, Russia tries to convince the whole world that Georgia is "a small empire" which must be broken down and that the Georgian "aggressor" will oppress other "undeveloped ethnic groups" etc.

What does Georgia Wish?

For many centuries, Georgia has been repelling aggressive empires. The Georgian nation took shape in this struggle. At present, Georgians wish to defend their national-cultural identity and statehood.

It is obvious from the documentary sources created over the centuries that the inhabitants of various regions of Georgia: Megrels, Laz, Meskhs, Pkhovians, Rachans, Lechkhumians or Kakhetians perceive themselves as parts of the Georgian ethnos and Georgian culture. Not a single Georgian needs to be reminded of this, because he is proud that he is a representative of a nation having a centuries-old state history and culture.

It is also attested in the documents that for at least 15-20 centuries, Georgian nation has been creating Georgian written culture, being formed itself in its mother tongue. This single Georgian written (secular and spiritual) culture is based on the common Kartvelian language existing since the 1st millennium BC. In addition, many facts show that this culture was created qualitatively equally by all historical communities of Georgia. Exactly this defined the remarkable stability of Georgian national culture in all regions of Georgia: in Abkhazia (before Russia’s entrance into Caucasus), Samegrelo, Achara, Lazeti, Tao-Klarjeti, Meskheti, Kartli, Kakheti, Tusheti, Saingilo, etc. Since old times, the population of these regions was referred to with the ethnonym "Georgian."  

It is also a well-known fact, that even after the division of united Georgia in the 16.-18. centuries, the resulting formations - kingdoms and principalities - still considered themselves as small Georgias and as far as possible developed traditional Georgian culture. There has never been any attempt in any region to replace the historical mother tongue by a dialectal speech.

Along with the historical documents, modern academic scholarly researches also demonstrate that in ancient Georgian sources the choronym "Kartli" and in foreign sources choronyms "Colchis" and "Iberia" correspond to the state called at present Sakartvelo by the Georgians (Eng. Georgia). The formation and revival of Georgia as a whole state occurred by the activity of Georgians from exactly those regions (Megrels-Laz, Svans, Meskhs…) who are declared by the Russian misinformation machine as non-Georgian “ethnic groups” “oppressed” by the “Karts”.

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Today too Georgians wish to defend their unity because they are well aware that the national energy of Georgia lies in their unity.

What Kind of Evidence is Available on Georgians and Georgia in the Modern World?

One could say with confidence that with the great “efforts” of Russia the scholarly-information space of the modern world to the present is almost without alternative dominated by politicized anti-Georgian provisions, serving Russian geopolitical goals; several qualifications are offered below for illustration:

1. In the Atlas "France and the World" (La France et le Monde, Atlas), published in Paris in 2000, Georgians, Abkhazians, Megrels, Svans and Ossetes are represented with different colors and ethnic designations.

2. In the book "Europe of the Peoples", published in Spain in 2002 by "The Centre of European Languages", Georgians, Abkhazians, Megrels, Svans and Ossetes are shown with different flags and ethnic designations.

3. According to the basic ethnological encyclopedia of the world’s global network (on the basis of the evidence of 2008), Georgia is inhabited by the following ethnoses/peoples:

   Azeri – 308 000
   Assyrians – 3 000
   Abkhazians – 101 000
   Batsbs – 3 420
   Greeks – 38 000
   Laz – 2 000
   Megrels – 500 000
   Ossetes – 100 000
   Russians – 372 000
   Svans (using Georgian and Russian as written language) – 15 000
   Armenians – 448 000
   Urums (Muslim Greeks) – 97 746
   Georgians (Imeretians, Rachan-Lechkhumians, Gurians, Acharans, Imerkhevian-Kartlians, Kakhetians, Ingilos, Tushs, Khevians, Khevsurs, Pshavians, Mtiuls, Fereidanians, Meskh-Javakhs) - 3 901 380
   Georgian Jews – 20 000
   Kurds – 40 000, etc. (Ethnologue report for Georgia http://www.ethnologue.com).

4. A part of Georgians (Megrels, Laz, Svans) are declared as non-Georgians at the modern site of the world’s virtual history; namely, on the webpage of Georgia in the Asian Department the following map of settlement of the “ethnic minorities” living in Georgia is published:
According to the explanations of the map: 1) Chechen; 2) Tsova-Tush; 3) Khundzakhian; 4) Udian; 5) Azeri; 6) Armenian; 7) Laz, i.e. Chan; 8) Megrelian; 9) Abkhazian; 10) Svan; 11) Ossetian are regarded as the languages of minorities in Georgia. Noteworthy, the author (P.J. Hillery) worked nine years (1996-2004) to elaborate these qualifications. Mr. Adrian Brisku, the author of the webpage on Georgia has also worked for years in Georgia (see: http://vlib.iue.it/history/asia/georgia.htm).

5. In 2007 a collection «Историографический диалог вокруг непризнанных государств: Приднестровье, Нагорный Карабах, Армения, Южная Осетия и Грузия» (Historiographic Dialogue on Unrecognized States: the Trans-Dniester Region, Nagorno-Karabakh, Armenia, South Ossetia and Georgia) was published with an introductory article of Mr.Kimitaka Matsuzato, Doctor of Juridical Science, Professor of the Slavic Research Center, University of Hokkaido (Sapporo, Japan). In it (p.7) one reads: "If western countries tried to overcome international differences on the level of the formation of other social possibilities with the help of non-territorial measures too, directed to wards individuals, in the USSR the status was given to ethno-territorial formations. Republics with the union status (e.g. Georgia) had perfect conditions for development, the territorial formations with the autonomous status (e.g. Abkhazians) were less successful, whereas the ethnic groups without territorial formation (e.g. the Megrels) overcame tremendous difficulties in order to preserve their language and identity"[10]...

6. The Georgian public has been aware of the anti-Georgian activity of Prof. G.Hewitt for a long time. At this stage he appears with a "new" initiative. In his view, by the recognition of the Megrelian language as state language, the buffer state of Samegrelo must be created, which will serve to settle the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict... It is also necessary to create the Caucasian confederation[11] (subjects of which are supposed to be Abkhazia, Samegrelo, Georgia, Azerbaijian, Karabakh, Armenia, South Ossetia...).[12]

7. In the project "Linguarium Register" implemented by Prof. Yuri Koriakov, the Kartvelian linguistic-ethnic world is represented as 5 living and 1 dead language. Megrelian, Laz, new Georgian, Upper Svan (the Bal language) and Lower Svan are independent languages. Dead language is old Georgian. In the opinion of the same author, Megrels, Laz, Georgians, Balis (Upper Svan) and Lower Svan are also independent ethnoses (EG).

It is surprising too that for the description of the modern Kartvelian linguistic world one finds Y. Koriakov’s production without alternative even in the Georgian-language Wikipedia (evidence of October–November, 2008). See the link on Georgian Wikipedia "Atlas of Caucasian Languages, Kartvelian Languages." Here, one has access to the

10 The material with critical analysis was presented by Prof. Vazha Kiknadze at the enlarged session of the Academic Council of I.Javakhishvili Institute of History and Ethnology on December 3, 2007.


12 Cf. e.g. the opinion of A. Dugin concerning the territorial structure of Georgia (Moscow: Арктогея-центр, 1999): A new political order in the Caucasus supposes a complete revision of the now existing political realities and transition from the model of the relationship state-state or nation-nation to the purely geopolitical system centre-periphery, whereas the structure of the periphery must be defined not by the political, but ethno-cultural differentiation. This may be realized by means of creating the "Caucasian federation", which would include the three Caucasian republics of the CIS as well as the inter-Russian autonomous formations. The Centre would give this entire region cultural-economic autarchy, but would provide the strictest strategic centralism... (pp. 351–352).
following map (http://linguarium.iling-ran.ru/maps/1-all.gif):

Whereas the link to "Map of Kartvelian Languages" (http://linguarium.iling-ran.ru/maps/14-kartv.gif) leads to the variant given below:  

Cf. J.Gippert’s creation of many years is almost the same.  (http://titus.uni-frankfurt.de/didact/karten/kauk/kaukasm.htm):

13 In the second map, for some reason, the Eastern Georgian dialects and Imeretian-Gurian-Acharan-Imerkhevan-Taoan are represented in different colours... In addition, Taoan is regarded as the dead dialect. Elsewhere, Y. Koriakov singles out 6 Georgian languages: Megrelian, Laz, Old Georgian, Middle Georgian, Ecclesiastic Georgian, Svan (Y.Koriakov, 2006, p. 39-42; cf. in the same place Y.Koriakov instead of 1 Darguan language singles out 18 languages: he declares Darguan dialects as languages).
Y. Koriakov’s third map is also available in international circulation regarding Georgia.\(^4\)

The essential “novelty” here is that the terms Samegrelo and historical Colchis (Colkhis) are equal to each other, which stresses the allegedly long history of the separation of Georgian and Megrelian. According to Y. Koryakov’s map, it follows that linguistically, culturally and ethnically the Megrels have been separated from other Georgians for at least 3000 years.

In reality, the boundaries of Colchian archeological culture and ancient Greek-Urartian historical evidence attest the fact that the Georgians’ historical state Colchis as well as Colchian culture, created on the basis of the common Kartvelian language, covered the main part of historical Georgia. At that time too the ancestors of the present-day Megrels, Meskhs, Acharans, Svans, Laz or Taoans represented a single Georgian (Kartvelian) ethnos and created a common culture.\(^5\)

No one should think that Y. Koryakov is not familiar with the Kartvelian reality and for example he supposes that the Upper and the Lower Svans are different ethnoses. It

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\(^4\) On the advice of Prof. Kevin Tuite this map was sent to me for comment by Patrick Lemonnier, French specialist of linguistic maps.

\(^5\) The assumption seems reliable that Kulkha originated in the Chorokhi valley and the Kola-Artaani area in the middle of the second millennium BC; for the history of the question see: M. Inadze, Terms: “Colchis” and “Kolkheti” in Ancient Literature; Foreign and Georgian Terminology Denoting Georgia and the Georgians, Tb., 1993; T.Putkaradze, The Georgians, Kutaisi, 2005.
is obvious from Y. Koryakov’s maps and comments that he is perfectly knowledgeable about Georgia’s history as well as its present. It is evident as well that Y. Koryakov has a clear idea of the location of all Georgian villages and of the characteristics of the vernaculars spoken by the inhabitants of one or another village.

Naturally, Y. Koryakov also knows that Svans, Megrels, Gurians, Acharians and Georgians of other regions too consider themselves as creators of the single Georgian written culture. He is aware as well that the idioms, which he refers to as languages, are considered by some scholars as dialects of the Georgian language. In spite of this, for some reason he still declares Megrelians, Laz, Upper Svans and Lower Svans as non-Georgians, as ethnoses different from the Georgians, and represents their dialects as independent languages.16

In my view, this is not accidental. Y. Koryakov’s qualifications are not based on the results of scholarly research, they are made by the inertia of the soviet, politicized scholarship (purpose: “Divide and rule!”).

Conclusion

At present, Georgia is at the centre of the world’s attention. One might say that this small Caucasian state has never been the object of such a dangerous global confrontation. Nowadays Georgia is considered in the US-Russian, European-Russian, Turkish-Russian and Eurasian geopolitical contexts. Accordingly, many interested parties study the history, demographic and linguistic-ethnic situation of Georgia.

Georgia is not a powerful geopolitical player of this region yet. Russia still manages to control a part of the geopolitical strengths of Georgia. At the same time it tries:

- To legalize the ethnic cleansing of autochthonous Georgians in Abkhazia and Inner Kartli (Tskhinvali area);
- To manipulate a part of the political spectrum;
- By declaring some groups of Georgians as non-Georgians and by using of the educational system, to direct the consciousness of a part of the population in some regions for their own benefit;
- By spreading pseudo-scholarly ethno-linguistic qualifications in the global information and scientific network to mislead the rest of the world: to make Georgia notorious under the name of a “small aggressive empire”;
- Against the will of the Georgians, to impose on Georgia a federative or confederative structure, where “subjects” will be separate regions of Georgia: Achara, Samegrelo, Imereti, Kakheti, Meskheti, Kartli, Svaneti, etc.17

In order to restore the geopolitical control over Transcaucasia, Russia is again planning a new aggression, which endangers the vital interests of the Georgian nation and state.

Only by the existence of whole and powerful Georgia is it possible to liberate Transcaucasia from Russian dictates, to restore the safe state area linking Europe and Asia and to maintain in the region the space of mentality based on Western values (Christian, democratic).

The deployment of the EU observers in Georgia, face to face with the Russian

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16 In recent decades there is an attempt to establish synonymous terms Kartvelian and Georgian with different semantics. In particular, by the analogy of the terms: Roman-Germanic”, “Indo-European”, some scholars or political experts purposefully use Kartvelian to denote “ethnoses”, “independent peoples” of common origin: “Georgians”, “Svans”, “Laz”, “Megrels”... (see e.g. Y. Koriakov’s qualifications), and Georgian – to refer to the “Georgians proper”; cf. in the recent period the term Georgia proper (the land remaining without Abkhazia and Tskhinvali area) originated. This problem will be discussed more deeply elsewhere.

17 Georgia must necessarily give autonomy to the Abkhazian people.
occupation troops, should be regarded as a new stage in the geopolitical history of Caucasia.

In order to prevent Russia from changing with barbarous method the demographic situation in Transcaucasia (genocide of Georgians and Abkhazians) and to make it possible for 500,000 refugees to return home, the following is necessary:

- By the full operation of democratic institutions, Georgia’s aspiration towards the European Union must continue intensively; Georgia must in reality become a partner of the Euro-American alliance. Instead of the Russian occupation troops, the peacemaking mandate must be handed over to the EU police units;

- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other ministries of Georgia, through the embassies accredited in Georgia, should provide adequate information to the world community concerning the current processes in Georgia. E.g. it is obvious from the friendly life together of ethnic Abkhazians and Georgians in Achara and other regions of Georgia as well as the ethnic Ossetes and Georgians in Tbilisi or Kartli and Kakheti that there are no so-called Georgian-Abkhazian and Georgian-Ossetian ethno-conflicts in Georgia. It is an inadequate terminological evaluation disguising Russian aggression in Georgia etc.

Finally, the topic which was brought to the forefront in the present paper:

To prevent the Russian empire from “demographic manipulation” of Georgia, it is necessary:

To establish in good time scholarly qualifications about the linguistic-ethnic identity of Georgia and the Georgians through the efforts of the governmental and scientific-educational institutions of Georgia, in the school textbooks, as well as the world’s scientific-encyclopedic space, instead of the Russian-soviet materials.

In parallel, the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia should actually carry out one of the basic recommendations of the “Bologna Process”: study and propaganda of national cultures.\(^{18}\)

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\(^{18}\) Cf. At present in the school-educational space not only the teaching of sacred literature is limited qualitatively, but even of the spiritual treasure of the Georgian nation Vepkhistqaosani (The Man in the Panther’s Skin). In addition, with rare exceptions, at many universities and public schools the history of the Georgian nation and the Kartvelian linguistic world is still taught according to soviet qualifications etc.
Epigraphy as the Source of Ethnocultural History of Abkhazia and Samachablo

Lia Akhaladze

Epigraphic monuments often play a significant role in studying the historical past as one of the most important and reliable historical sources.

Ethno-political history of modern Abkhazia and the so-called South Ossetia cannot be studied without investigating the rich Georgian epigraphic material of this area. Majority of the given inscriptions are located on the Christian architectural monuments, tombstone epitaphs, church articles and other items of material culture. The mentioned materials contain important information on the history of ethno-political, social-economic, cultural and spiritual life of the native population of the region.

From this point of view, among the material-cultural monuments remaining on the territory of modern Abkhazia and Tskhinvali, should be distinguished the lapidary and mural inscriptions carved out on Georgian Christian architectural monuments. They expose unambiguously the true history of the cathedrals: about wardens of the church, architects and builders. Besides, both regions have retained a significant amount of embossed inscriptions, remained on the embossed monuments: icons, crosses and various types of church items.

It is characteristic, that the epigraphic monuments remained on the territory of Abkhazia and the historical “Kingdom of Abkhazians” (West Georgia) are presented in three languages: Georgian, Greek and Turkish. Among them the Greek and Turkish monuments have survived only in the form of lapidary inscriptions. There are about 22 Greek inscriptions (Kaukhchishvili, 2004, p.59-79), 6 Turkish (Bgazba, 1967, Akhaladze L, 2005(b), p.71), and about 100 inscriptions in Georgian language (Akhaladze, 2005, a 4). Their chronology makes up 9. - 19. centuries. Scientific literature applies Georgian inscriptions of “The Kings of Abkhazians» in old Georgian “Asomtavruli” writing (Akhaladze, 2004, p.56-64).

As for the territory of Shida Khartli, the so-called South Ossetia (Tskhinvali, Java, Akhalgori and Kornisi regions) there are about 50 lapidary and more than 20 mural medieval inscriptions, remained in scientific literature (Otkhmezuri G., 1994, p.112-142).

The inscriptions have paramount paleographical value, since they clearly reflect a united line of development of Georgian writing and writing culture in general. From the paleographical point of view, the epigraphic materials of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region are important acquisitions for Georgian epigraphic fund. Among multiple inscriptions of Abkhazia must be distinguished those of Msgkhua, Hopa, Anukhvi, Likhi, Mokvi, Bedia, Ilori, Tsebeldi, Ghumurishi, Gudavi, Tskelikari, Dikhazugri, Tsarch etc. as they are of special importance for the study of ethno-cultural history.
Among them, the Msigkhua inscriptions (46 inscriptions) from Gudauta region belong to the oldest Georgian writings found in West Georgia. (pic.1)

Historical source and scientific analysis confirmed that in the 9. century in Gudauta, near the village Sanapiro on the mountain Msigkhua, was erected St. Michael Archangel cathedral. In 929-957, Giorgi II, “King of Abkhazians”, built St. Nikoloz cathedral in Khuapi, in token of Queen Gurandukht’s birthday. According to the inscriptions, the wardens of both cathedrals, the builders and masters and parish, belonged to the Georgian ethno-cultural world (Akhaladze, 2005a, p.140-153). Besides Khuapi, cathedrals were built in Martvili and Kiachi by Giorgi II, who is mentioned on the inscription of the Kiachi cathedral (pic.1a).

In the 10. century, ”King of Abkhazia”, Leon II built the Virgin’s Cathedral in Mokvi and established an Episcopal school (pic.1a). Mokvi became the most important center of Georgian Church and culture. It is evidenced by inscriptions and manuscripts, among which the Mokvi Bible occupies a special place (Kh.Bgazba, 1967; Akhaladze L., 2005a, p.109-116). The Archbishop Grigol, the son of Gudzani, served there in the 12. century. His warden inscriptions are placed on the bell tower built by him (pic3). Since the 13. century, due to difficult geopolitical situations in East Georgia, the importance of Mokvi, as a center of Georgian culture and church, was increased. In the most difficult period for Georgian culture, a remarkable Bible of Mokvi was created and decorated with miniatures, by the initiatives of Daniel Mokveli. Based on postscripts of Mokvi Bible and other sources, the names of archbishops of Mokvi cathedral were specified, whose activities made Mokvi to become the most significant center of Christian culture in medieval Georgia (Khorava, 199, p.52; Kalandia, 2004, p.134; Akhaladze, 2005a, p.116).

Large amount of lapidary, embossed and mural inscriptions survived from the famous Georgian architectural monument, Bedia Monastery complex (Akhaladze L., 2000, p.43-54). The mentioned inscriptions tell that the present building of the cathedral must have been built under the reign of the first king of united Georgia, Bagrat III (978-1014), in 989-999 by the architect at court of the United Kingdom of Georgia, Svimeno Galatoztukhutsesi. On the verge of the 10. - 11. centuries, the institution of Galaktoztukhutsesi was a constituent of the administration of the royal court. Inscriptions of King Bagrat III and Queen Gurandukht are carved on the famous Cup of Bedia the masterpiece of Georgian goldsmiths (pic5).

According to Bedia inscriptions, on the verge of the 13. - 14. centuries, in 1293-1327, due to the initiative of King Konstantine of Likht-Imereti, substantial restoration-reconstruction was carried out in the monastery complex. This fact is confirmed by archaeological excavations carried out in the 1960s and restoration results. The mentioned restoration is connected with the name of Nikoloz Gonglibaisdzse, Catholics of Abkhazia (West Georgia), and the Archbishop of Bedia: Sopron Gonglibaidzse. Bedia bell-tower was built at that time, the cathedral walls and the fence were repaired and mural paintings were restored in the interior of the cathedral. The following restoration of Bedia Cathedral is connected with the names of the “Queen of the Queens”, Marikhi, wife of Eristavt-Eristavi” the Prince of Odishi-Vamek I (1384-1394), her son -”Eristavt Eristavi” and “Mandaturtukhutesi” Giorgi Dadiani.
In the 16th century, Anton and Kirile Zvanisdzes carried out their activities in Bedia Cathedral. Anton was one of the most important figures of the church of late medieval Georgia, who carried out wide cultural-educational, building and church warden activities in Bedia Cathedral. By his initiative, in 1540s and 1550s, Bedia Episcopate was built, which is confirmed by relevant lapidary inscriptions. A famous archive of Bedia was renewed and filled with new manuscripts. Many Georgian relics were embossed. Among the Archbishops of Bedia Episcopate, he was the first who was conferred the dignity of Metropolitan, instituted in West Georgia since the mid 1540s (Akhaladze, 2005 (a), p. 52-59).

In the 17th century, Germane Chkhetidze was the honorable successor of activities of Anton Zvanisdze. The information about him is kept in various written sources, including the inscription carved out on the communion cup stalk of Bedia. With the purpose of updating the archives and the manuscripts in the cathedral, Germane Chkhetidze brought from Shavsheti a famous group of people, well-known for their calligraphy at that time. They updated old archives, including the famous menaion of Bedia. The repeated embellishment of the golden communion cup stalk of Bedia, dated by 999. The 17th century is connected with the name of Germane Chkhetidze. The mentioned golden stalk was stolen in the second half of the 19th century.

The epigraphic material of Bedia cathedral and the data of other historical sources allowed to specify the chronology of the Archbishops of Bedia (Akhaladze L., 2005). From the second half of the 18th century, Bedia was no more the center of Georgian church and culture, due to the difficult political situation in Georgia.

On the verge of the 10th-11th centuries, by the initiatives and assistance of ecclesiastic and civilian persons, one of the most important churches, St. George cathedral of Ilori, was built. On the epigraphic monuments the names of church wardens are depicted: ecclesiastic persons, Archbishop Giorgi and priest Giorgi Kocholava. From the civilians are named a local feudal and ruler of the region Giorgi Gurgenidze, a builder Giorgi Galatozi etc.

From the epigraphic monuments of Abkhazia, a special attention should be paid to the inscriptions of the St. George Cathedral of Tskelikari built in the village Rechkhotskhiri of Gali Region. In the inscriptions, the names of the initial builders of the cathedral, ecclesiastic and civilian persons, are damaged and are difficult to read. But in the 16th-17th centuries Tskelikari Cathedral was renewed by rich nobles. Their mural images with damaged inscriptions are placed in the cathedral's interior. There is also a fresco of a local prince, church warden Chichua, with a fragment of inscription.

According to Georgian "Asomtavruli", inscriptions survived on the facades of Michael and Gabriel Archangels Cathedral in the village Anukhvi, Gudauta region. In the 11th century, Giorgi, the son of Basil, and his feudal family members had owned the village Anukhvi and its surroundings of Gudauta Region. As a result of their church warden activities, a stele-cross was built and then on its place Michael and Gabriel Archbishops church of Anukhvi.

From the perspective of Georgian church historical researches, Tsebelda region is of key importance, famous for its three lapidary and three embossed inscriptions found
up today (Akhaladze, Silogava, 2004). The mentioned inscriptions say that several cathedrals used to function simultaneously in the region: churches of St. Teodore, St. Andrew Apostle, St. John the Baptist and St. George. Among them cathedrals of St. Andrew Apostle and John the Baptist had existed here since early period. In the 11. century and at the end of the 12. century, the churches of St. Teodore and St. George were built respectively.

The Gudavi and Tsarche inscriptions represent interesting materials (Silogava, 2004, p.292-296; Akhaladze, 2005, p.131-138). According to their historical analysis, Gudavi church was built by local nobleman Rabia and his wife Nugamtsira (pic.17).

Cathedral of the village Likhni of Gudauta region is a real epigraphic collection of more than 17 inscriptions placed in the interior. The temple was painted with frescos accompanied with explanatory inscriptions in Georgian (picture 18a). Among Likhni inscriptions, the one from 1066 about the appearing of a comet, deserves attention (pic.19). In the inscription are mentioned historical persons, Georgian Kings: Giorgi II Kurapalati (1072-1089), Bagrat IV (1027-1072), Mtsignobartukhutsesi and Chkondideli, Vache Ipertimos, Petre- former Patric and others (pic.18b).

In the church yard of village Chlou (Chala) in Ochamchire Region was depicted the epitaph on the grave stone, of high nobility, statesman at court, Eristavt-Eristavi Ozbeg Dadiani, (pic.19). In the village Dikhazurga of Gali Region was found an epitaph with the inscription of Mikhael Galaktozukhutsesi (pic.20a) which is one of the oldest sample of Georgian Mkhedruli writing on the territory of Western Georgia.

The social spectrum of historical persons named in Georgian inscriptions is diverse. In the inscriptions we meet the names of almost all layers of population: kings, region rulers, high church hierarchy, priests, church wardens and common prayers. In the inscriptions are named the kings of kingdom of “Abkhazians” and the united Georgia: Giorgi II (922-929), Bagrat III (978-1014), Bagrat IV (1027-1072), Giorgi II Kurapalati (1072-1089), “King of the Kings” Konstantine (David, the son of Narin). Royal officials, region rulers and local feudals: Eritsavt Eristavi and Mechurchletukhutsesi Abusalan (the son of Iob), Mtsignobartukhutsesi and Chkondideli Giorgi (the son of Basil). Giorgi Gurgenidze, “Queen of the Queens” Sagdukh, Eristavt Eristavi and Mandartukhutsesi Giorgi Dadiani, “queen of the queens” Marikhi, Eristavt Eristavi of Racha - Nania, Eritsvt Eristavi and Mandaturtukhutsesi Ozbeg Dadiani, Levan I Dadiani, the main rabbi of “Anakopia”. Ecclesiastic persons: builder of Khopi Cathedral - stranger “mamadmtavari”, Archbishop Giorgi, Catholicos of Abkhazia Nikoloz Gongilibaisdze, Sofron Bedieli, Archbishops and Metropolitans Anton Zhuanisdze, Germane Chkhetidze, Grigol Mokveli, the priest of Ilori church Giorgi Kocholava, the priest Merkili of Tselikari Cathedral, the archpriest of Gudavi Church and so on. The church builders: Svimon Galaktozukhutsesi, Giorgi Galatozi, Luka Martineva, Saba (the son of Mleli). On the inscriptions are mentioned common prayers, the local population, Michael, Giorgi, Pashadze, Rosha, Nugamtsira and so on. This is the incomplete list of historical persons, creating material and spiritual culture, on the modern territory of Abkhazia during medieval centuries.

Magnificent monuments of Georgian architecture, built in the Tskhinvali region are distinguished by multiplicity of Georgian inscriptions maintained till now. From this
point of view, Georgian inscriptions on the cathedrals of Nikhozi, Armazi, Eredvi, Ikorta, Largvisi, Kanchaeti, Kabeni, Tighvi, Tiri, Kvemo Kitreuli, Dodoti, Tsirkoli, Tbeti, Ikota, Kheiti, Kvaisa, Kozha, Charebi, Doretkari, Gomarta, Dzeglevi, Ozhara, Sokhta, Zemo Lisi and others are of key importance.

One of the oldest epigraphic monuments in Georgia is the inscription of the church located in the village Nikozi, three kilometers away from Tskhinvali. Zakaria the Archbishop is named in this inscription (Shoshiashvili, 1980, p.70-71). There are two churches in Nikozi: Gvtaeba and Mtavaranelozi churches. Gvtaeba was an Episcopcal Cathedral in medieval Georgia and was built by Vakhtang Gorgasali in the second half of the 5. century. According to the X century inscription, carved on the cathedral, the restoration of Gvtaeba was carried out by the Bishop Michael in the 10. century. Two inscriptions are curved on the facades of Nikozi Mtavaranelozi (Archangel) Church, telling us the history of building carried out by Nikozi bishop and his nephew.

Among the inscriptions of Shida Kartli, Armazi inscription dated from 864 is the oldest. In this inscription, Giorgi I is mentioned (861-868) (Shoshiashvili N., 1980, p.168). The indicated inscription, given by the unknown author of "Annals of Kartli", proves that since the 960s, the Kings of Abkhazians began an active fight for the possession of Kartli (Kaukhchishvili, 1955, p.258).

There are two churches in the village Eredvi in the Liakhvi Ravine. On the facade of St. George Cathedral the four Georgian "Asomtavruli" inscriptions are curved (Shoshiashvili, 1980, p.170-174; Otkhmezuri, 1994, p.120-121). The inscriptions have great historical value for the study of the church history and the political situation developed in Qartli at the beginning of the 10. century. From the inscriptions, it has been revealed that the cathedral was built by the architect Tevdore, the son of Taplai under the reign of Konstatin the King of Abkhazians (893-922). At that time, Qartli was held firmly by the King of Egris-Abkhazia, which was ruled from Uplistsikhe by the Eristavi of the King. This fact is proved by another epigraphic inscription of Samtsevrisi Cathedral performed on the twentieth anniversary of King Konstantine's ruling, in 912 (Shoshiashvili, 1980, p.222-223). According to Eredvi inscription, Eredvi and its surroundings was the domain of Tbelis, the Great feudal family of Shida Karthli, who had built the cathedral. The inscriptions of the cathedral shape a very precise picture of the social hierarchy of ancient Georgia: King - Konstantine - King of Abkhazians; great feudal Tbeli; architect Teodore Taplaidze and the builder and prayer Kvarkvare.

We meet the name of the King of Abkhazians Leon III (957-967) in three fragmental inscriptions of the church relieves in the village Tsirkoli. The figure of the king is depicted with angels (Chubinashvili, 1939, p.207-208; Shoshiashvili, 1980, p. 221). According to the content of the inscription, Tsirkoli Church was built by Leon III, who held Shida Kartli and Javakheti at that time. The joining of Javakheti by the King of Abkhazians is proved by the inscription of Kumurdo cathedral, situated in Akhalkalaki Region (Silogava, 1994, p.39). In general, the active church warden activity of Leon III is evidenced as by Georgian epigraphic monuments and narrative works. According to these sources, Leon III was the builder of Mokvi, Tsirkoli and Kumurdo Cathedrals.
There are more than ten Georgian inscriptions on the Bortsvisjvari Church of Tbeti near Tskhinvali, giving rich information about the history of church building and the great feudal family of the region, the Tbelis, in the 10. century (Shoshiashvili, 1980, p.175-178; Otkhmezuri, 1994, p.121-123). From the content of the inscriptions it can be found out that in the 9. - 10. centuries, Tskhinvali and its surroundings was the domain of the Tbelis. The names of the Tbeli family members are indicated in the inscriptions. Besides them, the historical persons Ivane and Kobul Abazasze are also mentioned in the inscriptions. Here are the names of the representatives of lower social layers. Actually, in the inscriptions of Tbeti, three social layers are shown: great feudal, nobles and common handcraftsmen.

The name of Dodoti Tskhrakari Church, which is situated seven kilometers away from Tskhinvali, is connected with the old folklore epos. Three “Asomravrul” inscriptions of the church say that it was built by the local feudal Ivane Tbeli and his son Kavtar Tbeli (Shoshiashvili, 1980, p.175- 178). Bieti Sameba (Trinity) Church in the Tkhinvali Region keeps four Georgian inscriptions, where are mentioned Church wardens, historical persons Erissjvat Erjstavi Ioane, his father Bakur Kanchaeli, Vache and Beshken (Shoshiashvili, 1980, p.192-195; Otkhmezuri, 1994, p.118-119).

In the inscription of Kabeni Monastery, from the beginning of the 10. century, Karthlian prince, Erismtavari Adarnase and his daughter Latavri, Ashot Bagrationi’s sister, are mentioned (Otkhmezur, 1994, p.114-115).

For identification of ethnical composition of the population, important information is kept in the epigraphic monuments of Java Region, as the inscription of Kasagina, Sokhta, Kvaisa and Krosha churches. They depict the building history of the mentioned cathedrals by the local feudal and masters. Largvisi Monastry was one of the important cultural centers of Shida Kartli. In the 9. century, the famous calligraphers worked there on restoration and renovation of the manuscripts.

The most important epigraphic monuments, from the point of ethno-cultural historical researches, are Lisi Jvari, Tskhratavi, Ozhara, Zeglevi, Gomarta, Zghuderi inscriptions. According to these monuments, the builder and church warden was Febronia, a daughter of the local feudal Tualoi (MepisaShvili, Tsintsadze, 1975, p.103-104; Shoshiashvili, 1980, 1990-1991). According to the inscriptions of the 12. - 13. centuries, the church wardens of Ozhara Church were local feudal Tinati, Fadlon and their sons (Mepisashvili, Tsintsadze, 1975, 126). Significant information is kept in the inscriptions of Tighvi Monastery. According to the inscription in the 9. century, the first builder of the monastery was Bishop of Ruisi, Giorgi Mroveli. In the 12. century, it was renewed by Tamar, the daughter of David Agmashenebeli (1089-1125) in 1152.

The building inscription dated from 1172 is kept in Ikorta Cathedral, which belonged to the local feudal–church wardens Beshken and Vardan. Here is the prayer inscription of Erjstvat Erjstavi Arsen, Chiaberi, Basili and Tvalisguga. These historical persons are known in other historical sources, they carried out their activities during the reign of Giorgi III. Later, in 1673 Rodam the Queen of Kartli (the wife of Vakhtang V) and Iese Erjstavi renewed the cathedral.
In Tskhinvali Region, in the famous Monastery complex of Tiri, are contained the Virgin Cathedral, the bell tower and the cells carved in the caves. The inscriptions of different epochs are carved on these buildings. Tombstone epitaphs of the daughter of Zurab Machabeli dated from 1654 and the prince Rostom (the son of Giorgi XI) dated from 1689 and etc. are found there.

The lapidary inscription of Ikoti Church tells us the history of its restoration in 1798 by Ketevan Tsereteli, the daughter-in-law of the king. The epitaph of the late 18. century, which belongs to Magdan Korinteli, the daughter of David and Nana Korintelis, is kept in the church.

There are some Greek and Armenian inscriptions on the modern territory of South Ossetia. The Greek inscriptions belong to the early period, and the Armenian inscriptions to the later period and are connected with the settlement of the Armenian population in Karthli in the late medieval centuries. The inscriptions kept in other languages have not been found on this territory.

The Georgian inscriptions mentioned above, clearly point to who was the historical population of this region. In the inscriptions there are mentioned local feudal lords, clergymen, architects of the cathedrals, masons and common population. The fact that we often have to deal with tomb epitaphs that are the funeral farewell words of the local population in the lapidary inscriptions of Tskhinvali Region. As it has been mentioned above, the population that created the material culture of the region had depicted those historical events in its native language. It left the history of the construction of the cathedral for the posterity. It was in this language that it asked for favor and mercy. It was in this language that it wrote the tomb epitaphs. It is natural that the population ethnically belonged to the Georgian world.

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One Example of Demographical Management: History of Muhajiroba in South-West Georgia

Tamaz Putkaradze

Muhajiring as a specific form of displacement of population (Muhajir in Arabian means an emigrant, who has left his homeland) was used in historiography as a term of resettlement from the Caucasus to Turkey in various periods of the 19th century. The muhajir Georgians themselves call their natives "chveneburebi", i.e. "ours", "relatives" (Sh. Putkaradze, 1993, p.9).

The first wave of Muhajiring is related to resettlement of Muslim population from Samtskhe-Javakheti to Turkey that took place during the Russian-Turkey War in 1828-29 and afterwards. The second period started during the well-known war of 1877-1878 and lasted till February 3, 1992 (M. Svanidze, 1996, p.5), though this period spontaneously continued till 1921.

The mentioned period of Muhajiring was presented in literature as the Turkish and Russian stages (I. Baramidze, 1999, p.49). At the first stage (August-September, 1878), migration of population in the depth of the Ottoman Empire was caused by the Turkey-Porto actions. But from August-September of 1878 the Russian colonialist policy became the main reason of resettlement of the population. Even after establishing Russian ruling, the Ottomans fearing to lose their privileges continued agitation-propaganda with the help of the threatened Molls. This process certainly influenced the migration of a new wave of population from this region.

It was very hard for the Georgians to leave the country but the existing circumstances caused them "to obey to a cruel fate and to resettle" (Z. Chichinadze, 1914, p.2-4). After the issue of transferring Ajara and Batumi to the Russian Empire was clarified, the process of eviction and resettlement of Georgians was somehow speeded up. Ottomans even used force. According to the order of Dervish Pasha more than 160 horsemen were involved in the process of Kobuleti population resettlement by force (Droeba, #190, 1878). Nuri Tavdgiridze informed Gr. Gurieli about forced immigration of the native population, while the last blocked the way to the Ottomans and the exiled people returned to their homes (Droeba, #190, 1878).

The Georgian population tried to rebut the Ottoman's violence by their own strength as well. On August 14-15, 1878, the Kobuletians levied war against Ottomans ("Obzor" (review), #231, 1878). Despite such resistance and protests many villages had been ravaged. This process was suitable for both (Russian and Ottoman) empires. That was why the Ottoman government unhurried to leave Ajara and presumably, Russia "generously bore" existence of Turks "within its frontiers" until achieving its final purpose (to depopulate Georgia in this part).

On August 25, 1878, Batumi was officially given to Russia. The Russian officials declared the will of the Russian Empire to the Ajarian population, that their (Georgians) property and religion would be inviolable. They were imposed the same obligations towards Russia as it used to be during Ottoman's rule. The local governance would remain unchanged. Those willing to resettle would be given time and opportunity to sell out their property (Kh. Akhvlediani, 1978, p.13). That announcement was not fulfilled as the major goal of Russia was to evict the natives/Georgians and settle there ethnicities appropriate to them. It became evident from the report sent by the Russian official Sviatopolk-Mirsk to the imperial government (October
Due to this, the principle task of the Empire was to get rid of population in Batumi district, while the 21st article of San-Stefano Peace Treaty gave them such opportunity.” As strict as possible measures should be carried out towards the local population, including the use of arms aiming at their implicit obedience. Application of such means will enable us to clean the region from those elements that are inadmissible for us”. (CSA of Georgia, p.416, ext. 3, case 1172, p.2-4) The mentioned announcement was the main acting doctrine of the Empire. The Russian government objected traditional norms, which existed in local population for centuries. That finally caused discontent of the native population. Besides, by reuniting Ajara to Georgia, Ottoman and Russian Georgia was united under the Russian state flag, i.e. the non-Georgian elements, grown up in non-Georgian system, were combined in the non-traditional union (I. Baramidze, 1999, p.50). Such state was well-admitted by the Ottomans and by means of inciting the Muslim Georgian population against the Christian Georgians (as of “unbelievers”/”Ghiauri”) deliberately provoked the religious hostility and hatred among them. That was why Muslim Georgians preferred to stay under ruling of the old governance instead of the “patronage of ruthless Russia” (even along with brothers) (I. Baramidze, 1999, p.50-51). From this point of view Muhajiring, though caused by various factors, included free-will elements as well.

After establishing Russian authority, Ajara still remained to be a bordering territory with enemy. That was why the imperial authority gave special importance to the issue of eviction and resettlement of the native population. “Veliko-Russian Chauvinism” successfully hid its true purposes under messianic phraseology, tried to conceal the objective reality and by reason of “natives’ ignorance” continued the resettlement process. (J. Vardmanidze, 2002, p.84)

The Russian-Turkish peace treaty gave an official face to the colonial activity of Russia. The new administration needed to justify its deeds, to find its ideological cover. Officially, Russia was considered as a protector of the oppressed people. There raised an issue of justifying such policy to be carried out towards the natives. The alternative was found soon – the Tsarist government accused local population of “Turkism”. Though Ottomans incited hatred among Muslim Georgians towards Christian ones they did not consider them Turkish, while, on the opposite the Russians called them Turks. Such policy was held by Tsarist authority little earlier in another part of Georgia: in Samtske-Javakheti. This policy of Russia was admitted by E. Veidenbaum as a big mistake. In his opinion, “there would not be repeated those mistakes in Ajara that were made in Akhaltsikhe in 1829. We did not acknowledge, or probably forgot again that there are many islamized Georgians” (Veidenbaum E., 1901, p.122). Russian policy towards the native population remained unchanged.

The government of Tsarist Russia created unbearable conditions to the Georgians in order to enforce them to flee the region and to resettle in Turkey (M. Svanidze, 1996, p.7). The colonialist policy of Russia served as the main reason of Muhajiring in Georgia. Further artificial aggravation of economic conditions in Ajara in the post war period also served such policy. Out of 20 villages in Kobuleti region, many had been ravaged and burnt as were Khutsubani, Qaquti, Kobuleti, Tsikhisdziri, Mukhaestate, Leghma, Sameba, Kvirike. Village Gvara did not exist at all (“Golos” (Voice), #102, 1879). Houses, gardens and plough-lands had been destroyed. In such distressed conditions, Russia rendered taxes on the local population, while the Ottoman authority promised them benefits in case of resettlement. This circumstance increased the will of emigration.

Due to the same reason, Russia knowingly aggravated/levied taxes on drinks, salt and tobacco trade in Kars and Batumi (CSA of Georgia, p.416, ext. 3, case 849, p.2), as well as for navigation on Chorokhi. Soon afterwards the taxes in kind were replaced by money taxes (CSA of Georgia, p.7, ext. 4, case 1107, p.27), i.e. Russia turned all the promises into pure sheets of paper.
Muhajiring was somehow conditioned by agitations of some ecclesiastics. As Z. Chichinadze states, "if not for the provokers, the Georgians would have never left the country" (Z. Chichinadze, 1914, p.42). Turkey successfully exploited the negative attitude of the local population towards the new invaders (the Russians) and with the help of agitators incited fear, hatred and distrust among the population, which could be noticed amongst the part of elderly people so far. Even nowadays, in certain mountainous villages, the children are frightened by the "Russians" ("stop the Russian’s coming") that ascertains the then attitude towards them. Briefly, from this point of view the Russian and Turkish interests coincided with each other. By resettlement of the natives/Georgians, Russia could easily fulfill its colonialist tasks. As to Turkey, by settlement of the population with high agricultural experience, they could improve economic development in particular regions of the country. At the same time, regarding a war against Russia, the muhajirs could have been recruited by the Ottoman army.

"Religious fanaticism" was named to be one of the reasons of Muhajiring in the literature, but "what had happened with Christians as 200 families intended to resettle from Artvin this year?" ("Droeba", #131, 1880). Could it all be explained by "fanatism"? A person, regardless which religion he practices, first of all seeks calm life” (Sh. Megrelidze, 1964, p.79). Wrote Gr. Orbeliani, I. Chavchavadze, Gr. Orbeliani, S. Meskhi, N. Nikoladze, G. Tsereteli and others named the barbarous treatment of ruling circles towards the Georgians as the main reason of resettlement. Religious fanaticism supported this process but it was not its stipulating condition. As Great Ilia said "because of war Ajara and Kobuleti endured disaster, ravage of forests and fields, burning of villages, fleeing of the threatened population, which finally caused ruining of their property, destroying of arable farming, death and bloodshed and all these deeds will last for long" (I. Chavchavadze, 1987, p.467). Scholar I.Baramidze considered that one of the reasons of Muhajiring, together with political grounds, was giving the status of Porto Franco to Batumi (I. Baramidze, 1999, p.61). The same idea had risen earlier by the rear admiral Greve and V. Sichinava. Changing Batumi into Porto Franco aggravated the economic conditions of the population. That was clearly reflected in press materials of that time. According to the newspaper "Droeba", "leaving Batumi as Porto Franco finally destroyed life, people turned excoriated and denuded, everything was too over-priced... To buy cloths for family, one should pay tax for that” ("Droeba", #35, 1879). This regime naturally played the role of a stimulator, though reckoning it as a determinant of Muhajiring would be unfair. There was no Porto Franco regime in Sukhumi or Akhaltsikhe but it has not impeded to mass displacement of Georgians from these regions.

The Russians deprived the local (Georgians) Begs (princes) of political rights, privileges, and abolished the pensions granted by the Ottomans. This small part of the society possessed the most part of the best lands. Therefore, they fell under interest of the Russian government. By means of getting rid of them, the Russian empire wanted to catch two rabbits at one time: on one hand, the Russians could have owned the deserted lands and on the other hand, the fleeing of the authoritative persons would have stipulated similar processes of displacement of the lower layers of society (J. Vardmanidze, 2002, p.35). Such attitude of Russians influenced the political orientation of Begs. Though they had lost privileges, they still maintained their authority and they became the opposition to the Russian government. Many of them headed the resettlement process, though the leaders (among them were Muslim spiritual leaders) and the part of Begs (Qedi confessors (mufti) Ahmed Khalipashvili, Khulo clergy Nuri Beridze, mufti Loma Kartsivadze (phadi-shah teacher in Stambul), Nuri Beg Khimshiashvili, Tevphik Beg Atabag, Dursun Beg Tavdgiridze, Tuphan Beg Shervashidze, Ahmed Khalvashi, Gulo Kaikatsishvili, Dede Nizharadze and many others) ambiguously confronted the resettlement process of
Muslim Georgians. But “the petty officials which were greedier, meaner and more glutonous than all the dragonflies together” (I. Chavchavadze, 1987, #136) always created unbearable conditions for their co-existence. During Ottoman ruling, people maintained independence in domestic affairs, but the Russians immediately compelled the Georgians to flee to Turkey seeking better fate (I. Baramidze, 1999, p.74).

In the result of such politics bigger part of historical Georgia: Shavsheti, Nigali/Ligani/Livani, Machakheili, Murghuli, Ajara lowlands, Tao and other had been devastated. Since resettlement in 1879, out of 2000 residents only 500 were left in Kobuleti. Kvirike, Ereguna, Arsenauli and other villages were totally emptied (I. Baramidze, 1999, p.77). Based on various authors and statistics, Sh. Megrelidze determined 30 000 migrants from Batumi district and 10 000 – from Ajara, out of which 4 000 were Lazeti Georgians and Abkhazians (Sh. Megrelidze, 1964, p.61-63). It is worth to note that there exist different and mostly controversial statistics regarding the number of resettled persons. It is impossible to define the exact number and this is not our task either. But if we consider the number of population at that time and compare with the mentioned statistic data, rather big scales of Muhajirning will become evident.

It was distinctly figured out the “stabilizing” role of the Russian Empire, later of a “great Soviet Union” and now of the Russian Federation (on the background of the lastly developed events) in Georgia. The Caucasian nations fall only under ethnological qualification criteria in Russian political or “intellectual” thinking. That is why mass media publish such maps or transmit the mutilated false “information” that would serve against Georgian political interests. (T. Putkaradze, 2008)

The entire history of the Caucasus shows that Russia fulfilled its imperial purposes via declaring local population as “guilty nations” and by their resettlement-destruction. Besides, Russia used to achieve its purpose only when there was certain confrontation among Caucasian people. The time came for us to think over not only the mistakes that have been made by the Caucasian nations towards us, but our mistakes towards them as well. We should also foresee that the Georgian Islamic societies, that really exist, can provide us with their invaluable service (notwithstanding in which country they operate). We should principally include them in service of the Georgian state interests.

Muhajir Georgians have chosen such residing places that were similar to their ancestors’ living places. Families which were displacened from Ajara mountain region as were Gogitidzes (Ozdili), Vakhtangidzes (Bashurk), Putkaradzes (Phortokali), Davitadzes (Unuer), Gchitidzes (Akhsikhaloghli), Beridzes (Chavdaroghli), Qamadadze (Alteqni) and other family representatives chose those villages in Inegol Region which were rich of forests and the cold springs as are Baghchakaya, Phazarilin, Hilme, Mezit, Gunekestan, Tupekçh Konak, Kaysen, Hayri… Villages of Adaphazar Vilayet: Ahmadie, Kahramanmarsas, Kuchuzcek, etc. Those families, which had migrated from lowlands of the region as were: Lominadzes (Erol), Khevrudzes (Yenilmazi), Margadzes (Sutchi), Meskhidzes (Shahini), Kvitasvhilis (Velasvihili), Shavishvilis (Qara), Mighmadzes (Sarachi) and other settled in lowlands, along the coast line (in villages of Pars, Samsun, Sinop, Izmir and Adana regions. (Sh. Putkaradze, 1993, p.18)

In the second half of the 19. century and at beginning of the 20. century there were often published materials about Muhajir Georgians in the Georgian press. Newspaper “Kvali” informed us about the number of Georgians living on the Black Sea coast line of Turkey. In Hopa there were 10 families, in Birkav – 100, in Mafaura – 120, in Irosa – 100, in Surmene – 150, in Ofa – 120, in Trabzon – 100, in Phlatan – 100, in Beygvelman – 120, in Tripoli – 100, in Giresun – 100, in Ordu – 100, in Unia – 1000, in Termo – 100, in Chersheghmesh – 100, in Samson – 140, in Sinop – 120 [302]. According to the same newspaper, in Bolaman about 200 families spoke Georgian (“Kvali”, #49, 1895). In 1912, one of the issues of “Sakhaliko
Gazeti” (Public Newspaper) published “a map of the Georgian population in Turkey” (“Sakhalkho Gazeti (Public Newspaper), #108, 1912), which gives us information about the Georgian family settlement in Izmit gulf on the Sea of Marmara. In addition to the map, there was provided the names of villages and the list of Georgian families residing in those villages.

Descendants of the Georgian Muhajirs (Vardidze, Cholokashvili, Naskidashvili, Saghridze, Dabelidze, Zurabidze, Tavadghiridze, Beridze, Lominadze, Vakhtangadze, Putkaradze, Dolabidze, Shavishvili, Gorgoshadze and others) live in many towns and villages of contemporary Turkey, namely these are Trabzon, Giresun, Samsun, Sinop, Zonguidak, Izmit, Izmir, Iznik, Kütahya, Balikesir, Adana, Konya, Eskişehir, Adapazarı, Bolu, Çorum, Amasya, Tokat, Ordu, Üni, Bursa, Inegöl, Düzce, Yalova, Gemlik, Mezitpor, Patkha, Gonen, Chunara, Gülbaş and other places. There are many Georgian nationals in Ankara and Istanbul, which are mainly descendants of the migrants from Ajara and Tao-Klarjeti. Rarely but still, there could be met descendants of the displaced population from Guria, Samegrelo and Kartli, e.g. in Tokat region there live families from Giorgi Saakadze’s surroundings (Sh. Putkaradze, 1993, p.18).

There is not exact data about the number of Georgians in contemporary Turkey. Various opinions have been expressed in this regard. According to data of 1965, there lived 17 698 Georgians in Artvin, 4815- in Ordu, in Sakaria – 451 543, in Amasya – 1378, in Balikesir – 1281, in Sinop – 1144, in Istanbul – 846, in Tokat - 412 (R. Bakradze, 1995). (It is meant that, the Georgians live in towns and their regions).

Due to the latest Turkish statistical data, recently there lived 130 000 Georgians in Turkey. Those are the descendants of Muhajirs, so Georgians residing on their own ethnic territory (within the frontiers of Turkey). This people had declared their native language being Georgian (and Lazi) (A. Totadze, 1993, p.11). But the language is not the sole criterion for defining nationality. Many people do not know Georgian, though they consider themselves “Gurjis”. Thus, the number of Georgians living in Turkey might be much more than named (though in publications, the information, without any arguments, about the number of Georgians settled in Turkey (5-10 millions) is too much exaggerated).

More than a century has passed since the process of Muhajiring. The biggest part of Muhajir descendants has not broken off the spiritual links with Georgia and till now they nurse all native with pure Georgian tender. From this point of view, a narration of Dursun Ozdili (Gogitidze), the descendant of Muhajir from Goginauri (Shuakhevi Region) is very interesting: “Georgia is our earth. Our people (relatives) are settled in Ajara. One of six brothers stayed there, 5 moved to Turkey. How many of us had moved to Turkey? Many. They came to Turkey and founded Georgian (gurjistan) villages. They always used to speak their native Georgian language… May God give them enough wit to maintain relations with each other” (Sh. Putkaradze, 1993, p.19).

Thus, migration-Muhajiring of population in alien-ethnic environment is one of the major stages of displacement of Ajarian population. It was conditioned first by the Ottoman/Porto violent and ideological (bribed agitation) activity and then by the Russian colonialist policy (artificial aggravation of economic situation for colonialist purposes, pre-term taxation policy, Porto Franco Russian regime, unemployment, depriving begs (princes) of privileges, unreliness of Russian officials, neglect of Islamic norms, etc.)

The descendants of Muhajirs live in seaside towns and villages and in inland regions of the country. “Chveneburebi” have not lost their native language, habits and traditions. They have maintained up to now the archaic elements of Georgian being and culture, names of places (N. Tsetskhaladze, 2000), language, traditions, family names and customs.

It should be considered, that assimilation process in Turkey is held in a speeded
manner and the unique Georgian ethno-cultural values are gradually lost. That is why we should maximally use the neighborly relations between Georgia and Turkey with the aim to study the existing culture of descendants of Muhajirs.

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From the History of Armenian Diaspora in GEORGIA

Guram Markhulia

The Georgian-Armenian relationship has a long history, lasting through many centuries. Due to their geographic location, Georgia and Armenia, along the whole length of history, create an important geopolitical area. Georgians and Armenians belong to the peoples who were fighting for liberation and for obtaining and preserving independent statehood. Due to historical fate, it turned out that the Georgian nation was able to preserve its three-thousand-year statehood and existed till the beginning of the 19. century either as an unified Georgian Kingdom, or in the form of separate Georgian kingdoms or princedoms. While the great empires were disappearing from the political map, small Georgia continued to exist. Armenians had a different fate. During centuries, the very existence of the Armenian nation, not to mention the Armenian statehood, was often questioned.

During the millennia, in the bloody wars, Georgia was one of the central regions of the Caucasus. None of the world’s existing nations had to fight so many battles and wars as Georgians had in order to live on their own land and to repel the aggressors, to preserve their existence and maintain national pride.

The beginning of the 2. century B.C. brought new geopolitical changes. The Roman legions defeated the armies of Antioch III in the battle of Magnesia in 190 B.C. The defeat of the Seleucids contributed to the break-up of their empire. The Armenian military commanders, Artaxias and Zariadres used the momentum to betray Antioch III, stop obeying his orders and declare independence of the provinces which had been given to them for governing. Thus, for the first time in history, the Armenian state was created on territories of ethnic Georgians. From the very beginning Armenians started to expand the controlled territories. According to Strabo, Artaxias and Zariadres expanded (Armenia), cut off the lands from their neighbours and took Pariaadre, Khordzena and Gugareti from the Iberians. This was the beginning of the Armenian-Georgian wars that lasted for centuries. Georgians, who did not yield to the greater aggressors, of course were not going to surrender their lands to the Armenians.

In 95 B.C., the Armenian throne was taken by Tigranes II (95-55) who, owing to the geopolitical situation, was able to establish his control over a significant part of Minor Asia. Later, Armenian historians, on a larger the scale than it was done by Tigranes II, fantastically expanded the territory of “Great Armenia” from the Caspian Sea to the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. The same historians, were working out the idea of the restoration of “Great Armenia's” borders.

Due to the military and political situation, Armenian settlements began to appear in Georgia from the 5. century. In the 7. century, the divine service in Tsurtaavi eparchy was conducted both in Georgian and Armenian. It proves that the Armenians, which were forced to leave their homeland, found asylum in Georgia.

From the 7. century, Persian rule in the South Caucasus was replaced by the Arabian
one. Exactly at that time, the Armenians offered their help to the Arabs in collecting levy and taxes. The Caliphate considered the Armenian “Ishkhan” as one of the main tools in establishing control over the South Caucasus. Therefore, the Caliphs were interested very much in prolonging and preserving its functioning. The consent of both sides became the basis for the strengthening of “Ishkhan” institute and its further transformation into a state. Thus, under the aegis of the Arabs, Armenian statehood was restored. Later, in the second half of the 10. century, the Armenian political organization, claiming to act in the Arab’s interests, took over significant Georgian territories and established two kingdoms there: Tashir-Dzoraget (Lore) Kingdom and Vanand (Kars) Kingdom. With that, the Arabian invasion was joined by the “Great Armenian invasion”.

In 1045, the Byzantine Empire abolished the Armenian political organization, Kingdom of Ani and resettled the Armenians into the inner provinces of empire. Great number of Armenians asked for refuge in the Georgian Kingdom. King of Georgia met the refugees with great respect, allowed them to settle in different parts of the country and saved them from annihilation. Thus, after abolition of the Armenian statehood, Georgia became a second homeland for the Armenian nation.

Armenians living in the inner provinces of the Byzantine Empire soon were able to create a self-governmental body. Afterwards it was "raised" to the rank of Armenian state in Cilicia by Armenian historians, who notified the whole world about the foundation of the new Armenian state in a different geographical environment.

Arabian rule allowed Armenians to settle on the territories of the present-day Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Egypt. Using the method of unconditional surrender, they moved to Central and Eastern Iran. During the greatness of Byzantine Empire, they began to appear in Constantinople, Thrace, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Romania, Transylvania and Crimea. The Crusades allowed the Armenians to settle down in Cyprus, Crete, and Italy. Thanks to the Tamerlane’s campaigns, the Armenian Diasporas were founded in Kazan and Astrakhan. Armenian maps refer to all of the above-mentioned territories as parts of “Great Armenia”.

In the second half of the 15. century, the united Georgian feudal kingdom broke up. The newly-created Georgian kingdoms and princedoms continued to fight against the Turks and Persians. While defending their homeland, many Georgians fell at the battlefields and many Georgian provinces became depopulated. The Armenians took advantage of the situation and seized Georgian lands, houses, churches. Using these methods, the Armenians were trying to found the Armenian statehood on Georgian territory, which was proven by further development of events.

In the second half of the 18. century, Erekle II cleared Eastern Georgia from the Persians and created the strong Georgian Kingdom of Karthl-Kakheti. The Yerevan Khanate became subservient to Karthl-Kakheti Kingdom and practically became part of it. From that time, Armenians had placed all the hopes of liberating Armenia on Erekle II. Even the Armenians living in India asked Erekle II to create a Georgian-Armenian federal state, but the Armenian Patriarch, fearing that he would lose his small domain, foiled that plan, and reported about it to the Iranian Shah.
At the end of the 18. century, Russia joined the fight for the South Caucasus. Erekle II had to sign an agreement with Russia. This step aggravated the situation of Karthl-Kakheti Kingdom. It soon became clear that Russia was not interested in strengthening her ally. At the same time, the Persian Shah decided to punish Karthl-Kakheti and moved to plunder it. It should be mentioned that the Armenian Catholicos Luka gave 100,000 roubles to Agha Muhammed Khan in 1795 in order to cover the war expenses and asked him not to harm the Armenians living in Georgia.

The first battle ended with a Georgian victory. Fearing an ultimate defeat, Agha Muhammad Khan retreated. But because of the betrayal of the Armenian Meliks Mejjun and Abov, the Persians would be able to take Tbilisi. After Agha Muhammad Khan took Tbilisi and ruined it, a new wave of Armenians with the new goals entered Georgia.

The well-known Georgian historian I. Javakhishvili was writing with bitterness: “During the reign of Erekle, the nature of the Armenian immigration in Georgia is obviously changing: if previously their resettlement was spontaneous and had no political inclination or significance, from the end of the 18. century it obtained certain political aspects. Formerly, the Armenians were moving to Georgia seeking protection and were subservient to the Georgian state; from this time on they are looking for the patronage of the outside force, in order to achieve their goals in Georgia.

From this time on the strange situation arouse: Armenians were establishing double connection. From one side they had relations with King Erekle II or King Giorgi and were coming to Georgia as refugees but at the same time they had secret protection from Russia and with the help of Russian government they were following their line.”

In 1801, the Russian empire abolished Karthl-Kakheti Kingdom. In the following years, the other Georgian kingdoms and principalities shared the same fate and Georgia became part of the Russian empire.

Georgia paid a high price for peace, which was established after the disposition of the Russian troops in the country. "The Russian government relied on the Armenian Diaspora in Georgia and artificially increased Armenian population. The Armenians helped a lot the Russian government in suppression of the 1812 Kakheti uprising. The emperor Alexander I considered the Armenians as the Russian bulwark in the matter of subjugation of Georgian “disobedience”, and sent them gratifying letters”.

The Russian government had new plans against Persia and Turkey. Such a policy was advantageous for the Armenians and they continued to come to Georgia. In 1828-1829, when Russia was conducting wars against Persia and Turkey, the main clause of the truce was the free resettlement of the Armenians in Georgia. All the Armenians received these news with a great pleasure and began to migrate immediately to Georgia. Despite the opposition from the Persian government, Colonel Lazarev and General Paskevich, acting under the orders of the Russian emperor, were able to move more than 40 000 Armenians into Georgia. Three Turkish provinces: Beyazit, Erzurum and Kars were nearly completely cleared from Armenians, who also migrated to Georgia (their number was around 70 000). Armenians were settled in various
Georgian provinces, including Abkhazia, but the main part of them, due to Russian geopolitical goals, stayed in Samtskhe-Javakheti, near the Turkish border.

Because of this, the Russian publicist Zagurski wrote with bitterness: "After settlement of the Armenians, Georgian villages in Akhaltsikhe district became like oases. The region looks as if Armenians had lived here from the beginning. The Armenians were free in their actions: they were destroying churches, monasteries and became so impudent that they wanted to rename Akhaltsikhe into Nor-Erzurum."

L. Velichko could not hide his resentment and wrote: "The Armenians do not miss an opportunity to praise, in a parasitical way, their historical "services" or present virtues. On the way they try to shadow their neighbouring peoples, who have a much brighter history and more dignity than the Armenians themselves. Armenians are robbing the Georgians historically and archaeologically they try to delete Georgian inscriptions from the historical monuments, misappropriate the ancient orthodox chapels and deserted churches... fabricating historical nonsense and trying to represent the places, where every stone shows the past of the Georgian kingdom, as the old Armenian domains. Avoiding the convincing testimony of the historical monuments, they were trying to steal, use all the methods and the rich past of the Georgian historical province of Saatabago, which was the domain of the Jaqeli Atabags and which is part of Akhaltsikhe district nowadays. This is despite the fact that all Caucasians know about the still existing traces of the reign of King Tamar in these places... that the most part of the Armenians are refugees from Turkey since the 19th century and not indigenous population."

Exactly from that time begins the creation process of Armenia’s new history. With the legends about "Great Armenia”, they try to draw attention and convince the whole world that they had possessed the lands from the Caspian Sea to the Mediterranean Sea since ancient times. Regarding this Velichko was writing: “The Armenian intelligentsia comprehends well that their kin is not enjoying a good reputation. It is not a coincidence that they represented themselves as Georgians, or sometimes as Circassians to the people, who were not well-informed about Caucasian matters. It is also not coincidental that some publicists, who sympathize with the Armenians, try to avoid naming them as "Armenians” and refer to them as “natives”, “Caucasians”, and often as "Christians". They create a history, persuading that the Armenians are originating directly from Noah... Pages of their history are full of the names of “great persons”, who are unknown to history. Sometimes, historically absolutely insignificant persons are depicted as the "greatest figures."

In 1840, the Russian empire carried out an administrative reform in the South Caucasus and renamed Georgia into the Province of Georgia-Imereti. The leaders of the Armenian nationalistic forces, who wanted to restore “Great Armenia”, got angry that the “future territory of Great Armenia” became merely a district in the province of Georgia-Imereti. In 1849, after the negotiations with the Russian government, the Province of Yerevan was established. This was the first victory of Armenian nationalism on its way towards the creation of “Great Armenia”. The leaders of the Armenian nation, with a great zeal, began the expansion of the borders of the new administrative unit. According to their plan, the Armenians demanded to create a
new Armenian province of Alexandropol from the Borchalo and Akhaltsikhe districts. The imperial administration definitely could create a new Armenian province of Alexandropol on Georgian territories, but owing to geopolitical goals, the Armenians’ attention was drawn to the Eastern provinces of the Turkish Empire, which were densely populated by the Armenians. Thus, the Armenians were pointed out about the possibility of liberation of the so-called Turkish Armenians and creation of the unified Armenian state. The Armenian nationalistic parties and organizations began to convince the Turkish Armenians that mighty Russia was going to liberate them from the Ottoman yoke.

With the aim of restoring “Great Armenia”, the Armenian population in Turkey began to prepare ethnic area. It was the Turkish population that was impeding to the realization of the old idea. On February 21, 1914, following their goals, Armenian bands killed 30 000 Turks in Kars and Artaani. Armenians were taking off their children and throwing them into fire. The organizer of this action was Stepan Ter-Danielian, a member of the Turkish Parliament.

In 1914, after the beginning of First World War, the Armenian population of Turkey decided that the time of liberation had come and began an uprising in the Eastern Turkish villages of Trebizond, Erzurum, Erzinjan, Van and Bitlis. Armenian bands started to kill the peaceful Turkish population. The Dashnak groups did not even spare women, old people and children. During a few months, Armenian terrorist groups killed 90 000 Turks, among which 14 000 were children.

Gagik Pasdirmajian, former Member of the Turkish Assembly (Parliament), was stating in his addresses: “The Turkish children have to be slaughtered. They are a threat for the future Armenia.” Seeing this treachery, on April 24, 1915, the Turkish government decided to deport the Armenian population.

300 000 Armenians decided to take refuge in Georgia. The Georgians received them and settled them near the border, in Samtskhe-Javakheti. Exactly in three years, the newly established diaspora “forgot” how they came to Georgia, claimed that they lived in Armenia and demanded the integration with Armenia. Despite this, the Georgian government did not take any measures against the Armenians, as it had been done by the Turks previously. Moreover, it created even more favourable conditions for the Armenians. It should be mentioned that the descendants of those Armenians today have the same demands as their ancestors.

After the 1917 Bolshevik coup d’etat, the Russian empire broke up and Russia came out of war. This was a menace to the idea of “Great Armenia”.

On March 3, 1918, Soviet Russia signed the Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty with Germany and gave Ardagan, Kars and Batumi to Turkey, who was a German ally. The Trans-Caucasian government did not recognize the Brest-Litovsk Treaty and tried to make peace on more agreeable terms but failed to get Turkey’s consent at the Trebizond Conference.

According to Turkish demand, the Trans-Caucasus proclaimed its independence but this did not stop the Turkish troops who took over the territories given to Turkey by the Brest-Litovsk Treaty and continued to occupy even more parts of the Trans-
Caucasian Republic.

The Turkish plans towards Georgia and the whole Caucasus caused a diplomatic struggle between Germany and its ally at the Batumi peace conference. Despite the geopolitical disputes, Turkey could not openly confront Germany because of Georgia. The Georgian politicians used this situation and asked the German government to protect Georgia. Germany agreed to do so. The Georgian social-democrats, who had lost all the hopes of restoring the democratic Russia, began their preparations for the declaration of independence. Dashnaks became desperate, since they could not agree with the course of Georgian social-democrats, and also could not count on the Germans in the realization of their grandiose plans. There was no unity between the political parties of different nations in the Trans-Caucasus and this caused the break up of the federative republic.

Due to the existing political situation, the independence of Georgia was declared on May 26, 1918. It caused great rage among Armenian politicians. They blamed the Georgian social-democrats for leaving them alone against the Turks and for not helping in the fight for the creation of “Great Armenia”. The situation was aggravated by the new Turkish ultimatum about the revision of the borders. The Turks wanted to seize the territories considered by Armenia but owing to the political situation, the Turkish government had to make some corrections in its plans. The Turkish government made a great mistake and agreed on the creation of an independent Armenian state in the part of Yerevan province. On May 28, 1918, the Armenian National Council, which was operating in Tbilisi, declared the independence of Armenia. After many centuries, the Armenian statehood was restored, but the plan of “Great Armenia” failed. Although, the Armenian government was not satisfied with the achieved goals and was seeking for the allies in order to expand its territory.

After declaration of independence, the Georgian government decided to put the border troops on the South boundaries of Borchalo, Sighnaghi and Tbilisi districts. Despite the fact that the historical frontiers of Georgia were passing even more Southern, the Armenian government protested against this decision. Armenia was categorically against drawing the border along with the historical boundaries, since it would endanger the very existence of the newly established Armenian state. Dashnak politicians thought that the Georgian government, by taking the historical territories, was confronting the “democratic principles” and definitely impeding the self-determination of the Armenians on Georgian lands. With this protest the Armenian government demanded from the Georgian government to accept the fact of the ethnic occupation of Georgian historical provinces of Lore, Glumri, Vanadzor, Akhaltsikhe, Akhalkalaki by the Armenians.

In order to determine the state borders, a joint Georgian-Armenian commission was created. The Armenians demanded the placing of Lore and Akhalkalaki districts and 2/3 of Borchalo district inside the Armenian boundaries. The Georgian side protested and the commission stopped functioning.

In June and July of 1918, the Georgian government seized the historical Georgian territories between Sochi and Tuapse. The local Armenian population sided with Denikin and fought against Georgia. Thus, they once more showed their treachery
for which they were thrown away from Turkey.

On December 5, 1918, Armenia, without declaration of war, attacked Georgian territory. On December 29, the successful attack of the Georgian troops cleaned the road to Yerevan. Due to the critical military situation, the Armenian government had to agree on stopping the hostilities and restoring the status quo. On December 31, 1918, the Georgian troops offensive was stopped.

On January 1, 1919, British troops took over the territories of Lore and Borchalo regions from the station Airum to the station Shagal and declared that line as a "neutral zone". On January 9, 1919, the Armenian-Georgian peace conference was opened in Tbilisi. It specified the terms of the armistice. The administration of the Lore neutral zone was formed from both Georgians and Armenians. The control over the administration was performed by military representatives, first by the British, then by the American ones. The temporary armistice was signed on January 22, 1919. It ended the Armenian-Georgian war and officially legalized the creation of the Lore neutral zone.

Despite this, the Armenian government succeeded in its policy of reaching the expansion of Armenia's borders with the help of Western countries. In August of 1920, the Treaty of Sèvres was signed. According to the Treaty, Armenia got a part of the Eastern province of Anatolia and the outlet to the sea. The "noble-minded" European diplomats increased the territory of Armenia at the expense of historical Georgian lands. At the same time, the Dashnaks were waiting for receiving Karabakh, which was in Azerbaijan, and the so-called Lore "neutral zone", which was established by the English directly after the end of Armenian-Georgian war.

Facing the national liberation movement in Turkey, Britain decided to use the Dashnak Armenia against the Kemalist forces. Soon Armenia began the war against Turkey, in order to get the territories given to her by the Treaty of Sèvres. However, Armenia lost the war and her troops retreated to the Georgian border. On November 26, 1920, after the defeat in the war against Turkey, Armenia signed a declaration, according to which it renounced the Treaty of Sèvres. In a few days, the Soviet regime was established in Armenia. Soon the Armenian People Commissar of Foreign Affairs demanded from the government of Georgian Democratic Republic the withdrawal of Georgian forces from the Lore region. The struggle for the old goals continued in another way, under another flag and using another ideology.

After the establishment of the Soviet regime in Georgia, on July 7, 1921, the plenary session of the Caucasian Bureau adopted the decree on passing the former Lore neutral zone to Armenia. In that way, the 3812 square kilometres of historical Georgian territories were cut off Georgia.

Moscow's official anti-Georgian policy became apparent in cutting off the original Georgian territories from Georgia. Russia itself seized significant territory (even if we do not take into consideration the territories from Sochi to Tuapse) from Georgia, namely the Western part of Gagra Region (present-day Sochi). Georgia had lost overall 19 491 square kilometres of its original territories.

In the 1980’s, the leaders of the Armenian nation understood that the break up
of the Soviet Union was inevitable. In 1985, they gathered at the 23rd congress of Dashnaktsutiun and discussed the expansion of the future independent Armenia. At the gathering the Dashnaks set two directions of Armenian expansion: Azerbaijan and Georgia. It seems, they were afraid of history lessons regarding the Turkish direction. During the voting they choose the Azerbaijan direction because the Highland Karabakh enjoyed the status of the Autonomous Region in Azerbaijan. From their point of view, it would less irritate the society.

The Soviet Armenia offered its geopolitical area to the official Moscow. Based on the Russian interests, Armenia got the military guarantees for the realization of her plans in exchange. Hence, Armenia started the war against Azerbaijan and with the help of the Russian army, cut off 20% of territories of the neighbouring country. More then million Azerbaijanis became IDP-s in their own country.

During the 1992-1993 war between Russia and Georgia in Abkhazia, the Armenian Diaspora, living in Abkhazia, stood out against the Georgian nation and the Georgian state. They created the so-called Bagramian Battalion and fought against Georgians with special cruelty.

In November 2001, a meeting of Dashnak leaders took place in Basel (Switzerland). They discussed the question of annexing the Samtskhe-Javakheti region. The meeting decided to give the region autonomy. With this purpose they created the “Javakheti Renaissance Fund”, where considerable amounts of money were transferred. As a result, the population of Javakheti began to held meetings and demonstrations and demanded autonomy. Later they demanded the joining of Javakheti to Armenia.

The Armenian political circles, in order to prove their rights on this Georgian region, are distributing the works of questionable quality in Javakheti saying that Armenians here are the autochthons. Such a movement is caused by the present-day Russian-Armenian geopolitical union, and it has a purpose of occuying Javakheti. The Armenian Diaspora is ideologically prepared for this event. On the background of the Russian-Georgian war of August, 2008, such ideological diversions are especially dangerous for Georgia.

Hence, throughout history, the Armenian nation always used Georgian statehood to create a densely populated ethnic land to ensure territorial demands in future against the state, which saved and supported them. These are the desires of the Armenians in Georgia. Despite this, we express the hope that in future the two nations can deepen good neighbouring relations and build peaceful, democratic states.
Essence of the Abkhazian Conflict –
The Russian-Georgian War

Dazmir Jojua

The Russian-Georgian War of August 7-12, 2008, may become the beginning of an absolutely new geographical-strategic calendar, not only for our region but in general as well, because this event includes the perspective of initiating a new geopolitical process: the changing of the existing model of the world order.

The Russian military intervention in Georgia and the occupation of the Georgian territories evidently emphasized new global geopolitical outlines:

- An attempt to restore the Euro-Asian Empire of Russia and to form a new global pole around it;
- The Russian plan to create a conflicting “archipelagos” (Ukraine, Baltic States, Poland, Romania, Central Asia).

Provision of Georgia with a strategic assistance and liquidation of the August War results should be discussed, as a prevention of a global geopolitical revolution. If Georgia does not get serious help and if dynamic of support is not proceeded in the strategic protection regime (especially it relates to the multi-dimensional military guarantees), then the imperial project of Kremlin will become unique. As a result, the Western civilization will enforce the Russian-Eurasian model of International relations, transatlantic system – strong impulses of disintegration and the European Union – a new wave of “threats’ strategy”; the process will mostly damage and reduce the geographical-strategic interests of the USA.

One of the principle stages of the Russian conquering policy was the war in Abkhazia in 1992-1993. It must be directly stated that this war was a typological “matrix” of Russian imperialism. There are no real grounds in order to discuss this conflict as an "ethno-conflict", "Georgian-Abkhazian armed conflict", “civil war” or “war among Tbilisi and Sukhumi for the Abkhazian economic wealth distribution”.

The "Abkhazian crisis" was developed during the entire period of the 20. century in the form of a "diversifying evolution" that was carried out by means of periodical changes of the Abkhazian ethnic “separatism” rises and delaying phases, ruled by Russia. Alliance of the so-called separatism and the Russian imperialism, ruled by Russia, had an obvious anti-Georgian character ("Plan of Sitin – 1922; the so-called “Resort Republic” establishing plan of 1945-47 to be implemented by means of uniting Sochi district and Abkhazia; “Suslov’s Doctrine” – 1961; series of the civil-political putches in Abkhazia in the 1950s to the 1980s etc).

In August 1992, the "crisis of Abkhazia” was turned into a war by Russia:

On June 24, 1992, at the meeting of Shevardnadze and Eltsin in Dagomis, there were discussed Russian-Georgian relations in a general context, except the principles of Georgian-Ossetian conflicts settlement. In the adopted “communiqué” it was mentioned that, "the law-enforcement bodies of Georgia and Russia, within the territories of their competence, would prevent the illegal presence and activities of the military and semi-military formations” (“Saqartvelos Respublika” (Republic of Georgia), June 27, 1992). By that agreement, E. Shevardnaze received a sanction from B. Eltsin to launch the military operations on the territory of Abkhazia, and presumably with a neutrality guarantee from the Russian side.

On July 18, 1992, at the “Bocharov Ruchei” state residence in Sochi there was held an unofficial secret meeting between B. Eltsin, V. Ardzinba and some other
representatives of the Abkhazian elite (S. Lakoba, 2001, p.25). Already in five days after the meeting, V. Ardzinba’s regime adopted the separatist legislation. We think it is doubtless that at that confidential meeting, the separatists received a sanction of war against the central authority of Georgia (with the guarantee of military interference from Russia).

Following to the Resolution of August 10, 1992 about the establishment of extraordinary rules on railway transport, relying on a decision of August 11, 1992 of the State Council Presidium of Georgia (E. Shevardnadze, J. Ioselliani, T. Sigua, T. Kitovani, V. Goguadze) and according to a special plan (with code title “Makhvili” (Sword)) prepared by the Ministry of Defense General Staff Operations Department, the armed forces of Georgia moved to the territory of the Abkhazian Autonomous Republic on August 14, 1992. A group of Abkhazian combatants opened fire against the armored column with a limited contingent near the village Okhurei, Ochamchire Region, which resulted in the first victims. The first serious attacks took place near Agudzera, Gulripshi Region, where the so-called “Interior Forces of Abkhazia” special battalion stood up to the Georgian army and exploded one armored car (G. Gasviani, T. Gasviani, 2005, p.161).

Thus, the Abkhazian War started.

It must be underlined that the action of the 14th of August was not an intervention act from the part of the central authorities, nothing to say about its occupation character. From the formal and legal aspects, this was the state army displacement, or if speaking with military terms, it was re-dislocation within the frames of the state territorial supremacy.

At the same time, from the point of view of international law, this action shall be described as “inter-governmental reprisal”, a military sanction that was used by the Georgian authorities, in response to the one-sided illegal action (separatist decision of July 23) of the autonomous entity of Abkhazia, finally aiming to delay the factual result of this action (as was the state dissolution).

In order to determine the essence of the Abkhazian War and to create its conceptual model, it is important to note ahead few priori postulates:

1. The Abkhazian armed conflict of 1992-1993 was the sixth Georgian-Russian war during the last 2 centuries – after the wars in 1804, 1812, 1819-1820, June 1918, February 1919 and February-March 1921. All these wars finished with a victory of the Russian Empire. “A hierarchy” of the negative results for Georgia is as follows: during the wars of 1804, 1812 and 1819-1820, the Georgian monarchic nationalism of the first half of the 19. century was defeated, a process of restoration of Bagrationi dynasty was blocked, Georgia was entirely incorporated into the Russian Tsarist Empire; during the War from June 1918 to February 1919, the territorial integrity was infringed at Gagra zone; in the War of February-March 1921, Georgia was forcedly changed into a soviet republic and was occupied, lately it was annexed; during the War in 1992-1993, Abkhazia was temporarily lost.

2. The armed conflict of Abkhazia was a reaction of Russia on the geographical-civilized choice of Georgia, the main characteristics of which are positive nationalism, pro-western liberal-democratic ideology and integration strategy into the Western system. Besides, the central aspect in the Georgian geographical-civilized choice is a non-participatory course in the regional blocks formed by Russia.

After the putsch failure and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in August 1991, replacement of the “Gorbachov’s Centre” by the “Eltsin Centre” in the Russian higher authority practically did not change attitude of the Empire towards Georgia, so as the “Abkhazian card” had not been thrown into the historical garbage. On the opposite, the new Russian elite even deepened relations with the Abkhazian “ethnicity”.

Shortly speaking, the Abkhazian War served as a blocking opportunity of the
geographical-civilized choice of Georgia from the side of Russia, as Georgia refused to join a new neo-imperial strategic block, the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States). In response, Georgia was imposed the military punishment.

In the geographical-civilized dimension of war, the Russian goal has a bigger place. That as is to ruin a new order in the process carried out by the initiative of Georgia in the Caucasus, as its basement was the Georgian-Chechnya alliance established in autumn 1991. While a position of the West was not signified strategically yet, the idea to create a Caucasus geographical civilization, as the strategic block, was an alternative to the Russian-Eurasian, Turin and Pan-Islamist strategies. By means of bringing into effect the factor of “Caucasian Mountaineer Peoples Confederation” Russia stroke a serious blow to this project and practically frustrated it with the Abkhazian War. It is absolutely clear that, the Abkhazian War seriously harmed the Iberian-Caucasian consciousness as well.

3. From the point of geopolitical theory and the world geopolitical structure, Abkhazia (as well as Georgia and almost all the Caucasus) is situated in the zone of our planet, which was called “Rim Land”, i.e. “frontier zone”. In this zone, one sector of which was Georgia and H. Kissinger called it “discontinuous zone”, are included Eastern Europe, Balkans, East Mediterranean, Caucasus, Afghanistan, Iran, India and Korea¹.

Thus, the Abkhazian War, from the international geopolitical dimensions point of view, represents a starting phase of the “Hartland restructuring”² process. It was the Abkhazian War that showed implementation of Talasocratic and Telurocratic dualistic law in its infancy within the Caucasus area. Unfortunately, this was just the embryonic phase, as the Abkhazian War, in the timing aspect, entirely "fixed" that regime of guarantees, which was accepted by Russia within the scopes of the "Malta

¹ Strategic meaning of “Rim Land” first was defined by the founder of American geopolitics direction N. Speakman. He stated that, "the one who controls Rim land, controls Eurasia and thus, controls the face of the entire world... Rim Land is a key for ruling the world". (A. Dugin, 1999, p.62).

² “Hartland Restructuring” meant distribution of particular Eurasia territories and geo-strategic influence sphere among Russia and the West.
“Format” to reintegrate the former Soviet sphere, except the post-imperial legitimism and Baltic States. This explains an absolutely unjustified neutrality of the West and let’s say peripheral character of the Georgian issue, at the beginning of the 1990s during the Russian-Georgian War.

The so-called major factor of the Abkhazian War was participation of the Russian Federation in it, especially when the last participated, not in a distance-minimal format or with a status of the pro-Abkhazian interested side, but in form of the immediate combating party. Exactly this moment influenced the Abkhazian conflict determination, as it was defined de facto as a Russian-Georgian War.

From the international legal point of view, the reason for the Russian reactive operations was reoccupation and re-annexation of the Caucasus. It was a geopolitical project, the central thesis of which was to restore control over Georgia. The Abkhazian War was considered as a military remedy to achieve that goal. This war was one of those main circles in a chain of events (Karabach War, Tskhinvali conflict, overturn of Z. Gamsakhurdia government in Georgia and A. Elchibey authority in Azerbaijan, establishing the pro-imperial regimes there). That caused blocking of formation of the progressive tendencies of the Russian alternative geopolitical structures and restoring of the Russian influence zone (fortunately, temporarily).

At the same time, an important aspect of the mentioned geopolitical project was a Geographical-strategic plan worked out in president Eltsin’s administration in autumn 1991. The plan aimed at a long-term insurance of the military existence of Russia on Georgian territory by means of creating a network of the geo-strategic enclaves (military bases, especially the militarized centers, the so called peace-keepers) with the diversified status. This network ensured the military control on territory of Georgia and development of the political processes in our country favored by Russia. As a result, the geo-strategic goal of Russia was to absorb the Caucasian geopolitical zone, to carry out the territorial expansion (i.e. “creeping annexation”) against Georgia and to involve Georgia coercively in the external buffer zone of the imperial geographical area together with Moldova (with the Dniestr Conflict) and Azerbaijan (with the War in Karabakh).

Russia participated in the Abkhazian War in two major directions as were the military-strategic and the political-diplomatic ones. Namely, in 1992-1993, Russia used military force against Georgia as follows: the Pskov special division; the 345th airborne unit (regiment); the 643rd antiaircraft-rocket union; the 529th military air forces dislocated on the Bombora Base; the Black Sea navy warship; battalions dislocated in Qvemo (lower) Eshera and Ochamchire and also the special force divisions.

The “separatists” and the volunteers combating against Georgia were provided with ammunition and military equipment by Russia. We represent only one document, which is based on data provided by M. Demianov, an Advisor to V. Ardzinba, which stated: at the beginning of the war, the 643rd antiaircraft-rocket union of the Russian armed forces supplied the separatists with 984 submachine guns, 267 pistols, 18 machine guns, more than 500 missiles, 600 signal rockets, more than half a million bullets, military trucks, military-engineering etc. (Labyrinth of Abkhazia, 1999, p.208)

The "separatists" were provided with military-expertise assistance (by means of the military units’ strategic management) from the Russian Generality (G. Kondratiev, R. Chindarov, A. Kvashnin, I. Sigutkin, others) and the Officers’ corp.

Russia organized the volunteer groups through its territory and dislocated them in the conflict zone. Besides, Russian air and naval forces bombed the Georgian army positions and those territories that were populated by ethnic Georgians.

At the same time, the Russian Higher Authorities (e.g. Vice-President A. Rutskoy, Speaker of the Parliament R. Khazbulatov) periodically threatened the Georgian authority to bomb Tbilisi and other cities.
At the beginning of the 1990s, political-diplomatic format of Russia's participation in the Abkhazian War meant to strengthen the diplomatic-treaty basement of defeating Georgia by means of the political pressure on the Georgian government and suggestion of the false guarantees, during negotiation processes (the Moscow Agreement of September 3, 1992; the Moscow Agreement of May 14, 1993; Sochi Agreement of July 27, 1993, etc.).

In the starting phase of the Abkhazian War in 1992-1993, a bigger part of the Abkhazian territory was controlled by the Georgian civil authorities and the armed forces. Gudauta grouping, which obeyed to Russia, controlled only the Gudauta-New Athens line and Tkvarcheli zone.

The Gagra operation of September 1-6, 1992, against the Georgian armed forces was ended with a victory of the "separatists" military forces, that was followed by immediate movement to the Russian border. This action was commanded by Colonel-General G. Kondratiev. At the same time, there is information, according to which, the general commanding of the Gagra operation was provided by the head of the Joint Staff, a Colonel-General M. Kolesnikov.

On December 9, 1992, the Russian air forces launched bombs against the inhabited regions and the crowded market-place in Sukhumi, in result of which 13 peaceful citizens died. On December 11, the Russian air forces attacked a village Akhaldaba in Ochamchire Region, which resulted in the death of 11 peaceful persons; more than 60 were wounded (G. Gasviani, T. Gasviani, 2005, p.180).

The Russian air-forces attacked the Georgian troops, especially in the zones of Sukhumi and Ochamchire Regions, which were densely populated by Georgians. Thus, Russia violated series of international treaties such as the 1949 Geneva Convention articles (about prohibition of use of carbonic missiles and cluster bombs during war).

The attacking operation in the frames of the Russian-"Abkhazian" confederative coalition took place on March 14-16, 1993 at the Gumista frontage. After the mass bombing of Sukhumi and the Georgian army positions by the Russian air-forces and the "separatists" heavy artillery, the united "Pro-Russian Abkhazians" and "Slavbat" forces started attacks. Following the bloody battles, the enemy managed to break the Georgian military units’ resistance in the central and south areas of Gumista frontage and invaded the territories that were occupied by Georgian troops. The Georgian forces besieged enemy: brilliantly implemented operation of the heavy artillery caused mass fire and in result the loss (as of the human forces, so as of military equipment) of the separatists and confederates.

It should be noted that 1992-1993, Abkhazian War was finished on the base of a special plan elaborated by the Joint Staff of the Russian Armed forces. The Russian military leadership processed a qualitatively new strategy, which foresaw a combined tactful format: simultaneous attacks on each area of both frontages, with preliminary disorientating military maneuvers. According to unofficial data, this plan was elaborated by the Ministry of Defense of Russia in the second half of June 1993. The secret plan consisted of 4 items: 1. to grasp a highway of Ochamchire Region by the Tkvarcheli grouping; 2. to land the navy troops near Tamishi and to unite it with the Tkvarcheli grouping; 3. to launch the parallel attacks from Gumista and to seize the strategic heights around Sukhumi; 4. in result, to besiege and to take Sukhumi” (Labyrinth of Abkhazia, 1999, p.150).

The plan was implemented in several phases:

On July 2, 1992, the Russian navy forces landed the Russian-Abkhazian landing troops near Tamishi, which set their control on parts of Ochamchire-Sukhumi highway. At the same time, the enemy launched mass attacks in the left sector of Gumista frontage. The Russian-separatists forces managed to set control on the Komani, Akhalsheni and Guma strategic heights. On July 9, the enemy occupied Shroma and the Tsugurovka and Akhbiuk heights. Sukhumi was almost at siege.

3 Some Abkhazians were on the Georgians' side.
The second stage of implementation of the Russian plan, when the enemy took an advantage of the Sochi Agreement of July 27, 1993, started the following actions on September 16: the Russian-separatists unit- Tkvarcheli grouping set control over the highway and the railway bridges of the River Kodori. On September 17, the Russian-Abkhazian-confederate coalition started attacks against Gumista front. It should be paid attention to the operational aspect of an offensive action:

If a strategic structure of enemy attacks was united before, at this time this action was of echeloned form: the first echelon consisted of the Russian regular army special divisions and the confederates’ detachments; the second echelon was the so-called Abkhazian battalions. Besides, there was the third separate reserve echelon of the Russian armed forces, which united the infantry, tank and artillery divisions. It was planned to use the reserve echelon only in case of defeat of the first and the second echelons. As a result, the operational (strategic) depth of the Russian-Abkhazian-confederate coalition attacks was of several kilometers. Against all the above mentioned, the Georgian side managed to mobilize its forces of lesser number, mainly from the local population and without any equipment. At this period, it was impossible to restore the tactical zone of the echeloned defense. In fact, the implementation frame of the Sochi Agreement (signed by the Georgian side) excluded such possibility (D. Jojua, 2007, p.198). On September 27, Sukhumi fell and on 28-30 September, entire Abkhazia.

During the War in Abkhazia, in 1992-1993, when Georgia was defeated and the armed forces and the Georgian population had to leave the Autonomous Republic territory, the Georgian jurisdiction over this region stopped. Today, Abkhazia is a recessive local zone that was forcibly detached from the Georgian central authorities’ political sovereignty and jurisdiction, which in the name of Gudauta grouping, unambiguously disregards any form of revealing to restore supremacy of the centre (Tbilisi), while been backed by the Russian military-strategic support.

Secession of Abkhazia from Georgia has not taken place on the ground of self-determination, international legal mechanisms or domestic plebiscite processes. By means of unconstitutional insurrection and military disobedience of the separatists, incited by Russia, all this was addressed against the central authorities of Georgia.

Thus, “independence” of Abkhazia indeed was an action, directed against the Georgian government and accordingly, recognition of an anti-constitutional creation is an international offence.

A basic feature of the political conjuncture of separatist Abkhazia is the de facto protectorate of Russia. Strategic interests of Russia in Abkhazia are logically connected to the neo-imperial policy, in order to restore a control over the Post-Soviet space. The problem of Abkhazia is one of the acting mechanisms in this restoring process. The issue is to stop sovereignty of Georgia till a certain extent, to block Georgia as geopolitical core area of the Caucasus and to maintain possibility of reoccupation and re-annexation of the entire Caucasus.

By means of maintaining control over Abkhazia, it is insured to block the progressive geopolitical tendencies of configuration the Caucasus region and the south sector of “Hartland”. From this point of view, the function of Abkhazia within the global geopolitics is identical to the functions of Kaliningrad enclave, Dniestr and eastern Ukraine.

Adding to that, Abkhazia has an extra value for Russia, which is its local sub-regional geopolitical meaning: Abkhazia is some kind of a “tower” for Russia, which consolidates the Black Sea coast and the Caucasus in its entire systematic unity. The Sochi-Adler-Tuapse zone cannot have such a “consolidating” geopolitical function because of the low percentage of the population autonomy. If Russia “yields” Abkhazia, then there will be created polychromatic ethnical policy in the sub-region and the Sochi-Adler-Tuapse Russian zone will become a certain kind of buffer that will cause separation of
the Kabardino and Adighean ethnic zones from their “brother Abkhazians”. In result, they will attack this zone in order to liquidate its buffering type and all this will lead Russia to create of a new area of destabilization on the Sochi-Maikop-Cherkessky line.

As we have mentioned above, Russia had unofficially set its protectorate over Abkhazia. In fact, there is the external government regime operating, while Russia entirely controls the political processes in Abkhazia and the important decisions are made on the base of coordinative consultations with the administration of the Russian President and State Duma. Unfortunately, Russia has enough resources to block any undesirable decisions. In that case, the imperative “Veto groups” are the President’s administration, the Joint Staff of the Ministry of Defense and the Committee on CIS issues of the State Duma. These structures are exactly the ones having influence on the political spectrum of Abkhazia. Besides, a strong lobbying network of support of the separatists within the Russian establishment is provided by the State Duma fractions “Rodina” and “LDPR” and the CIS Strategic Research Institute of the Academy of Sciences of Russia. Thus, the unofficial protectorate governing Abkhazia by Russia and political colonization signs are evident.

The Russian destructive policy became especially radical on the eve of 1999-2000, after V. Putin and his militarist grouping came to power. Since that time, Russian policy gained an intentional annexation character.

In October 1999, V. Putin annulled the December, 19, 1994 resolution of the Russian Government about the economical, border and finance blockade of the Abkhazian separatist regime. With this action, Russia practically expressed its support towards the so-called “Independence Act of Abkhazia” of October 12, 1999, as it was the “independence” for uniting with Russia.

Since January 1, 2000 parallel to setting the visa regime with Georgia, Russia maintained the visa-free frontier regime with Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region. From 2002, by means of breaching all the international norms, V. Putin’s administration started granting the Russian citizenship and distributed Russian passports to the population of Abkhazia. This unexampled delicte process was a humanitarian intervention directed against Georgia and annexation of an organic part of its civil space.

It’s absolutely clear, that from the Eltsin strategy of informal support to the “Abkhazian separatism”, Russia started setting of special relations with Abkhazia, finally striving towards its gradual annexation. If on the earlier stages, the main goal of Russia was not secession of Abkhazia but “catching” of Georgia in its political influence zone with the Abkhazia factor, henceforth Russia oriented a disintegration process on Georgian territory. This strategy is an indivisible part of a new geopolitical project of Russia. Goal of this project is to create its own geopolitical and geo-strategic interests zone in the south sub-region of “Hartland” and together with Iran and Armenia to involve the unrecognized post-Soviet separatist enclaves within this system. According to the Russian plan, Abkhazia ought to become one of the parts of the pro-Russian geopolitical zone. This is exactly a function of Abkhazia for Russia, certainly together with breaching the Euro-Atlantic orientation of Georgia.

After the War of 7-12 August in 2008, Russia actively started the realization of this strategy. Following to the military intervention in Georgia and its post-intervention occupation on August 25-26, the Kremlin grouping adopted absolutely illegal and criminal acts (from the international legal point of view) about recognition of the so-called “independence” of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

The only alternative way of regulating the “Abkhazian crisis” is a radical orientation on the Euro-Atlantic course and parallel to receiving of the international guarantees within this course, neutralization of the “mediatory” mission of Russia. As to speak about improving the relations with the present authorities, it is absolutely unproductive, as dream have no perspectives.
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The Geopolitical Role of the Caucasus Mountains from a Historical Perspective

Giorgi Leon Kavtaradze

If we throw a glance through the main - Eurasian - part of the Eastern hemisphere we can easily find the Trans-Caucasus located between the two seas. It has quite an extraordinary, I dare say, even central position on the hemisphere. In North of it, across the Great Caucasian Range, is situated Russia; in the South, genuine Near Eastern Turkey and Iran; in the West, the Black Sea divides it from Eastern Europe and in the East, the Caspian Sea from Central Asia. Such an intermediate location of the Caucasus should be the reason of its ethno-cultural diversity noticed already by Greco-Roman authors.

Georgia (ancient Colchis and Iberia), the country of the Golden Fleece in Classical Greek mythology, is located in the central and Western parts of the Trans-Caucasus. It is chained to the Caucasus like Prometheus, who found his last abode in the same mountains. Even on the former state emblem of Georgia, under the hoofs of the horse of Tetri (White) Giorgi (the image of Georgia), the Caucasian mountains are depicted (instead of the dragon of St. George's icon - a symbol of natural challenge of the country, representing the link of its destiny with one of the main markers of the geographical, ethno-cultural and political division of the world).

Georgia and the Trans-Caucasus generally lie not only at the cross-roads of all four sides of the world, but at the cross-roads also, from the temporal standpoint, between the old and new worlds: the old world of totalitarianism and the new world of democratic society. Both these cross-roads are intertwined with each other. The areas North and East of the Caucasus are still embodiments of totalitarian societies. The areas West and South, embody societies with a democratic way of life or on the path of democratic transformation.

Numerous states were created in all parts of the world after the First and the Second World Wars and also after the collapse of the Communist system. In our days, this process takes place mainly in new independent states (NIS) of the post-soviet space and Georgia is among them. The analogous situation was created already in Georgia, due to the annihilation of the Russian Empire, when a new Democratic Republic of Georgia was created. In three years, in February-March of 1921, Georgia was annexed by Soviet Russia, though the tradition of statehood in Georgia counts thousands of years.

It seems that the factors of geopolitical character caused not only the emergence of statehood in Central Trans-Caucasus in the Classical period, but also determined its historical development in Medieval, New and Newest times.

The main purposes of the future studies are: at first,- to outline the possible trends in political orientation of Georgia, against the background of existing tendencies (in the political life of Georgia itself, of Trans-Caucasus generally, and of a much wider area adjacent to the basins of the Black and Caspian seas) and the second, to study
the character of interrelations among these trends.

Georgian politicians and public carry out discussions on how to resolve the triple choice, which faces the country:

1. Join the security system of the CIS (i.e. Russia);
2. Declare neutrality;
3. Integrate within the Euro-Atlantic democratic societies.

Pro-Russian trend actually means turning back from the process of state formation to final dissolution (though gradual) in the Russian maw – the age-long dream of Russian political circles. In spite of the decisions made on various summits, Russia tries to retain by all means its military presence in Georgia and at the same time to widen its economic and political presence in the country.

Neutral status is irrelevant for a country lying on the highway of political processes and surrounded by aggressive neighbours, primarily by Russia, Turkey and Iran. To some extent, during the reinterpretation of their Caucasian policy, after the breakdown of the Soviet Empire, these countries are trying to ensure peace and security in the region, different from their old historical traditions.

The pro-Western trend seems the only option, which can secure the independent development of Georgia. But can we be sure that this choice answers to the national interests of the country? Why does the pro-Western orientation become a motto of Georgian society? How trustworthy are the fears spreading among a part of the Georgian public that, because of their pro-Western orientation, the country and its population are under the unforeseeable and imminent threat of punishment, coming from rivals of the Western democratic societies and. Therefore, in the opinion of this public, the political orientation of the country should be changed.

These questions show how tense and uncertain the political situation in Georgia is lately. I don’t think that there exists an easy answer to all questions, that Georgian’s face today, but historians could try to make the situation more understandable from the standpoint of the historical development of this country.

Therefore, we need to throw a glance from the historical perspective, to gain an insight into the character of developments underlying modern processes. The pointer of the political compass of Georgia was directed to various sides of the world in different times, but what kind of mechanism caused such a shift of orientation? Which point, having strong magnetic power, was most determinative for the Georgian pointer throughout history? These are the questions that should be answered.

Unfortunately, nobody paid attention, in the special literature, to the interconnection between the existence of the state power in Central Trans-Caucasus and the necessity to control the passes through the Caucasus, indicated by the historical development of the area. This is mainly due to the fact that, during the last two hundred years, Trans-Caucasus was incorporated in the Russian and Soviet empires and no governmental employee, in charge of these totalitarian states, would allow, or encourage even in a post-Soviet time, to carry out such a study. Both these countries (the Russian
Empire and the Soviet Union) succeeded in total subjection of the Trans-Caucasian territory, which was of vital importance for their expansionistic plans against the entire East Mediterranean-Middle Eastern area. On the other hand, the fact, that no Caucasian nation was represented on the political map of the world over the last two centuries, with the above-mentioned short exception, is the main reason why Caucasian history was actually neglected by Western specialists, even when studying the areas adjacent to it.

The breakdown of the Communist system gave specialists of countries belonging to this system the possibility to use such methodological principles, far removed from the dogmas of Marxism-Leninism and sometimes already obsolete in other parts of the world. In connection with the early Caucasian political history, the use of Arnold Toynbee’s Challenge-and-Response model seems preferable, as the emergence and development of the idea of statehood in the Caucasus finds its stimulus (Challenge) in the reaction (Response) of the local natural and social environment.

The political history of Georgia, like other Trans-Caucasian countries, was mainly dominated by the geographical location of the Trans-Caucasus in the South of the Great Caucasian mountainous chain, one of the most important watershed systems of the world. These mountains form a fracture (something like a geological fault-line), not only from the geographical and ethno-cultural points of view, but also from the geopolitical division of the world. The key importance of the location of the Caucasus was picturesquely stated by Pliny the Elder (Plinius Magnus), already two thousand years ago, namely that the Caucasian Gate (i.e. the Darial Pass, crossing the central part of the Great Caucasian Range), divides the world in two parts (n.h. 6, 30).

There was always a need for a barrier to be erected by the world of reasonable men against the world of barbarians, such as the Great Wall of China or Hadrian’s Wall (Roman Limes). The Caucasian Gate had the same function for the Middle East. Since immemorial times, it barred the descent of Eurasian nomads into the civilised world of common interest: the Mediterranean-Middle Eastern oikoumene.

The Caucasian Gate is frequently called the Pillars, Stronghold or Iron Gate of Alexander the Great by the classical (Greco-Roman) authors. The linkage of Alexander’s name with the emergence of the Iberian statehood, known from old Armenian and Georgian chronicles, indicates the raison d’etre of this state, namely to be the outpost of the civilised world in its struggle with the realm of Gog and Magog lying beyond the Caucasian Gate.

The above-mentioned emblem of Georgia bears the sun, the moon and the five stars, supposedly bestowed on the Georgians by the legendary image of Alexander of old Georgian chronicles, as an ideological basis of their state religion. Thus, the concept of Alexander’s Iron Gate was the reflection of the concrete political function of the Georgian State: control over one of the most important strategic passes of the world.

This function seems to have been one of the main decisive factors that challenged the emergence of the Georgian State in the central part of the Trans-Caucus in the Early Hellenistic period. The location of Georgia, South of the Great Caucasian range,
in the contact zone of Eurasian nomads and Middle Eastern civilised societies, had predetermined the continual external pressure from the North. A Challenge, which for its part caused a Response: the creation of a state (i.e. the Iberian Kingdom) in Central Trans-Caucusus. It is interesting that the period of replacement of the Pax Achaemenia by the Pax Macedonica marks out the emergence of Iberian (East Georgian) Kingdom.

The raison d’etre not only of Iberia, but also of other new states of the Classical period, Albania and Lazica (the successive state of Colchis), were to become strongholds of the civilised world (Greek oikoumene or Roman orbis terarrum) in its struggle with the barbarian Realm of Darkness beyond the Caucasian Gate. However, there was undoubtedly a difference between the western political orientation (the Greek states, Roman and Byzantine empires) of Iberia and also, to a certain degree, of Lazica on the one hand, and the Eastern orientation (Persia, Parthia) of Albania (together with Armenia), on the other.

The control of the Caucasian passes could create the most favourable opportunity for the preservation of Pax Romana in the Middle East. The Iberians were the most important allies of the Romans in the region, having supremacy over the Caucasian Gate. The close collaboration between the Romans and the Iberians, based on their joint strategic interests as parts of one and the same orbis terarrum, was the leitmotif of their interrelations.

At the same time, the rulers of the Iberian Kingdom successfully used the favourable strategic location of their country to balance the pressure of the powers, coming from all sides of the world, often changing the direction of their orientation. Already Tacitus noted that the Iberians were „masters of various positions“ and could suddenly „pour“ mercenaries from across the Caucasus against their Southern enemies (Ann. 6, 33).

The long-term aspiration of the medieval Georgian monarchy, going back presumably to the times of the Roman Empire, to bring under its sovereignty not only the Caucasian Gate, but all existing Caucasian passes from the Black to the Caspian Sea, is expressed by the formula of its territorial integrity in the Georgian chronicle of the 11. century the „Life of Georgia“: „from Nikopsis to Daruband“, i.e. from the North-Eastern Black Sea littoral to the Derbent gateway (the second important pass of the Caucasus), on the Western shore of the Caspian Sea. This formula, emphasising especially the Northern borderline along the Caucasus, enables us to interpret the main function of that kingdom in a more general context.

Faced with the necessity of effective control of the Caucasian passes, which barred the way of the northern invaders, the rulers of the states of the Eastern Mediterranean-Middle Eastern area were always eager to have in Central Trans-Caucusus - in Iberia - a political organisation with sufficient strength to fulfil such a defensive function.

The concept of the Caucasian Gate predetermined the fate of the Georgian State from the Early Hellenistic time till the beginning of the 19. century when Georgia’s annexation by Russia meant the loss of this important function. I think this function is the reason why Georgia, as pointed out by Cyril Toumanoff, is the only country of Christendom where socio-political and cultural development ran an uninterrupted
course from the Classical period to the beginning of the 19. century.

This overwhelming interest of the Near Eastern-Mediterranean societies towards Georgia was caused not only by the abstract defensive function of this country, but mainly by its concrete location at the edge of the civilised and barbarian worlds. Though Georgia and Trans-Caucasus were open to the influences of these two opposite models of historical development, the factor of the Great Caucasian Range determined its destination to be the strongholds of the highly developed and prosperous Middle Eastern-Mediterranean oikoumene, against the vast area of Eurasian steppes: an embodiment of the powerful and aggressive forces with their slow rate of social, political, economic and cultural development. Or in other words, to be the stronghold of the civilised South and West against the barbarian North and East. On the other hand, the northern nomads required a bridgehead for their raids towards the Middle East. The territories of Georgia and Trans-Caucasus represented the best opportunities for this task.

The constant opposition between the barbarian and civilised peoples, aggressors and producers, brigands and creators, were two firestones with the help of which the fire of statehood, south of the central part of the Great Caucasian Range, in Central Trans-Caucasus, was kindled.
**Pic. 1.** Church inscription of Msig-khuia Mountain

**Pic. 1a.** Inscription of Giorgi II on Samtserobeli church art
Pic. 2. Mokvi Church built by Leon III, the King of Abkhaz

Pic. 3. Mokvi, inscription of Grigol Mokveli
Pic. 4. Bedia Church built by Bagrat III

Pic. 5. Bedia Chalice with inscription of the King Bagrat
Pic. 6. Bedia Ancestral fresco of Dadiani Family, Ochamchire

Pic. 7. Ilori Church
Pic. 8. Ilori, inscription of Giorgi Kocholava

Pic. 9. The fresco of Tskelikari Church with inscription
Pic. 10. Fragment of the Tskelikari church

Pic. 11. Tskelikari, inscription of a donor Chichua
Pic. 12. Anukhva, inscription of Giorgi Basilisdze

Pic. 13. Anukhva, inscription on the stele
Pic. 14. Tsebelda, inscription of Luka Martineva

Pic. 15. Tsebelda, inscription of the Church of St. George
Pic. 16. Tsebelda, chancel-barrier

Pic. 17. Gudava, inscription of Rabai and Nugamtsira
Pic. 18. Likhni Church

Pic. 18a. Fresco inscription of Likhni
Pic. 19. Likhni inscription about apparition of the comet

Pic. 20. Chala, inscription of Ozmeg Dadiani. Ochamchire
Pic. 20a. Dikhazurga, inscription of Mikael Galatoztukhutses

Pic. 21. Samtsevrisi Church built by Konstantine III
Pic. 22. Samtservrisi, inscription of Konstantine III

Pic. 23. Icon of Leon III, King of Abkhazs