Ghia Nodia

Components of the Georgian National Idea: an Outline

Since the 1980s, theoretical literature on nationalism has abounded, its most influential stars including Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, Anthony Smith and Rogers Brubaker. The main thrust has been to problematize the concept of nation as most people have tended to perceive it since the 19th century. To reject, that is, the romanticized idea of a nation as an age-old, pre-given entity one is supposed to speak of with awe. The new scholars of nations and nationalism disdain these approaches as "primoridialist" and "essentialist" - which, for them, is synonymous with unprofessionalism and inadequacy. On the other hand, most of Georgian intellectual tradition, inasmuch as it is preoccupied with the concept of the Georgian nation, takes the essentialist-primordialist approach for granted - even when authors display sharply critical attitudes towards different aspects of Georgian social or political realities. Georgian sociologists who teach contemporary theories of nationalism rarely apply them to Georgian material.[1] The latter attempts are rare and mostly belong to foreign scholars.[2]

The aim of this article is to propose a tentative trajectory of the evolution of the idea of the modern Georgian nation. I will not go into theoretical debates on nationalism but start by briefly summarizing my general approach towards the problem. Then I will proceed with a general description of two major components of the Georgian national idea: identity-building on the one hand, and the Georgian nation as a political project.

This is a big-picture approach, with its broad generalizations not based on detailed research into the specific components. For the reasons listed above, there is a shortage of relevant research literature and the author did not have the time and opportunity to undertake such research himself. The value of a big picture, however, is that it may stimulate more specific and detailed inquiry.

Nation as a Platonic Idea

Every nation is unique. This is so as a matter of fact because each one carries a distinctive combination of geographical, historical and social-cultural characteristics. But this is also so in the sense of self-awareness. It is crucial for any nation to *feel* unique.

At the same time, however, every nation is an imitation of the Platonic idea of nation. This idea is Platonic in the sense of being "objective": People - including scholars keen to "deconstruct" it - treat it as a given, something that does not only float in an anonymous space of public consciousness (or the "third world", as Karl Popper would have it[3]), but has *power* to reckon with (most scholars of nationalism believe this power to be devious and destructive, but this is another matter). There is another feature that makes this idea "Platonic": it is *productive*. It has a capacity to produce its own emulations.

But the same idea is not Platonic at all in that it was produced at a certain (and fairly recent) stage of historical development. The time of inception more or less coincides with that of modernization (or even late middle ages as precursor of modernity), while the actual birth is usually dated to the period of the French Revolution.[4] A whole army of constructivist ("modernist", "instrumentalist") scholars examine the periods of pregnancy and delivery. They wonder who the true parents of this rather bad-tempered baby were, what defined its particular character, and so on.[5]

There is one more non-Platonic feature about the idea of nation: It was not created as something separate, but simultaneously with the birth of those particular nations that happened to define what modernity is about. These are Britain, the United States, and France.[6] Admittedly, the idea of nation was a byproduct of these countries establishing themselves as modern nations. No political actors inspired by the idea of nation as such played any important role in their build-up. The people of the latter type we now call "nationalists": They use the Platonic idea of nation as guidance for political action. Contrary to this, the founding fathers of the paradigmatic nations of modernity did not make any conscious effort to construct an idea of nation or build their countries in accordance with it.[7] The idea developed out of the pragmatic needs of political modernization. The best symbol of such birth from necessity may be the moment when French soldiers went into battle shouting "vive là nation" for the first time. For centuries, soldiers went to die for their kings and princes. But whom would they die for after the king was deposed and even beheaded? "Homeland" or "nation" appeared to be the most practical choice.

The idea of nation took on its Platonic characteristics (that of the ideal model to be emulated by others) after paradigmatic nations that define the face of modernity took shape - a development which associated this idea with those of modernity, progress, success and power. For the British, Americans, or the French, the build-up of nations may be considered another byproduct of modernization. For others, it becomes a conscious - admittedly, ideologically driven - political project.[8] Accordingly, there emerged *nationalists*, that

is, begetters of nations, and there appeared such terms as "national revival", "nation-building", "failed nations", etc.

This second category of nations - which is a large majority of the total - may be called *latecomer* or *belated nations*, in that they were late to modernize and had to develop their nationhood by emulating the pre-existing paradigm. Germany became the first such belated nation[9] - one that became conscious of, and distressed by, being "late" and turned the idea of catching up into a major existential project.[10] Hence, while Britain, the United States and France are paradigmatic modern nations, Germany created paradigmatic modern nationalism. The extremely bad name that is associated with nationalism nowadays is also primarily linked to the experience of German nationalism.

But the spoiled reputation of nationalism resulted primarily from the experience of the two disastrous world wars of the 20th century. In the 19th century, when most national ideas were constructed - at least in Europe - it was still viewed mainly as the ideology of liberation and modernization. This was the period of liberal nationalism. It was in this context that the construction of the modern idea of Georgian nationhood started.

How to Compose a National Identity

Georgia is one of many belated nations. The modern idea of the Georgian nation began developing in the 1860s in the circle of *tergdaleulebi*,[11] people educated in Russian universities, with one of them, Ilia Chavchavadze, deservedly being called 'the father of the nation'.[12] It was this circle of people who tried to construct a national idea emulating the Platonic model born out of the experience of western modernization.

This does not by itself rule out the importance of pre-modern precursors of the Georgian nation - or the idea of it. It is a widely accepted view among Georgian historians that "from the 10th to 14th century, Georgia represented a unified political and cultural space that constituted a self-awareness of unified Georgia".[13] Some aspects of this opinion will certainly be contested within the constructivist-modernist paradigm, but if there indeed were any "nations before nationalism",[14] then the Georgia of that period was one of them. To use the language of 19th century discussions on nations, the modern Georgian nation was incepted as a *historical* one - that is, it could refer to a long tradition of statehood and written language, and an autocephalic Church that used that language.[15] To use Tony Judt's phrase, Georgia had a considerable "usable past" that could go into the nation-building project.[16]

However, the political, social and ideological context of modernity makes nations radically different from their pre-modern precursors. First of all, the latter are primarily patrimonies of kings and depend on strong and stable dynasties for their existence, while modern nations depend on a horizontal sense of belonging among the people that constitute them. Therefore, the "historical nations" have to reinvent themselves according the modern blueprint. Pre-modern cultural and political traditions serve as building blocks (albeit very important ones) for this new construction. The latter follows a guiding design, and this is what one may call the national idea.

So, what are the usual components of the Platonic idea of nation? Although cases differ, there are several elements of key importance, including:

Markers of identity. What are the features around which the sense of belonging is built? These features constitute the material, the meat, without which the idea of the nation can only be formal and shallow. These blocks are usually pre-modern (one could also call them 'primordial') components of the nation: Nobody can just invent, construct a territorial homeland, a historical record, language, religion, etc. Something should be there to start with. But all these things can be - rather should be - re-constructed and re-interpreted, in order to fit into a national design workable in the context of modernity. Politicians establish exact borders of the homeland, historians define what the national narrative is, grammarians and lexicographers define what the "norm" is and distinguish it from "dialect", etc.

The political project. Nation is a quasi-personality that needs a purpose around which its efforts and activities are concentrated. This may be rationalized as the task of preserving and expressing (projecting) national identity. Typically, this is the idea of a political home, or nation-state. The latter is not absolutely necessary, however. One could aspire to an autonomous unit within a state, or a non-territorial package of "minority rights" for a given community. However, modesty usually stems from weakness and a nation settles for the lesser option when either the best one appears unattainable, or laying claim to it is too risky. On the other hand, national ambition may also surpass the project of a nation state. It may seek, for instance, a role in defining the world order, or being a role model for less advanced peoples.

The image of the other ("the Out-group"). - As we know from classical philosophy, *determinacio est negatio*: in order to define oneself (or exercise a right to self-determination) one has to distinguish oneself from the other. In practice, this may also require one to politically and territorially detach oneself from one's imperial master. Therefore, it is usually (but not always) the actual or former imperial master who is the preferred other or the privileged foe.

The role models. As belated nations are doomed to play catch up in order to overcome the development gap, they may also need specific role models (abstract Platonic ideas do not suffice). Sometimes, in a paradoxical way, role models also serve as political enemies (imperial masters bring modernization but they also become adversaries in the context of self-determination) - but it is preferable to have them for allies.

The internal other. While trying to establish a the nation-state, as well as after this purpose is achieved, nations are usually forced to deal with those who reside in the national home but do not easily fit in because they do not share relevant identity markers. These are called national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. Projects such as genocide, ethnic cleansing, assimilation, and multiculturalism are typical strategies for resolving the issue. The choice of one of these options has deep implications for the result of the nation-building effort.

To be sure, other analysts may come up with different lists of ingredients, and I do not claim that the above constitutes a satisfactory description of the Platonic idea of the nation. But it may serve as a reasonably useful checklist for an attempt to map the process and challenges of nation-building in some specific cases. I will now proceed by applying it to the Georgian case, focusing on two principal parts: One is about constituting a national identity, the other about defining the political project.

Major markers of the Georgian identity

In 1860, Ilia Chavchavadze proposed a triad that later acquired a status of *the* formula of the Georgian nationhood: Fatherland, Language, Faith (mamuli, ena, sartsmunoeba). Chavchavadze wrote: "From our ancestors, we inherited the three sacred treasures: fatherland, language, and faith. If we do not even take good care of them, what kind of men are we, what will we be able to say to our heirs?"[17] We cannot contend that Chavchavadze attached any formulaic meaning to this triad. In fact, he wrote these words in the context of criticizing a bad Georgian translation of a bad Russian poem; he did not develop the idea beyond the quoted two phrases, and did not return to it in his later texts. However, the triad became the mandatory slogan in late 1980s, when the mass Georgian national movement unfolded. This makes it an even more deserving subject for serious analysis.[18]

The first important thing about the way in which the formula is introduced is establishing the link between the primordial past and the future: National identity as represented by the triad is "the treasure we inherited from

our ancestors", but, most importantly, it is a major *practical task* to preserve these treasures and to pass them on to *future generations*. This is a paradigmatic expression of the Platonic idea of nation, and a classic formulation of the nationalist program.

Each element of the triad is a building block of the Georgian national identity: This makes it important to consider each of them separately, as well as to discuss the sequence in which they are introduced. Fatherland (*mamuli*) comes first, and it refers to *territoriality* of the nation - belonging is defined in terms of territory, the homeland. This is the essence of the modern, liberal territorial concept of nation.[19] Importantly, Ilia Chavchavadze intentionally gave the term "mamuli" (patrimony, the land or estate of father) its new meaning - that of the translation of the French *patrie*, fatherland. Chavchavadze wanted thus to replace the term *samshoblo* (the land of birth, primarily associated with the mother). The innovation did not stick: while *mamuli* is also used in today's Georgian in more poetic and sublime contexts, *samshoblo* is a much more widely used term (also in patriotic texts, such as the Georgian national anthem adopted in 2004). But Chavchavadze's intention is itself significant: He wanted to associate the idea of Georgianness with something French - masculine, activist, rational, with the traits associated with the modern and powerful West.

Thus, mamuli is the idea of nation as territorial but also active. It is about doing, pursuing some project, rather than just being there. The idea of "national awakening", turning the nation from a passive to an active mode, to a mode of self-cultivation at the least, is as central to Ilia Chavchavadze's thinking, as it typically is for many fathers of nationalisms. But apart from mamuli as the arena of national activism, one also needs a feature that unifies members of the nation. This is the Georgian language. This also makes Georgian nationalism a typical "linguistic nationalism" of the European mold: that is a nationalism that considers language the main marker unifying members of a national community.

It was absolutely necessary to stress the character of Georgian as a written language of long history - to use Ernest Gellner's terms, that of high culture rather than a 'low' or popular culture.[20] Without this background, putting language forward in the context of the 19th century Georgia would have been a problem, as in at least two regions, people spoke different tongues, Megrelian and Svan, related to Georgian but incomprehensible to other Georgians. But those were and are vernaculars rather than written languages: when in need of reading the Bible or high literature, Megrelians and Svans also reverted to Georgian. That made the predominance of Georgian as the national language an obvious and uncontested choice.

For any linguistic nationalism, the language that is central to it should be a normative written language. Hence practical tasks of linguistic nationalisms, which Ilia Chavchavadze started to pursue in his lifetime: to consolidate normative (written) Georgian as distinct from dialects. For western European linguistic nationalisms, it was typically the translation of the Bible into the national vernacular (rather than Latin) that served as the turning point. Georgia of the 19th century was both ahead and behind in this regard: the Bible had long been available in Georgian, but within the Russian empire, the Georgian Orthodox Church was deprived of its autocephalic status and the Georgian language was no longer used in church services. Therefore, the action plan was to develop Georgian as a language of secular literature; to educate Georgians in this normative language; to make it the *dominant* language in mamuli, that is the administratively unmarked Georgian territory[21], or at least to make it effectively compete with Russian, the language of the imperial state. Ilia Chavchavadze stated these tasks and started to implement some of them: For instance, by founding, together with his associates, the *Society for Spreading Literacy among Georgians*, which Oliver Reisner called "the school of the Georgian nation".[22] But the program could only be effectively implemented later. Paradoxically, the most important steps were taken in Soviet Georgia, when normative grammar and dictionaries were created and Georgian became the language of universal mass education. The task was completed in the independent post-Soviet Georgia when Georgian was finally established the language of the bureaucracy.[23]

The inclusion of sartsmunoeba - faith or religion - into the triad, as well as consigning it to the third place after mamuli and language, indicates a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards religion within the nascent Georgian nationalism. On the one hand, the formative importance of religion in the buildup of Georgian nationhood is all too obvious. As they usually say in Georgia, "It is Orthodox Christianity that has preserved Georgia [throughout the Middle Ages]." This is fully true, as from the downfall of Byzantium until the arrival of Russia, it was Christianity that distinguished Georgia within its Islamic neighborhood (Armenians, the only Christian neighbors, were also denominationally different). The importance of language as the main marker of nationhood was also dependent on Christianity since the status of the Georgian language largely depended on its being the language of the autocephalic Georgian Church. Giorgi Merchule, an important religious leader of the 10th century, defined Georgia (Kartli) as the land where they preach in Georgian, and this may be the most workable definition of the pre-modern Georgian nationhood.[24]

However, constructing the Georgian national idea in the context of the 19th century Russian Empire was not conducive to strengthening the role of religion within the national identity. First of all, this would not fit into the paradigm of liberal 19th century nationalism which Chavchavadze was emulating: It would be against the positivistic Zeitgeist of the 19th century.[25]

Moreover, highlighting Orthodox Christianity did not work well in a specific practical sense. The major task of identity-building was to distinguish the nascent Georgian nation from its imperial master. Evidently, Orthodox Christianity was not very useful for that purpose, as it stressed Georgia's unity with Russia, not its distinctiveness. Tsarist Russia deprived the Georgian Orthodox Church of its autocephalic status and incorporated it into the Russian Church. Therefore, the Church could not be used as an institutional ground for consolidating the Georgian nationhood.

An additional factor against putting emphasis on the Orthodox religion emerged in 1877, when, following a war with the Ottoman Empire, Russia annexed Achara, the southwestern province inhabited by Islamicized Georgians. This created the practical task of incorporating this territorial and cultural unit into the construction of the modern Georgian nation. The new reality prompted Chavchavadze to propose a modified concept of the Georgian identity, based primarily on the idea of *history*. In 1877, as he welcomed the annexation of Achara, he wrote: "In our opinion, neither the commonality of language, nor that of faith and kinship does create as strong a sense of belonging together, as the unity of history".[26] This attitude of Ilia Chavchavadze strongly resonates with that of Ernest Renan as expressed in *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* , the seminal text of liberal nationalism that Renan delivered as a lecture in 1882.[27]

The idea of the common history as the centerpiece of national identity relativizes the importance of such 'hard' markers as language and religion. For instance, it makes it much easier for Megrelians or Acharans to fully belong to the Georgian nation despite their linguistic or religious otherness. This attitude led to the eventual success of the nation-building project. Today both groups are fully fledged parts of the Georgian national community not only politically, but identity-wise as well. But the centrality of history does not cancel the importance of the aforementioned 'hard' markers either. In order to be coherent and successfully instill the sense of common belonging, the historical narrative requires some recurrent themes. *Mamuli, ena, sartsmunoeba* provide them: The narrative of national history is about Georgians fighting for their homeland, their language and their faith.

There is one more important ingredient of national identity that is conspicuously absent from the Chavchavadze triad and from our discussion so

far, but not from the minds of most Georgians or most nationalists world-wide. This is common descent, which is also referred to the community of blood, the nation as a racial unit, or, as quite a few contemporary Georgians put it, "the Georgian gene". Presumably, Ilia Chavchavadze was an enlightened enough man to understand that relying on genes in nation-building is absurd - especially provided the history of Georgian lands, where "genes" have mixed handsomely for ages. The most prominent intellectual who later based Georgian identity on the idea of race was writer and essayist Grigol Robakidze, who was apparently influenced by the European, especially German, writings on race. In *The Snakeskin,* his programmatic novel of 1928, he describes Archibald McAsh, an English national, rediscovering his Georgian racial roots and triumphantly returning to his true national-racial self as Archil Makashvili.[28] Robakidze and some other Georgians active in the Georgian émigré community in the1920s and 1930s reinterpreted the Georgian national idea based on the Italian and German fascist/Nazi concepts that were in vogue then.

The emphasis on the racial component of nationhood appeared quite strong when the Georgian nationalism emerged from its state of hibernation under the Soviet rule - the first Georgian president, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, was often accused of carrying elements of fascistic ideology. However, this was not about his personality - he represented a trend in the Georgian national movement of that time in general. After Gamsakhurdia's overthrow in 1992, insistence on centrality of the racial element of Georgianness became less fashionable on the political level. Despite this, references to the "Georgian gene" remain conspicuous in the public discourse.

The last important case when the issue of the racial concept of Georgian nationhood became politically relevant was a lengthy discussion on the entry for (ethnic) "nationality" in official identity documents for Georgian citizens in 1999-2000. This was about keeping or removing the residue of the Soviet past, when "nationality" understood in the sense of ethnic belonging was separated from citizenship and entered in all identity documents. The liberals, represented by the reformist wing of the then ruling Citizens' Union party (who later joined the opposition and came to power as a result of the 2003 Rose Revolution) wanted to get rid of that heritage and introduce "ethnicity-blind" identification documents; they were opposed by ethnic nationalists who saw in the reform a conspiracy against the Georgian identity. Although public opinion appeared to be on the side of the latter, the reformers won.

Another important change in the interpretation of the Georgian identity brought on by the period of the national movement concerns the role of

Orthodox Christianity. The fathers of post-Soviet Georgian nationalism certainly did not pay heed to the fact that "faith" was number three in the order of importance in the Chavchavadze triad. On the contrary, belonging to the Orthodox Christian Church became the leading identity marker. Since the 1990s, no Georgian politician has been able to achieve success without demonstrating his or her religiosity and closeness to the Church. The notion that only an Orthodox Christian could be a 'true' Georgian, hence all others had to convert, was frequently expressed. Facts of intolerance - especially against those ethnic Georgians who profess religions other than Eastern Orthodox Christianity, started to abound, peaking in late 1990s.

Trying to explain this apparent contrast with the more liberal spirit of Georgian nationalism as first constructed by Ilia Chavchavadze would require lengthy discussion, though the very fact that there was a change is obvious enough. The reasons may be sought both in the general Zeitgeist as well in specifically Georgian conditions. In the late 20th century, religion became much more politically prominent more or less everywhere, making the Enlightenment project of secularization considered all but obsolete. More specifically for our case, the Georgian Orthodox Church, following the breakup of the Tsarist empire, had regained its autocephalic status, so it became an important national institution that could play a role in the independence movement (which it could not in Tsarist Russia). Last but not least, given the lack of the culture of consensus and cooperation in Georgian politics and the resulting polarization of the political elite and society, the Church remains almost the only unifying institution, or at least by far the most important one.

Here, however, we are moving to discussion of the political element of the idea of nation. It is time to focus on it.

Georgia as a Political Project

Defining the cultural markers of identity - and the task of preserving them - is central to nationalism at its early stage when it is not yet dominated by its political agenda.[29] However, it is the idea of the nation-state that is the true centerpiece of the Platonic idea of the nation. Moving from the cultural to the political is also the typical trajectory for the development of the national idea in the "belated" nations. In the Georgian case, the national idea developed into a political project in the early 20th century, when the concept of an autonomous Georgia within the Russian empire was put forward by a group of people that were called "the autonomists". This proved only a short transitory stage in the development of Georgian political nationalism. Since

the first Georgian independence of 1918-21, the Georgian nation-state became the only normatively acceptable condition for the Georgians, the only proper way to take care of the "sacred treasures" inherited from the ancestors.

The first Georgian republic of 1918 was short-lived and the attitude of Georgians towards it is somewhat ambiguous. Its Social-Democratic leaders do not enjoy the status of heroes in today's Georgia, because they had never supported nationalist agenda *before* independence but were forced to become nationalists by default following the failure of first the Russian empire and, later, the Transcaucasian Federation. They proclaimed an independent republic, the critics say, because it was the only remaining option. Being reluctant nationalists, they were also blamed for not defending independence from the Russian Bolsheviks, their ideological kin, vigorously enough.

Despite this, it was the short-lived First Republic that has defined the design of the Georgian political project whose main outline persists to this day. Here are its major guidelines (as modified according to today's context):

1) The Georgian nation-state is the only acceptable political framework for the development of the Georgian nation;

2) Europe or the West in general (these two terms are not conceptually divided) serves as the provider of a larger (framework) identity, as the role model, and the presumed ally. This means that: (a) By its essence, Georgia is part of Europe, it should be recognized as such and be part of main institutions of the West such as NATO and the European Union; (b) the West serves as a blueprint for the construction of the Georgian state - that is, it is only legitimate as a *democratic* state. If it does not fully conform to this normative framework yet, it is on the way to doing so; (c) the West is Georgia's main friend, ally, and protector.

3) Russia should be just another neighboring country with whom Georgia should have friendly though not preferential relations. In fact, however, it is the main adversary, as it tries to undermine the Georgian state through direct intervention or through exacerbating internal Georgian problems (see the next point).

4) Georgia is a tolerant country that accepts and recognizes culturally distinct ethnic minorities on its territory but demands from them loyalty to the Georgian national project as defined above. Granting them territorial autonomy is undesirable but acceptable if necessary. The presence of minorities may become a challenge to it (as it is the case for any country)

but Georgia is fully capable of handling this unless outside actors (in practice - Russia) deliberately infuse tensions.

Despite all the differences between the first Georgian republic of 1918-21 and the post-Soviet period, as well as important differences among the political regimes of Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Eduard Shevardnadze and Mikheil Saakashvili, these points constitute invariable guidelines of the Georgian national project. It is the context and capacities that evolve - for instance, the willingness and ability of the West to support Georgia, the willingness and ability of Russia to undermine Georgia's sovereignty, the capacity of different governments to handle the minorities' problem properly. These guidelines are also rather similar to those of many other nations, especially those in Eastern Europe, that developed their national projects in approximately the same timeframe as the Georgians. The main difference from the latter is that most countries in Eastern Europe have mainly fulfilled their national aspirations and there are no other grand nationalist projects to pursue, while with Georgia, the agenda is still incomplete. The real borders of the state and, with them, the composition of the national community are still to be established; the West still has to recognize Georgia as its part and parcel and admit it to its institutions (NATO and the EU); Russia has still to reconcile itself to the idea that Georgia is now a separate state that is entitled to make sovereign decisions.

The resilience of the main ideas of the Georgian political project is not based on some material necessity or strict logic that infers Georgia's national interests and policies from interests and aspirations of its individual citizens. Theoretically, one could easily imagine Georgia taking another course on fundamental issues. During the twilight of the Soviet Union, many westerners wondered why Georgians were so bent on the idea of having an independent state instead of focusing on supposedly more important tasks such as developing new democratic and market institutions in cooperation with Russian democrats. There are Georgian intellectuals who question the idea that Georgia is really a European country and give preference to a view that Georgia is some kind of synthesis or bridge between the West and the East. Surely, Georgian history and culture may provide some evidence for this viewpoint as well. There are Georgians - including some politicians - who think that Georgia's recent woes arise from its being rude to Russia and it would be much more rational to give up silly aspirations like joining NATO. And a rational case can be made in favor of the idea that it would be more sensible for Georgia to recognize Abkhazia's and South Ossetia's independence, thus depriving Russia of its last excuse to meddle in Georgia's affairs,

and concentrate on internal development (again: develop democracy, attract investment, etc).

One could imagine Georgia taking some of these options, and there may be Georgians who favor them right now. One can never be sure about the future, and there is always another way. Still, the fact of the matter is that the attitudes and policy directions that I have described as "the national project" have proved rather stable, while their opponents are kept invariably marginal in Georgia. Admittedly, the experience of Georgia as well as of many other countries is that once the main tenets of national projects are consolidated, they tend to persist. A social scientist may call this "path dependency", or look for some other explanation, but that's another matter.

As it is also typical for quite a few "belated nations", Georgian nationalism has served as the principal force of modernization and westernization of the country. In lieu of genuinely entrenched pluralistic institutions, the combination of civil nationalism with the thrust towards westernization remains the main hope for maintaining the existing modicum of liberal democratic order in Georgia. But in the eyes of most westerners, this also implies a paradox. For Georgians, nationalism and the wish to integrate into Europe come naturally together. But the Europe Georgians want to integrate into is supposedly "post-national". To say it in other terms, nationalism is one of the main ideas of modernity; while the West - at least this is what most intellectuals believe - is now "post-modern". Nationalism is supposed to be replaced by multiculturalism. It is the European Union that epitomizes post-modernity - especially its post-national character. In the West, the Platonic idea Georgia still strives to emulate is already dead.

Or is it? Twenty years ago, people spoke of the same paradox with regard to the Baltic experience: Their nationalist movements also strived to "return to Europe" in which nationalists were considered marginal and backward people. So what? The Baltic countries are still led by the more or less same leaders espousing similar ideas, but they are normal EU member-states producing completely acceptable functionaries for EU institutions. The paradox exists more in the eyes of idealistic intellectuals than in the reality. The European Union did indeed modify the idea of the nation for its members, and in many ways it removed the sharpness of European nationalisms. But, first of all, this effect becomes valid for those who are inside it, not necessarily for the aspirant candidates. Secondly, even for the former it would be a gross exaggeration to say that their nationalisms are dead. To the contrary - they may be resurging. European liberal multiculturalists feel increasingly squeezed in the ever narrowing space between the strengthening European anti-immigrant right on the one hand and anti-liberal thrust of defiant mi-

nority sentiment on the other. Apart from these two paths, the nationalist spirit in Europe is alive and kicking in several other manifestations: outspoken anti-Americanism of the European elites, more quiet but tenacious traditional European nationalisms that have apparently sent the dream of the federal Europe to the dustbin of history, or persistent European separatisms such as Basque, Scottish or Flemish.

So, it would be naive for Georgians to be embarrassed about their not-yet-postmodern-enough nationalism and try getting rid of it in favor of recycled European multiculturalist dreams that are losing credit in their multiple homelands. At this moment there is no ground to expect that Georgia will change its national project - at least without very direct intervention from Russia, and probably even that would not help. If this is so, Georgia will continue striving to achieve more of the same: Develop and maintain effective and stable state institutions at the same time making them more pluralistic (not easy to achieve at all), integrate into the West against all odds (a rather challenging task), make the Georgian civic nation more inclusive (possible but not easy), not to allow internal conflicts to unravel the Georgian dream (even more difficult).

Notes:

1   See for instance, a collection of essays by leading Georgian intellectuals of 1920s and 1990s: Levan Bregadze (Ed.), *Pikrebi sakartveloze* ["Thoughts on Georgia"], Tbilisi 2006. Several authors participating in a collections of essays: Zaza Kvertskhishvili, Zurab Kiknadze, Malkhaz Kharbedia, Eds., *Sakartvelo atastsleulta gasaqarze* ["Georgia at the junction of the millennia"], Tbilisi 2005, apply constructivist approaches to different aspects of Georgia's nation-building processes.

2   Roger Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, Bloomington and Indianapolis 1994; Oliver Reisner, *Die Schule der Georgischen Nation: Eine Sozialhistorische Untersuchung der Nationalen Bewegung in Georgien am Beispiel der 'Gesellschaft zur Vorbereitung der Lese- und Scheibkunde unter den Georgiern' (1850-1917)*, Wiesbaden 2004.

3   K. R. Popper, *Objective Knowledge: An Evolutionary Approach*, Oxford 1972.

4   "The principle of nationalism emerged gradually in Western Europe, and was theoretically formulated in revolutionary France." - Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nationalism and Communism*, London 1964, p. 3; "The nationalist vision of the

world gained general currency during the era of Enlightenment; but it was only during and after the French Revolution that nationalist movements appeared." - Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism: A Trend Report and Bibliography*, The Hague-Paris 1973, p.107.; "Nationalism [...] is a modern and initially a European phenomenon, best understood in relation to the developments that produced and were symbolized by the French Revolution of 1789" - Eugene Kamenka , "Political Nationalism -- the Evolution of the Idea", in: E. Kamenka, J. Plomenatz, eds., *Nationalism: The Nature and Evolution of the Idea*, London 1973, p. 4.

5   Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford 1983; Benedict Anderson**,** *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London 1983; Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and German*, Cambridge, Mass.,-London 1992.

6   Liah Greenfield, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*, Cambridge 1992.

7   This in a way contradicts Ernest Gellner's dictum: "It is nationalism which engenders nations, and not the other way round" (*Nations and Nationalism*, p. 55). Gellner's view is true of many nations, but not of those that served as models for others.

8   As Benedict Anderson points out, for instance, after the French Revolution occurred, it became a model, a blueprint. "In much the same way, the independence movements in the Americas became, as soon as they were printed about, `concept', `models', and indeed `blueprints'"- *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, p. 78.

9   The term was introduced by Helmut Plessner, a German sociologist, in his *Die Verspätete Nation. Uber die politische Verführbarkeit bürgerlilchen Geistes*, Stuttgart 1959. (The text was first published, under a title *Das Schicksal deutschen Geistes im Ausgang seiner bürgerlichen Epoche*, in Zurich in 1935). Plessner saw roots of German Nazism in the belated formation of German nation, whose build-up, unlike that of the English and French ones, was not shaped by the context of the Enlightenment. In the English-language social science literature, there are the popular terms of *late modernization* or *catch-up modernization* that have a comparable meaning. It is probably no coincidence that it was a German sociologist who spoke of late modernization in terms of late emergence of nationhood, and coined the relevant term. In this article, I prefer to speak of "belated nations" instead of "catch-up modernization", because the former term better grasps the importance of nation-building for the trajectory of modernization in any given country. The Georgian sociologist Emzar Jgeneraia first applied the Plessnerian concept to the Georgian case - see his "Sad vart chven? [Where Are We?]", *Solidaroba*, No 2 (29), 2009, pp. 33-36.

10   One should add here, of course, that direct encounter with forces of advanced modernity as represented by Napoleon was the main factor that set Germany on the path of nationalism. It is an almost commonplace contention in the literature on nationalism that Napoleonic wars - or rather reaction to them - was the main factor in spreading of the nationalist idea throughout Europe.

11   Literally "people who have drunk from Tergi". The Tergi (Russian: Terek) is a river on the border with Russia.

12   Arguably, it might be fairer to start the history of modern Georgian nationalism from the 1832 conspiracy of a group of Georgian nobles aiming to restore Georgia's independence. This aborted rebellion was inspired by the French revolution of 1830 and the Polish insurrection of 1830-31 (see Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, p. 71) - in that, it tried to follow western models of nationalist uprising. However, this small-scale conspiracy was an isolated event that did not leave behind a coherent ideology and did not have any political follow-up. Most importantly, no effort of *nation-building* was involved. In its ideology or instincts it rather aimed at resurrecting the pre-modern Georgian dynasty. While general inspiration for the revolt did come from the West, there was no apparent link between ideas of the nation and that of modernization: something on which modern nationalism depends.

13   Levan Abashidze, entry in a discussion Mamuli, ena, sartsmunoeba (fatherland, language, faith), in *Sakartvelo atastsleulta gasaqarze,* p. 18.

14   John Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism*, Chapel Hill 1982; Anthony Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Oxford-New York 1986.

15   In the 19th century Europe, while discussing claims of different ethnic groups to independent nationhood, they sometimes made a distinction between historical and non-historical nations. For instance, Poles and Lithuanians were considered "historical nations", while Slovaks, Latvians, or Estonians were "non-historical" ones. Experience shows, however, that being "non-historical", that is, lacking a historical record of nationhood in pre-modern times, does not necessarily make the nation-building process less successful.

16   Tony Judt, "The Unmastered Culture: What Prospects for Eastern Europe," *Tikkun*, May 1990.

17   Ilia Chavchavadze, "Oriode sitqva tavad revaz shalvas dze eristravis kazlovidgan 'sheshlilis' targmanzeda [A couple of words on the translation of Kazlov's *The Mad Girl* by Prince Revaz Shalvas dze Eristavi] - in his *Tkhzulebani*, vol. V, Tbilisi 1991, p. 30.

18 For heated debate on it among a group of leading Georgian intellectuals, see *Sakartvelo atastsleulta gasaqarze*, pp. 13-213.

19 Zurab Kiknadze contests existence of a direct link between *mamuli* and territoriality of the state: "In the nationalist thinking of Ilia [Chavchavadze], territory, as an attribute of state, has no link whatsoever to *mamuli*" (*Ilias mamuli* [Ilia's mamuli], in: *Sakartvelo atastsleulta gzagasaqarze*, p. 37). I think this is an exaggeration. According to the core meaning of the word, *mamuli* (which one can translate both as 'patrimony' and 'fatherland') cannot be anything else but something territorial, at least virtually demarcated. If Chavchavadze did not explicitly lay claim to carving up some kind of Georgian territory in a way of a political project, that could have also been a political decision, presumably based on the calculation that making such claims would be politically counterproductive at the moment (Chavchavadze knew, after all, what happened to the conspirators of 1832). But people inspired by Chavchavadze, as well as people in many other countries inspired by figures like Chavchavadze, eventually did lay claims to territorially carved-up nation-states. How else could one be sure that the "sacred treasure" of the national patrimony inherited from the ancestors would be duly protected?

20 Nations and Nationalism, pp. 50-52.

21 There was no administrative unit with "Georgia" in its name within the Russian territory; but there were Tbilisi and Kutaisi gubernias, which served as more or less effective substitutes for such a unit.

22 This refers to the very title of Reisner's book, see reference 2 above.

23 Georgian was used in the bureaucracy of the Soviet Georgia as well, but the most important power institution, the Communist party, functioned mainly in Russian. As a legacy of the Soviet past, in the Armenian-populated parts of the Samtskhe-Javakheti region in southern Georgia, Georgian as the language of bureaucracy still has to compete with Russian; but this practice actually contradicts the Georgian legislation.

24 Based on the national character of the Orthodox Church and on its use of the spoken (rather than "sacred") language, Zaza Shatirishvili wrote: "Whereas western nationalism is the result of its emancipation from the Church (…), in the east, nationalism was actually there from the start". (*Sakartvelo atastsleulta gasaqarze,* p. 190). This is of course a serious overstatement if taken literally: under certain circumstances a Church operating in a national language may be a precondition of a nationalist movement, but in itself it does not have much to do with what we call 'nationalism' today.

25 Zaal Andronikashvili highlighted secularizing spirit of Chavchavadze's program with regard to language reform: see his "Mamulis dabadeba literaturis sulidan: Enis reporma rogorts sekularizatsiuli proekti" [The birth of fa-

therland from the spirit of literature: The language reform as a secularizing project] - in Irma Ratiani (Ed.), *Ilia chavchavadze 170, saiubileo krebuli [Ilia Chavchavadze 170: Anniversary Collection]*, Tbilisi 2007, pp. 157-173.

26 "Osmalos sakartvelo [Ottoman Georgia]", in: Ilia chavchavadze, *Tkhzulebani*, Tbilisi 1984, p. 547.

27 Ernest Renan, *Qu'est ce q'une nation*? (Conférence faite en Sorbonne le 11 mars 1882), Paris 1882.

28 Grigol Robakidze, *Gvelisperangi [Snakeskin]*, Tbilisi 1989.

29 To use Miroslav Hroch's periodization, this corresponds to stage A and, in part, to stage B of the evolution of nationalism. See his *Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe. A comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations*, Cambridge 1985, pp. 22-24.