

**BRATISLAVA INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF LIBERAL ARTS**

**GEORGIA'S EUROPEAN IDENTITY**  
**BACHELOR THESIS**

Study Programme: Liberal Studies  
Field of Study: A. L. & Political Science  
Advisor: M. A. Nader-Brennan  
Level of Qualification: Bachelor ("Bc.")  
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**Bratislava 2010**

**David Babunashvili**

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**Study Programme: Liberal Studies**

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**Author's Declaration of Originality**

I hereby certify that I am the sole author of this text. No part of this thesis has been previously published or submitted for publication. Primary and secondary sources used in this thesis are cited in text and listed in "References". The thesis was developed under the guidance of my thesis advisor M.A. Valer Lomuashvili.

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**Bratislava, 30. 4. 2010**

Babunashvili: Georgia's European Identity

## GEORGIA'S EUROPEAN IDENTITY

David Babunashvili

Bratislava International School of Liberal Arts

Thesis advisor: M.A. Valer Lomuashvili

36 pages; 9,222 words

### ABSTRAKT

David Babunashvili, vypracovanie bakalárskej práce na tému: Gruzínska európska identita na medzinárodnej škole v Bratislave slobodných umení, tútor: Valer Lomuashvili MA, Bratislava 2009, 36P strán.

Práca upozorňuje na koncepciu európskej identity, diskutuje hlavné referenčné body o európskej identity (kresťanstvo, kultúrnych väzieb a spoločných hodnôt), a stavia paralely medzi Európou a Gruzínskom.

Práca odpoveda na nasledujúce otázky: Čo bolo zázemie pre európske aspirácie Gruzínska? Aké sú vyhliadky pre Gruzínsko dostať sa bližšie k Európe a spoločnej identity Európskej únie?

Babunashvili: Georgia's European Identity

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### ABSTRACT

David Babunashvili, elaboration of Bachelor's thesis on the theme: Georgia's European Identity at Bratislava International School of Liberal Arts, Instructor: Valer Lomuashvili M.A., Bratislava 2009, 36 pages.

The work draws attention on the concept of European Identity, discusses major reference points about European identity (**Christianity, Cultural ties and Common values**) and provides parallels between Europe and Georgia.

The thesis answers following questions: What was background for the European aspiration of Georgia? What are the prospects for Georgia to get closer to Europe and common European Union identity?

## Preface

Georgia is a small country located in the Caucasus. Its total area is about 70,000 sq.km but it has got about 3000 year-old history of statehood that makes Georgia part of an ancient civilization (Mark, A. 2008. p.n.).

For centuries, Georgia's geographic location and its neighbouring of powerful states had been source of attempts to fragment and control the country. Through the history, Georgia had been a stumbling block to numerous Turkish, Persian, Arab, Mongol, Roman, Byzantine and other conquerors. These empires passed away one by one while Georgia still lives on developing a unique way of life of its own on the basis of blended eastern and western traditions. As an independent kingdom, Georgia was the strongest power during the reign of King David the Builder and Queen Tamar in the 11th and 12th centuries. This period is considered as Golden Era, or the Renaissance of Georgia (Jones, S. 2009. p.n.).

Main religion in Georgia is self-governing (autocephalous) Georgian Orthodox Church. Before acceptance of Christianity by King Mirian in the 4<sup>th</sup> century A.D., Georgia was subject to the influence of Greece and Persia while still remaining as a Roman client state and an ally for several centuries but adoption of the Christian religion brought Georgia closer to the neighbouring Byzantine Empire promoting deeper mutual cultural relationship (Georgian Orthodox and Apostolic Church: Encyclopedia. 2009. p.n.).

The population of present Georgia is 4.6 million, over 70% of them Georgians and the capital city Tbilisi (population 1.1 million). The state language of Georgia is Georgian and it belongs to the "Kartvelian" group of Iberia-Caucasian languages. Georgian is one of the oldest living and written languages in the world (one out of only 14 written languages) (Makharadze, Z. 2007. p.n.).

Following legend well describes Georgia, its beauty and its people: Georgians were late when God was distributing the Earth among all peoples of the world. When asked why they had not come on time, the Georgians replied that they had stopped on the

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way to drink in His honour. God was so pleased with the answer that He presented Georgians with the piece of Earth that He had preserved for himself. Hence, Georgia is called the Land of God or "God's share country" (Mikaberidze, A. 2009. p.n.).

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## List of Acronyms

- B.C. – before Christ
- CoE – Council of Europe
- DC FTA - Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area
- EU- European Union
- ENP – European Neighbourhood Policy
- Ex. – Example
- IO – International Organizations
- ISAF – International Security Assistance Force
- MAP – Membership Action Plan
- NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization
- p. – page
- WW2 – World War 2

## **Introduction**

It is a difficult task to define the precise boundaries of Europe on the map. Unfortunately, there is no agreement on the criterion of the European territory. The Greeks, for example, who gave the name to Europe, had in mind some other territory (the Don and the Azov for them were no longer Europe and Britain for a long time was an island off the coast of Europe). There has been an ongoing construction of European identity during the integration process within the EU. The problem of "European identity" has been increasingly felt in the EU, with deepening of the European integration. Since European integration increasingly touches upon the boundaries of state sovereignty, there has been a growing need to strengthen people's identification with the EU. According to the accepted practice, the notion of European identity contains three major elements: cultural similarities, religious ties and common values (Oner, S. 2006. p.n.).

Fall of the iron curtain opened possibility for many former communist-block countries in Eastern and Central Europe to join the European Union. Whether this process of the EU-enlargement will be a success or not, depends on the factor of European identity of candidate countries (Pollack, D. 2000. p.n.).

The main research question of this study is following: Does Georgia, on basis of its history, meet the above-mentioned conditions in order to be perceived as a European state?

Historically, Georgia has always been fighting to secure its place among the European nations rather than looking for integration into other regions as this is the continent where Georgia belongs to from its historical background, religion, customs and traditions.

Georgia, as a country of old Christian traditions, has always belonged to the European civilization and despite temporary isolation from Europe in the Soviet period, its cultural identity is inseparable from the European culture.

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Independence, freedom and free market are the keys to allow people everywhere to realize their full potential. As Georgia takes its full place in the global community, it seeks not only to build better life conditions for its own people, but also to make positive contribution to the world as is consistent with its history. It is hard to make such a strong statement without a profound background. Besides geographic aspects, it is primarily the European aspiration of Georgia, its European awareness and culture dating back to the nation's centuries-old history.

Georgia's geographic location and its neighbouring with powerful states had been source of foreign attempts to fragment and control the country. At the same time, such a position and the environment have served as a driving force of its success and flourishing (Jones, S. 2009. p.n.).

"Old Europeans" do not perceive Georgia as a European state because "the iron curtain" separated from the common European values for quite a long period. The Europe, including "old Europeans," is not old enough not to be actually aware of members of its own family irrespective of distance from Brussels and who are much older than the "old Europeans" themselves (History of Europe. p.n.).

The present thesis is not aimed at resolution of all existing problems accumulated for quite a long time but could make certain contribution to the formation of approach and a new vision of Georgia.

This work contains three chapters: the first part draws attention on the concept of the European identity examining three major elements: culture, religion and accepted European values, because all these components are common heritage and tradition of each one of the nations which constitute Europe.

The second chapter concerns Georgia's European identity from historical point of view with the aim of showing influence of the European countries on the formation of Kingdom of Georgia. The same chapter illustrates convincing examples of ancient cultural links between Georgia and Europe.

Moreover, this chapter discusses the issue of Georgia's temporary isolation from the western values, illustrates other state's invasion and forcible actions against

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Georgia's aspirations to Europe. Besides, it sheds light on the country's attempts to escape from the Soviet captivity.

The third section considers challenges of the country after its reappearance on the international arena and current attempts to strengthen the European values. At the same time, here are enumerated several aspects where experience and contribution of Georgia could be valuable.

With the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe in 1989, and the founding of the "European Council" with 1992's Maastricht Treaty, two issues gained renewed urgency: defining the EU's borders and brooding political legitimacy of the Union in the eyes of its citizens. The only thing that could settle this question was perhaps evolution of the European identity (Eckstein, *Networks*, 1998, p.11).

European identity is used in two ways: internally and externally. Externally, identity appears to be part of a country's approach to other member states to build strong relations. It refers to a common security and defense policy. Internally, identity refers to more cohesion and integration. To be more specific, it means European citizens' feelings of belonging to the EU based on their attachment about their common historical and cultural heritage and common values such as freedom, democracy, human rights, peace and prosperity (Wang, 2006, p.132).

### 1.1 Main components of the construction of identity: Culture, Religion, Common Values

Identity is not culturally unfractured. There is a clear distinction between culture and identity (Sims, *Values*, 2008, p.15). William and John (1994) also argue that values are not the same, and that people discover their social position or identity by their values (Wang, 2006, p.133).



## **1. The Concept of European Identity**

The European identity is the result of both European history and culture. European integration never went beyond its "natural borders" and there was no necessity to define our common European identity. The issue has become urgent since the European Union is facing serious internal and external challenges (E-News from Centre-Right Think Tanks and Political Foundations in Europe. 2010. p.n).

With the fall of Communism in Eastern Europe in 1989, and the founding of the "European Union" with 1992's Maastricht Treaty, two issues gained renewed urgency: defining the EU's borders and boosting political legitimacy of the Union in the eyes of its citizens; description of the "glue" that unites all Europeans and keeps the bloc together. The only thing that could settle this question was precise definition of the European identity (EurActiv Network. 2009. p.n.).

European identity is used in two ways: externally and internally. External identity appears to consist of a common approach amongst the member-states to their foreign relations. It refers to a common security and defense policy. Internal identity refers to more cohesion and integration. To be more specific, it means European citizens' feelings of belonging to the EU based on their awareness about their common historical and cultural heritage and common values such as freedom, democracy, human rights, peace and prosperity (Wang, 2009. p.153).

### ***1.1 Main components of construction of Identity: Culture, Religion, Common Values***

Identities are culturally constructed. There is a clear correlation between culture and identity. Some theorists, such as Raymond Williams and E.P. Thompson, state that culture delivers identity, and that people determine their social position or identity by their culture (Wang, 2009. p.153)

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Culture plays quite a significant role in the European integration process. As European integration moves forward, the idea of "culture" becomes more and more important. According to the European Commission, the public are not sufficiently aware of their common cultural values and heritage. In order to remedy this deficiency, the Commission's 1988 communication on the "people's Europe" claimed that action is needed in the cultural sector to make people more aware of their European identity in anticipation of the creation of a European cultural area. Through its action in the cultural sphere, the EU hopes to instill some "European consciousness" into European people's minds so that they can identify themselves closer with the EU. If we look back at the history of Europe, we may find there are indeed some shared historical and cultural heritages in Europe and they serve as the foundations for construction of a common European identity (Wang, 2009. p.153).

We may state that the European identity is based on common cultural heritage and common historical experience that enables arrangement of a family of cultures. Further speaking, there is common past to be based on for European identity in Europe, which includes ancient Greek and Roman civilizations, Christianity, the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution.

Common historical and cultural traditions of Europe can be traced back to ancient Greek times since Europeans can immediately feel a sense of homeland once they mention ancient Greece. The heroism and the notion of freedom in Homer's epics, the political theories and ethics in Plato and Aristotle's works, as well as the spirits of humanism and rationalism that go through the Greek civilization are all the inheritances left by the ancient Greek civilization. They have given a great impact on the later development of intellectual thought on the European continent (Wang, 2009. p.153).

The Romans conquered Greece but they did not destroy the precious Greek legacies. Because they knew that the Greeks enjoyed an artistic and intellectual inheritance much older and richer than their own, they respected this inheritance and tried to absorb and develop it. Along with the expansion of the Roman Empire's territory, the Greek civilization was accordingly brought to the whole western European continent. The ancient Greek-Roman civilization has been portrayed as the fountainhead of the

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European civilization. Without the foundations on the Hellenic culture and Roman Europe would not exist (Wang, 2009. p.154).

Christianity has taken a very important position in European history. After the Roman Empire collapsed, there was no central government to keep the order during the Middle Ages, it was the Church holding its supreme power that united Europe under the flag of Christianity. Christianity took the lead in politics, law, art and learning for hundreds of years. Because of its power and influence, almost everyone in Western Europe was a Christian in the late Medieval times.

Christianity has been the major religion of the European continent for nearly two thousand years. Christianity and Christian values have had a remarkable impact on European politics and society, and they have influenced European people's life greatly (Pantel, 1999. p. 152).

The European Union is based on values such as respect for human dignity; fundamental rights, including the rights of communities and families; freedom, democracy, equality, and the rule of law. The member states' societies - in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity, responsibility and gender equality prevail - share these values.



## **2. Georgia's European identity from a historical point of view**

The debate about Georgia's Europeanisation and whether it should be accepted or not to the EU is still going on. One of the biggest obstacles against its membership as it stands is the identity problem. To reach this conclusion, the relations of Georgia and the EU should be viewed in a historical context.

The data collected by the German archaeological institute confirmed that evidence for the earliest use of the territory of present day Georgia goes back to ca. 1.8 million years as evident from the excavations of Dmanisi in the south-eastern part of the country.

Middle Palaeolithic cave sites along the Black Sea Coast of Georgia prove the presence of an indigenous people between 100,000 - 50,000 B.C. A great deal of archaeological evidence attests to a flourishing Neolithic culture in Georgia in the fifth and fourth millennia B.C. Pottery and metallurgy of the Early Bronze Age was renowned. This period is marked by a highly developed culture (Javakhishvili, 1973. p. 19).

In the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C., ethnic consolidation of Georgian population deepens. By the end of Millennium, a unity of two big states Diauehi (Diaokhi, Tao) and Colchis emerge in the south-western part of the historic Georgia capable of serious resistance even to Assyria for several centuries in Asia Minor. This unity was destroyed by the kingdom of Urartu on the verge of the IX-VIII centuries B.C. (Braund, 1994. p. 22).

In the 30-20ies of the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C. the first Colchis state was destroyed by invading Cimmerian nomadic tribes from the North. Ancient sources about the old Colchis's state reveal that Colchis had their own script and public (royal) servant institutions where the Kartvelian (Georgian) tribes were represented together with their closest kin Abkhazian tribes. Abkhazians, together with Georgians are native population

of Georgia – their cohabitation dates back to this time and encompass 3 thousand years. (Salia, 1983. p.36)

According to the scholar of the Caucasian studies Cyril Toumanoff: (1979), “Colchis appears as the first Caucasian State to have achieved the coalescence of the newcomer. Colchis can be justly regarded as not a proto-Georgian, but a Georgian (West Georgian) kingdom. It would seem natural to seek the beginnings of Georgian social history in Colchis, the earliest Georgian formation” (p. 69).

### ***2.1 Influence of Europe on the formation of the ancient Georgian kingdom***

In the VI-V centuries B.C., Greek settlements emerge along the West Georgian Black Sea coastline in Colchis. These settlements were: Phasis – modern-day Poti, Ghienos – present Ochamchire, Dioskuria – present Sokhumi. Convergence of Georgian and Greek and, respectively, European cultures have been originating since this period. The contiguity influenced the state of economy. Intense trade relationship caused minting of the “Colchis Tetry” (*in Georgian Tetry means “White”*) already in the VI century B.C. while coin minting was the privilege of only a handful of states. (Janashia, 1986. p. 44) Thus, the “Colchis Tetry” belongs to ancient coins and its line art or technical styling does not concede to any coin of the advanced states of that time. Flow of the “Colchis Tetry” lasted till the 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C. until replaced with the coins of Elinistic period.

Colonizing impulse of Greeks known as the great Greek colonization had an impact on determination of geographic borders of Modern Europe. Since that time the Greeks (Greek colonization) have formed a ring [of cities] stretching from the far west of modern Europe, from the Gibraltar strait, to the far East of modern Europe - to the Colchis coastline, from the Pyrenees to the Caucasus Mountains, from Hesperidins to Syspiritis, from Spanish Iberia (the Iberian Peninsula) to Georgian Iberia. Hence, these geographic parallels are not fortuitous (Braund, 1994. p. 48).

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It is remarkable that ancient Greeks drew the boundary of Europe and Asia along the Phasis River (modern-day Rioni) with its source in the middle of Northern Georgia. Then, it flows in the south-east and divides the entire West Georgia into two equal parts. Finally, the Phasis (Rioni) flows into the Black Sea. This geographic tradition was first recorded by the "father of history" Herodotus in his works. Ancient Greeks regarded the Phasis as one of the biggest rivers of Europe. On the bank of the Phasis River a town Kutaia/Aia and residence of legendary Colchis king Aeete was situated. It was the final destination of Argonauts. Historians identify Kutaia/Aia as modern Kutaisi, the second biggest city of Georgia (Janashia, 1986. p. 69).

Since the great Greek colonization, most significant historical experiences that had substantial impact on formation of the European self-consciousness of the Georgian nation are associated with conquests of Alexander the Great (Alexander III of Macedon). Although certain Greek, Latin, Georgian and other sources provide pretty poor and vague information, most historians believe that Alexander the Great has never invaded the Caucasus and above all, historic Georgia. It is not the aim of this thesis to argue whether Alexander put his foot in person on a Georgian soil or not. However, series of his campaigns resulted in creation of the first common-Georgia state, Hellenic kingdom of Kartli, termed as Iberia by Greeks. This was period of urban boom in Georgia (Sanikidze, 1998. p. 59).

Legendary campaigns of Alexander the Great describe how he drove savage tribes out to the North across the Caucasus Mountains and locked them for good with a unique Iron Gate in the mountains. In the narrowing of the Daryali Pass near present day Georgian-Russian border, ancient geographers placed Alexander's Pillars opposite to Pillars of Hercules in the Strait of Gibraltar. In this famous extract Greek conception drew Hellenistic or, in other words civilized world (of that time) boundaries where Georgia was allocated hard, and at the same time honorary, component of outpost of the Hellenic culture. Consequently, on one hand, Georgia had to protect the Hellenic world (civilization) from invasion of brutal and violent tribes living in the North and on the other hand, advance Hellenic culture among the barbarians (Sanikidze, 1998. p. 68).

Hellenic type towns emerge not only in Colchis, along the seaside but deeper in the country, in the East Georgia as well. In the 30-ies of the IV century B.C. coins of Philip II (Alexander's father) and Alexander become known in the territory of Georgian kingdom Kartli; minting of coins similar to that of Alexander's is managed in the East Georgia; again in the East Georgia, first artisan workshops producing pantile with Greek brands emerge; Greek farming and irrigation terms are introduced assimilating into the Georgian language; Greek lapidary inscriptions appear; Hellenistic syncretism deities dwell in central places in the Georgian pagan pantheon. The kingdom of Ibreia is a vassal state and an ally of the Selevkid dynasty Hellenic kingdom (Janashia, 1986. p. 98).

Later on, although relationship with the Roman Empire was not trouble-free, the kingdom of Kartli/Iberia was mostly an ally of Caesars and Rome after Roman military campaign in the Caucasus, Albania, Iberia and Colchis in 65 B.C. under the command of Pompey. In 63 B.C. Colchis/Egrisi became a client state of the Roman Empire. An unearthed Greek stone inscription of the 9<sup>th</sup> Roman Emperor Titus Flavius Vespasianus (Vespasian in English) dated with 75 A.D. and found near the old capital of Georgia/Iberia Mtskheta reads that king Mithridates of Iberia, the son of great king Pharsmanes was "the friend of the Caesars" and the ruler "of the Roman-loving Iberians." The Roman Emperor Hadrian (117-138) granted a special privilege and had king Pharsmanes's equestrian statue placed in the Field of Mars in Rome. Multiple archeological material, be it occult or civilian monuments point toward close relationship of Georgia with the Roman European culture (Braund, 1994. p.77).

## ***2.2 Cultural ties between ancient Greece and Georgia***

The ancient Greek mythological parallels illustrate tight cultural links between Europe and Georgia. The Greeks steal, with the help of Heracles, golden apples from the Garden of the Hesperides located in the far West and some Greeks steal, with the help of Jason, the Golden Fleece from the far East. Through these parallels, ancient Greeks united the entire world of that time under their European power. Golden apples from the Garden



of the Hesperides epitomize with divine wisdom rested in the luminous West and the Golden Fleece rested in Colchis epitomize with divine wisdom rested in the luminous East. The Greeks as real European pragmatists placed these two divine wisdoms in one vessel and transformed them into the European human knowledge (Asatiani & Anchabadze, 1997. p. 49).

The mythological Golden Fleece symbolically denotes to intellectual assets of ancient Georgian tribes to the Europe's spiritual and material culture. It must be mentioned that contributions could have been made in metallurgy, gold washing method or even medicine – it is known that the international word for Latin “medicine” originates from Colchis King Aeete's daughter Medea.

According to the Greek mythology about Argonauts, king Athamas of the city of Orchomenus (*in Greece*) had two children, Phrixus and Helle who had to be sacrificed to end drought. All of a sudden, a winged ram with fleece of gold came down, picked the children up and took them to the skies. He carried the children away to the Colchis where legendary king Aeete was the ruler. During escape, Helle fell off and drowned in the strait (*named after her as Hellespont – the Helle's Sea; the Dardanelles in present-day Turkey*) but Phrixus reached Colchis safely. Upon arrival in Colchis Phrixus sacrificed the ram to Zeus and presented hide of the golden ram to king Aeete. King Aeete placed the Golden Fleece on an oak tree in a grove where it was day and night guarded by a dragon and Phrixus married Aeete's elder daughter, Medea's sister. Some time later Peleus, king of Thessaly, ordered Argonauts under Jason to seek out and fetch the Golden Fleece from Colchis. Promising to marry her, Jason obtained help of Medea, king Aeete's daughter who blinded with love led him to the grove and put the dragon to sleep with her magic. Jason took the Fleece and with Medea and the Argonauts escaped safely (Asatiani & Anchabadze, 1997. p. 70).

The tale of Argonauts was a favourite theme of ancient poets. Homer wrote about it in his *Odyssey* and Sophokles used this theme in the drama that has not reached us. Apollonius Rhodius (Apollonius of Rhodes), a librarian at the library of Alexandria, is best known for his epic poem “*Argonautica*”. The poem with the same name was written by Valerius Flaccus, a writer. The theme of Argonauts was applied by the writers

later on: Goethe's "Faust" and its part one "Walpurgis Night," Byron's "Don Juan," etc. (Lortqifanidze, 1993. p. 91).

In the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, the oldest school of advanced rhetoric in Georgia, Phasis Academy was founded in Phasis (modern-day Poti) where Greek and Georgian students mastered rhetorics, philosophy, physics, mathematics, logic, etc. The instruction languages were Greek and Georgian (Lortqifanidze, 1993. p. 108).

In Middle Ages' Georgia, unique pieces of architecture, icon painting, handcrafted goldsmith works equal to those of the Byzantian culture, were created. Above all literary works, XII century masterpiece, Shota Rustaveli's epic poem Vepkhistkaosani ("The Knight in the Tiger's Skin") is of similar value for the Georgian culture and nation as Dante Alighieri's (Dante) "Divine Comedy" for Italians and Cervantes's (Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra) "Don Quixote" for Spaniards. With its importance "The Knight in the Tiger's Skin" could be compared with Jan Kolar's poem "Slavy dcera" from the Slovak literature. "The Knight in the Tiger's Skin" is translated into 50 languages (Slovak translation belongs to late Milos Krno) (Baqradsze, 1999. p.66).

### ***2.3 The factor of Religion in Georgia's orientation***

Proclamation of Christianity as a state religion plays particular role in the history of Georgia and formation of outlook of the Georgian nation. Before adoption of Christianity, the cult of Mithras and Zoroastrianism were commonly practiced in Iberia from the first centuries AD. The cult of Mithras, distinguished by its syncretism character and thus complementary to local cults, especially the cult of the Sun, gradually came to merge with ancient Georgian beliefs (Tetskhladze, 2007. p. 55).

The old Georgian, Greek and Slavonik sources credit the introduction of Christianity to Apostles Andrew the First and Simon the Canaanite in the first century. Christianity was recognized as a state religion in 326. King Mirian [Iberia, East Georgia] made this decision in 323 before the first World Ecumenical Council held in Nicea (in 325) while the ruler of eastern part of the Roman Empire was Licinius, enemy of

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Christianity and Constantine the Great (Saint Constantine, the first Christian Roman emperor).

Initially, the Georgian Orthodox Church was under jurisdiction of the Apostolic See (Church) of Antioch but after elevation of the Bishop of Mtskheta (old capital of Iberia/Kartli) to the rank of Catholicos of Kartli in 466, the Georgian Orthodox Church became autocephalous. During Christological debates which caused split of the Christian world into Dyophysites and Monophysites in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, Georgia again made a decision in favour of western Dyophysitism (supported the Chalcedonian Creed) and rejected Monophysitism (favoured by Sassanid Persia) (Tetskhladze, 2007. p. 74).

Middle Ages for Georgia meant fight and struggle for Christianity as Georgia is situated at the crossroads of the East and the West. As in the Hellenic period, Georgia served as an outpost for protection of the European culture. Any immediate hostility to the Christian world originating from the East challenged Georgia and dealt the first blow to Georgia. Georgian kings and nobles had various Byzantium-European governor titles - curopalates, hypatius, magistros, but, irrespective of Georgian orientation towards Byzantium confession Georgian public and respectively state structure, the Georgian feudalism is typologically European (vassalism) and not Byzantian (Ioseliani, 1983. p.136).

According to the Georgian sources, 200 "Franks" i.e. Crusaders served in King David IV (the Builder) numerous armies in the battles against Seljuk invasions making it clear that Georgians and "Franks" were united under one European flag.

After conquest of Asia Minor by the Seljuk troops and fall of the Byzantine Empire, diplomatic relations between the kingdom of Georgia and the West became more intense. Vatican archives keep records of correspondence between the kings of Georgia and Popes in the XII-XIII centuries but assistance of Europe to Georgia, left face to face with the Seljuk Empire far beyond the central Europe, was limited to verbal encouragement and sending of the Catholic missionaries (Javakhishvili, 1973. p. 169).

In the XIV century, during the reign of King George V (the "Resplendent," or the "Brilliant") (1329-1346) and by order of the Pope John XXII, eastern missionary centre

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and its eparchy were moved to the capital city of Georgia Tbilisi from old Greek town Smirna on coastline of the Aegean Sea.

In search of European identity and allies, Georgians appealed for support to European countries and dispatched multiple missions in the XVI-XVIII centuries. A head of the mission to Europe, an outstanding figure in the history of Georgia, a writer and a scholar Sulkhan-Saba Orbeliani (1658-1725) even renounced his Georgian Christian Orthodox faith and accepted Catholicism in order to attest Georgia's European aspiration to European countries and Vatican.

Catholicos-Patriarch of Georgia Anton I (1744-1788) patronized the Catholic missionaries trying to improve with their help the state of education system in Georgia. For close relationship with Catholic missionaries Catholicos-Patriarch Anton I was accused of secret Catholicism (Tsetskhladze, 2007. p.138).

Such steps undertaken by Sulkhan-Saba and Patriarch Anton were not politically successful for Georgia - meanwhile, the Catholic missionaries took advantage of pitiable state of the country and converted most of the South Georgian population to Catholicism.

### 3.1 Muslim countries reign in Georgia

The fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Turks in 1453 ended the Black Sea and cut the remnants of Christian states of the region from Europe and the rest of the Christian world. Georgia rebelled against the Ottomans through constant with the Russian colonies of the Caucasus. The Peace of Amasya in 1555, between Ottoman Turks and the Safavid Persians, divided Georgia into spheres of influence between the western part to Turkey and the eastern part - to Iran. Turkish and Iranian invasions became almost permanent. The town of Kizil, situated in the north of the Caucasus, was of special strategic importance. The town remained the main object of fierce aggression. Neither a political, historical, nor geographical specialty of the enemy, nor their brutality by the soldiers and even by their own brothers, nor the loss of their relatives and destruction of the country could make these forces to retreat in the history (Lomashvili, 1998, p. 108).



### **3. Temporary isolation from Europe**

In 1453 the Ottoman Turks captured Constantinople. This and a change of trade routes from Europe to the Far East seriously weakened Georgia politically and economically. By that time, the whole area changed dramatically in all possible aspects: linguistic, cultural, political, etc. During that period the Kingdom of Georgia turned into an isolated, fractured Christian enclave, a relic of the faded East Roman epoch surrounded by Muslim, predominantly Turco-Iranian-Arabic world (Mchedlishvili, D. History of Georgia. p.n.).

At the end of the 15th century, the rise of the Safarids in Iran further threatened Georgia which now found itself caught once again between two expanding empires. As a consequence of constant invasions, economic decline and feudal strife, Georgia began to disintegrate, and by the end of the 15th century three independent kingdoms of Kakheti, Kartli, and Imereti and the principality of Samtskhe emerged in its territory (Lomashvili, 1994. p. 212).

#### ***3.1 Muslim countries reign in Georgia***

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### **3.2 Russian subjugation**

Cut and isolated from Europe, being in precarious situation (Persia and the Ottoman Empire tearing it to pieces), Georgia appealed for protectorate and signed a treaty with Russia known as the Treaty of Georgievsk. Signing of the treaty was the only chance for famous King of Kartli and Kakheti Erekle II to return to Europe with the help of its northern neighbour. In his decision, Christianity of Russia and its domain power in Europe played key role.

When another Russian-Turkish War broke out in 1787, the Russians withdrew their troops from the region and left Erekle's kingdom unprotected. In response to Russia's action, the Persian shah, Agha Mohammed Khan, invaded the country and burnt its capital Tbilisi to the ground (Lang, 1957. p. 76).

In spite of Russia's failure to honor the terms of the Treaty of Georgievsk, Georgian rulers felt they had nobody else to turn to. Therefore, in 1801 Russia got rid of Georgian royal government, exiled throne heirs to Russia, gradually occupied and annexed principalities of Georgia (Lang, 1957. p. 88). In 1811, autocephalous status of the Georgian Church was abolished as well and the Russian Orthodox Church took over its administration. Abolishment of the kingdom of Georgia led to uprisings in regions – Kakheti (1802), Kartli (1804), Imereti and Abkhazia (1810), Kakheti again (1812), Imereti (1818). In 1820, Imereti, Guria, Racha and Mingrelia rose jointly against the rule. In 1825 (Petersburg) and in 1826 (Moscow) Georgian conspiratory groups were established. In 1841, the insurgency started again in Guria. In 1864, Russia abolished the principality of Abkhazia and exiled its last ruler Mikheil Shervashidze to Voronezh (Russian Empire). In 1876, Svaneti revolted against the regime. In 1891, the “League for Liberation of Georgia” was established in Poland, Warsaw (Janashia, 1986. p. 128).

Literary trends and tendencies at the end of the XVIII century and the beginning of the XIX illustrate European aspiration of Georgian perception. The Georgian literature rids itself of influence of the XVI-XVII centuries' Asian poetic forms and shifts to

European. In this regard, introduction of Romanticism into the Georgian literature is of particular importance as parallels are frequently drawn between a prominent representative of this literary trend in Georgia, poet Nikoloz Baratashvili and Byron, Baratashvili and Senkevich. In the middle of the XIX century, a group of young people educated in Europe, under the leadership of a prominent writer and a public figure Ilia Chavchavadze came out on Georgian public and literary arena. Ilia Chavchavadze's and his friends' entire creative activity was filled with advanced European ideas of that period and with deliberation about independence of mother country (Lortqifanidze, 1993. p. 222).

### **3.3 Soviet Iron Curtain**

Revolutionary upheaval of 1917 in Russia created conditions for Georgia to restore historical justice – adopt the Declaration of Independence and declare establishment of the Georgian Democratic Republic on May 26<sup>th</sup>, 1918 (Ramishvili, L. 2010. p.n.).

Refused entry into the League of Nations on December 16, 1920, Georgia gained de jure recognition from the Allies on 27 January 1921. Those countries were Romania, Argentina, Germany, Turkey, Belgium, United Kingdom, France, Japan, Italy, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Russia, among other countries. This, however, did not prevent the country from being attacked by Soviet Russia one month later (Encyclopedia. Democratic Republic of Georgia. p.n.).

In 1917, the autocephaly of the Georgian Orthodox Church was officially restored. In 1918, a European-style (namely German) Tbilisi State University was founded and the University board encouraged Georgian professors in Europe to teach at the University.

In February 1921, the Red Army invaded Georgia and after a short war occupied the country. The Georgian government was forced to flee (Ioseliani, 1983. p. 159). After occupation of Georgia's territory, Red Army started the so-called "Sovietization" of

Georgia; hence, they established three autonomous units (Abkhazian, Adjarian and South Ossetian).

### ***3.4 Attempts of escaping from the Soviet regime to unite with Europe***

Unfortunately, the independence of Georgian Democratic Republic recognized by Russia in 1920 was not lengthy – in 1921 Bolshevik Russia occupied fledgling Georgian state for the second time, choked the Georgian resistance in blood and condemned Georgia to 70-year long Communist darkness. The Georgian National Government was ousted and forced to immigrate to France and try to affect the processes in Georgia from abroad.

During the entire Communist epoch, Georgia was one of the most “disobedient” Republics of the USSR. In 1924, an anti-Soviet uprising in Georgia failed and that was followed by unparalleled to that day brutality against the rebels, their families and sympathizers. In the 30-ies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, most of the intellectuals – political activists, representatives of art and literature, Georgian classic writers and poets, representatives of academic circles and clerics - fell victims to the communist rulers. Common non-conformists were ruthlessly executed or exiled to the Sibiria and prairies of middle Asia. Purges of Georgian society were perpetrated even during the WW2 and afterwards (Lomashvili, 1994. p. 193).

In March 1956, in Tbilisi, student youth and intellectuals of Georgia started rally and were supported by the majority of population. They voiced slogans to leave the Soviet Union but aspiration of Georgian people was ruthlessly crushed by Soviet soldiers armed with machine guns and heavy military armament on March 9<sup>th</sup>, 1956. Hundreds of peaceful protestors, mostly 16-25 year old students were slaughtered. The Soviet media scornfully evaluated the tragic events as “action of nationalist forces instigated from the West.” Here, it is appropriate to draw a parallel with the events in Budapest, Hungary the same year. During anti-Communist rallies the Hungarian youth and academics demanded political freedoms, withdrawal of Hungary from the Warsaw Pact (Warsaw Treaty) and



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dismantling of Socialism as the cause of death of thousands "owing to" the Soviet Army. Later, in 1968, Tbilisi-Budapest scenario was replicated in Czechoslovakia (Bremmer & Taras, 1997. p. 43).

In April 1978, the capital city of Georgia was shaken again by unprecedented and incredible in scale [for the Soviet reality] public manifestation in support of constitutional status of Georgian as the sole official language - this article was intended to be removed under the pretext of amendment to the Georgian Constitution. The Soviet authorities retreated and decided against removing the disputed clause.

#### **4. The prospects for Georgia to get closer to Europe and common European Union identity**

In the late 1980s, national liberation movement spread widely in the entire Georgia. On April 9, 1989 Russian special forces dealt mercilessly with the young people assembled to protest in the main street of Tbilisi – 16 people were murdered on the spot and hundreds were poisoned with unidentified to this date gas. Despite all repressive measures, resistance still escalated. On May 26, 1991, Georgia restored its independence once again.

In the 90s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Russian provoked civil war devastated Georgia bringing turmoil and chaos in the country. The first President Gamsakhurdia left Georgia and in some months, former Minister of Foreign affairs of the Soviet Union Shevardnadze returned in his stead. The first high-ranking official visiting Georgia after its independence was Hans-Dietrich Genscher, German Foreign Minister, who said: “Europe has twice betrayed Georgia but will not do it for the third time.” The Minister referred to occupation of Georgia by Russia two times and unvoiced reaction of Europe (Bremmer & Taras, 1997. p. 55).

Regrettably, neither did Europe draw on its authority when Russia instigated ethnic conflicts in Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Ossetia. It was a common Russian provocation seeking to keep Georgia within its “sphere of influence.” The government of Shevardnadze failed to resist such attacks with active diplomacy and instead of finding solution to the problem plunged into corruption.

When Georgia appeared to the international arena as a sovereign country, the government had strong intention to achieve the European Standards of Human Rights and integrate Georgia into the European structures.

The country’s orientation became pretty controversial subject for the political elite. Opposite politicians wanted to defend the old, well-known conception regarding human rights protection: “Western Europe created its own standards of human rights,

East European Countries should develop their own approach, respecting their own traditions, culture and mentality” (Sanikidze, 1996. p. 322).

The other part of politicians clearly described advantages of the European system of human rights protection: “For the States, which aspire to establish democratic values at the national level, human rights protection must be a priority issue. For that reason, Georgia as a newly born sovereign republic has to accept those states’ practice, who already established protection of principles of human rights and the rule of law.”

On April 27, 1999 the Republic of Georgia became Member State of the Council of Europe. Before accepting Georgia some member states raised a question whether the territory of Georgia geographically belonged to Europe. As a proof, representative of the Great Britain introduced an old Royal geographic map from Encyclopaedia Britannica.

#### ***4.1 On the way to the European values***

Georgia turned a new page in its history following peaceful “Rose Revolution” in 2003 and after electing a young president, Mikheil Saakashvili. Objective of the new leadership is for Georgia to join the European Union, its transition towards values and standards promoted by the EU in the political, economic and social spheres. (Khandakeli, 2006. p. 11).

Starting from the first years, new government directed its efforts and succeeded in establishment of the rule of law, fighting widespread shadow economy, imposing rigorous tax-collection and reforming tax codes, making country more attractive for foreign investments, growth of pensions twofold and eradication of corruption in state institutions. In 2006, the World Bank declared Georgia as the most reformist country in the world and the International Monetary Fund ranked Georgia among the least corrupt countries. Georgia is on the way to reinstate its historic European identity (Anchabadze, 2005. p. 39).

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The Black Sea became a common European sea on January 1, 2007 when Bulgaria and Romania joined the European Union. Georgia is hopeful that the tendency will spread on other Black Sea countries and Georgia will be able to become a full-fledged member of the European family.

Nevertheless, such a prospect for Georgia faces explicit and undisguised resistance from the Russian Federation attempting to maintain its "Spheres of Interests" in the post-Soviet and post-Socialist neighbourhood at any consequences.

Instigated conflicts in South Ossetia region of Georgia as well as Abkhazia, Georgia have been regularly used by Russia to hamper the development of the country. As the 2008 August Russian-Georgian War proved, it was neither Georgian-Abkhazian, nor Georgian-Ossetian ethnic conflict and in fact, it was and is Georgian-Russian political conflict with far-reaching international goals and consequences.

Pre-requisites (including the Russian military build up and illegal "pasportization" of locals that had taken place for several years prior to the invasion) that made the aggression against Georgia possible can be traced in the international political climate before the 2008 August war. "Unidentified planes" bombed the territory of Georgia several times and regularly violated the Georgian air space performing reconnaissance flights. However, international reaction was quite modest and inadequate - despite multiple warnings that the invasion was being planned to trigger global changes and challenges, Georgia, together with Ukraine, was denied MAP in April 2008 at the NATO Summit in Bucharest and a vague wording "Georgia and Ukraine will become members of NATO some day" was adopted. Passive position of key international players encouraged Russia to use force for promotion of its strategic interests in Georgia. Only after full-scale military aggression against Georgia in August 2008 and occupation of [20 percent of] the Georgian territory by the Russian Federation did the Western world realize that Russia was not only in conflict with Georgia, but it was also against the western values (Saitidze, 2008. p. 67).

The August War in Georgia demonstrated certain risks associated with implementation of civilized western values in the developing states (all will be punished if they do not observe the interests of Russia) and the need for broader security



guarantees for post-Soviet countries that are definitely vital to the European and global security (Papava, 2008. p. 5).

Despite its negative impact, the imposed August War was neither able to stop Georgia's striving for independence (evasion from the "Sphere of Interests"), nor hinder with its democratic transformation:

- In November 2009, Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements were initiated with the goal of signing the Agreements by June 2010 as soon as the relevant EU internal procedures are finished (as stated by Herman Van Rompuy, the President of the European Council and Jose Manuel Barroso, the president of the European Commission);
- By April 2010, EU internal discussions on the draft negotiation directives for Association Agreement (including DC FTA) are due to come to conclusion as the Georgian side has successfully fulfilled all key recommendations of the European Commission for starting the negotiations on DC FTA;
- The EU-Georgia cooperation has considerably intensified during the last 1.5 year and the progress achieved in terms of negotiating the bilateral agreements in different sectors is significant;
- Georgia has become a reliable partner not only in terms of energy-transit, but also as an energy producer - 1.6 % of oil consumed in the EU is being transitted through Georgia.
- Georgia is the only South Caucasus country to have successfully negotiated both Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements with the EU.

## 5. Conclusion

The European identity serves as a pivotal integrative factor in the process of European integration. Therefore, constructing a European identity has become quite a significant and necessary task of the EU. The EU already has some achievements in the establishment of a common European identity, European citizens' feelings of belonging to the EU based on their awareness about their common historical and cultural heritage and common values (Wang, 2009. p.152).

Deriving from the arguments mentioned in the chapters above, Georgia definitely meets all requirements constituting to major elements of the European identity - cultural similarities, religious ties and common values.

Georgia, as a country of old Christian traditions has always belonged to the European civilization and despite temporary isolation from Europe in the Soviet period, its cultural identity is indivisible from the European culture.

Moreover, Georgia could positively contribute to the formation of common European identity bearing in mind its own rich:

- Culture and cultural inheritance;
- Customs and traditions (hospitality, family ties, table etiquette, wine production, etc.);
- Inter-civilization dialogue (Georgia is a multi-national and a multi-religious country. Due to its geographic location and historic upheavals, the population of Georgia has accumulated a unique experience and tolerance towards each other).
- In modern “security architecture,” Georgia is not a “consumer,” but one of the main “contributors” – from May 2010, Georgia is the largest per capita contributor of the ISAF mission in Afghanistan. It also participates in different operations of NATO.

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Georgia, based on public support and political will, is in a position to implement obligations under the ENP action plan in the shortest time and pave its way towards integration into the EU. Georgia's current irreversible political, institutional and economic reforms will enable to raise question of starting consultations with the EU on officially granting Georgia status of a candidate country using respective legal instrument.

Nowadays, it is hard to predict when Georgia will become a full-fledged member of the European Union but it is obvious – whether in the European Union or outside the Union, Georgia is a European state with its ancient history, rich culture and its values.

## Resumé

Gruzínsko je pomerne malý štát, nachádzajúci sa na Kaukaze, s celkovou rozlohou približne 70 tisíc štvorcových kilometrov, ktorý je charakterizovaný zmesou východnej a západnej kultúry. V Gruzínsku sa stretávajú tradície východu a západu, tvoriac spolu jedinečnú kultúru, ktorá nikde inde na svete nemá obdobu.

Rozvoj európskej identity Gruzínska plynule pokračuje v rámci integračného procesu s Európskou úniou. Problém „európskej identity“ sa bude stále viac prejavovať v samotnej Európskej únii, a to tým viac, čím viac sa bude integrácia dotýkať oblasti štátnej suverenity. Tento problém bude vyžadovať posilnenie identifikácie ľudí s Európskou úniou. Podľa zaužívaných prístupov pojem európskej identity obsahuje tri hlavné prvky: kultúrne podobnosti, náboženské väzby a spoločné hodnoty.

Kultúra zohráva v procese európskej integrácie pomerne významnú úlohu. S rozvojom európskej integrácie sa práve oblasť kultúry stáva stále dôležitejšou. Podľa Európskej komisie nie je verejnosť v jednotlivých členských štátoch dostatočne informovaná o svojich spoločných európskych kultúrnych hodnotách a spoločnom kultúrnom dedičstve. V záujme eliminácie tohto nedostatku Komisia v roku 1988 vyhlásila „Európu občanov“ konštatujúc, že je potrebné konať v kultúrnom sektore, aby si ľudia viac uvedomili ich európsku identitu v očakávaní vytvorenia európskeho kultúrneho priestoru. Prostredníctvom svojich aktivít v oblasti kultúry chce Európska únia položiť základy „európskeho povedomia“ v myšliach európskych národov, aby sa dokázali bližšie identifikovať s Európskou úniou. Ak sa spätne pozrieme do európskej histórie, môžeme tam skutočne nájsť spoločné historické a kultúrne dedičstvo. Ono slúži ako základ na vybudovanie spoločnej európskej identity.

Historické a kultúrne tradície Európy sa datujú spätne až do čias antického Grécka, keďže každý Európan cíti závan domoviny, kedykoľvek počuje zmienku o starovekom Grécku. Rimania si podmanili Grécko, ale nezničili drahocenný Grécky odkaz. Uvedomovali si, že Gréci disponovali umeleckým a intelektuálnym potenciálom

omnoho starším a bohatším, ako bol ich vlastný. Uznali tento potenciál a snažili sa ho absorbovať a ďalej rozvíjať. Počas celého rozširovania územia Rímskej ríše bola grécka civilizácia priebežne rozširovaná do celej západnej časti európskeho kontinentu.

Veľmi dôležitú pozíciu v európskej histórii zohráva kresťanstvo. Po úpadku Rímskej ríše neexistovala žiadna ústredná vláda, ktorá by udržiavala v priebhu stredoveku poriadok. Bola to práve Cirkev, ktorá disponovala najvyššou mocou zjednocujúcou Európu pod zástavou kresťanstva. Kresťanstvo prevzalo vedúcu úlohu v politike, práve, umení na celé stáročia. Z dôvodu jej moci a vplyvu bol v neskorom stredoveku v západnej Európe takmer každý kresťanom.

Kresťanstvo bolo hlavným náboženstvom európskeho kontinentu počas takmer dvetisíc rokov. Kresťanstvo a kresťanské hodnoty mali podstatný vplyv na európsku politiku a spoločnosť, podstatným spôsobom ovplyvnili život európskych národov.

Európska únia bola založená na **hodnotách** – ako je úcta k ľudskej dôstojnosti; základné práva, vrátane práv spoločenstiev a rodín; sloboda, demokracia, rovnosť a vláda zákona. Spoločnosti v členských štátoch – v ktorých pluralizmus, nediskriminácia, tolerancia, spravodlivosť, solidarita, zodpovednosť a rodová rovnosť prevážili – zdieľajú tieto hodnoty.

### **Vplyv Európy na formovanie starovekého Gruzínskeho kráľovstva**

Stále prebieha diskusia o európskosti Gruzínska, či by malo byť prijaté do Európskej únie alebo nie. Jeden z najväčších argumentov proti jeho členstvu je otázka identity. Pre dosiahnutie záverov v tejto oblasti je nutné preskúmať vzťahy Gruzínska a Európskej únie v historickom kontexte.

V 6. a 5. storočí pred Kristom sa pozdĺž západogruzínskeho čiernomorského pobrežia v Kolchode začali objavovať grécke usadlosti. Týmito usadlosťami boli Phais – moderné Poti, Ghienos – dnešné Ochamchire, Dioskuria – dnešné Suchumi. Zbližovanie



gruzínskej a gréckej, respektíve európskej kultúry má korene už v týchto dobách. Ich blízkosť ovplyvnila i stav hospodárstva.

Kolonizačný impulz Grékov, známy ako veľká grécka kolonizácia, mal významný vplyv na určenie zemepisných hraníc modernej Európy. Od tých čias Gréci (grécka kolonizácia) vytvorili okruh (miest) siahajúci od vzdialeného západu modernej Európy, od Gibraltárskej úžiny, po ďaleký východ modernej Európy – kolchidské pobrežie, od Pyrenejí po pohorie Kaukaz, od Hesperidinu po Syspirtis, od španielskej Ibérie (Iberský polostrov) po gruzínsku Ibériu. Teda tieto zemepisné paralely nie sú náhodné. Je pozoruhodné, že starovekí Gréci kreslili hranice medzi Európou a Áziou pozdĺž rieky Phasis (dnešná Rioni) s jej prameňom uprostred severného Gruzínska. Rieka následne tečie na juhovýchod a rozdeľuje západné Gruzínsko na dve rovnaké časti. Nakoniec rieka Phasis (Rioni) vteká do Čierneho mora. Túto zemepisnú tradíciu prvýkrát vo svojej práci zaznamenal „otec histórie“ Herodotos. Starovekí Gréci považovali rieku Phasis za jednu z najväčších riek Európy. Na brehoch rieky Phasis stálo mesto Kutaia/Aia, sídlo bájneho kolchidského kráľa Aeeta. Toto mesto bolo konečným cieľom argonautov. Historici identifikujú mesto Kutaia/Aia ako moderné Kutaisi, druhé najväčšie mesto Gruzínska.

Mestá helénskeho typu vznikli nielen v Kolchide pozdĺž mora, ale aj hlbšie vo vnútrozemí na východe Gruzínska. V 30-tych rokoch 4. storočia pred Kristom boli na území Gruzínskeho kráľovstva Kartli známe mince Filipa II. (Alexandrovho otca) a samotného Alexandra.

Grécke poľnohospodárske pojmy a pojmy z oblasti zavlažovania sú asimilovanou súčasťou gruzínskeho jazyka; objavujú sa grécke nápisy na kameňoch; helénske synkretické božstvá sa nachádzajú v centre gruzínskeho pohanského panteónu. Kráľovstvo Ibéria bolo vazalským štátom a spojencom helenistického kráľovstva Seleukosovskej dynastie. Neskôr, hoci vzťahy s Rímskou ríšou neboli bezproblémové, kráľovstvo Kartli/Iberia bolo po rímskej vojenskej kampani na Kaukaz, do Kolchidy, Albanie a Iberie r. 65 pred Kristom pod velením Pompeja, zväčša spojencom cisárov a Ríma. V r. 63 pred Kristom sa Colchis/Egrisi stalo podriadeným štátom Rímskej ríše.

### **Kultúrne zväzky medzi starovekým Gréckom a Gruzínskym**

Staroveké mytologické paralely významne ilustrujú úzke kultúrne zväzky medzi Európou a Gruzínskym. Gréci s pomocou Herakla ukradli zlaté jablká zo záhrady Hesperidiiek umiestnenej ďaleko na západe a tí istí Gréci ukradli s pomocou Iasona zlaté rúno z ďalekého východu. Prostredníctvom týchto paralel starovekí Gréci zjednotili celý svet tej doby pod ich európsku moc. Zlaté jablká zo záhrad Hesperidiiek stelesňovali duchovnú múdrosť, spočívajúcu v osvietenom západe, a zlaté rúno spočívajúce v Kolchide stelesňovalo duchovnú múdrosť spočívajúcu v osvietenom východe. Gréci, ako skutoční európski pragmatici, umiestnili tieto dva okruhy duchovnej múdrosti do jedného obsahu a premenili ich na európske ľudské poznanie.

V druhej polovici tretieho storočia bola založená najstaršia škola rétoriky v Gruzínsku – Akadémia vo Phasis (dnešné Poti), kde grécki a gruzínski študenti získavali majstrovstvo v rétorike, filozofii, fyzike, matematike, logike, atď. Úradnými jazykmi bola gréčtina a gruzínčina.

V stredovekom Gruzínsku boli vytvorené unikátne diela architektúry, ikonomalárstva, umeleckého zlatníctva, ktoré boli rovnocenné s podobnými dielami byzantskej kultúry. Nad všetkými literárnymi dielami stojí skvost z 12. storočia, epická poema Shotu Rustaveliho Vepchistkaosani („Rytier v tigrej koži“), ktorá má pre gruzínsky národ a kultúru rovnakú hodnotu ako Dante Alighieriho „Božská komédia“ pre Talianov a Cervantesov (Miguel de Cervantes y Saavedra) „Don Quixote“ pre Španielov. S dôležitosťou „Rytiera v tygrej koži“ by mohla byť porovnaná poema Jána Kollára „Slávy dcéra“ zo slovenskej literatúry. „Rytier v tigrej koži“ bol preložený do 50 jazykov (slovenský preklad uskutočnil Miloš Krno).

### **Faktor náboženstva v gruzínskej orientácii**

Vyhlásenie kresťanstva za štátne náboženstvo hrá osobitnú úlohu v histórii Gruzínska a vo formovaní gruzínskeho národa. Pred prijatím kresťanstva boli v Iberii od prvých storočí nášho letopočtu bežne praktizované kult Mithrasa a Zoroatrimus. Kult Mithrasa, význačný svojím synkretickým charakterom a doplnkový k miestnym kultom, osobitne ku kultu slnka, postupne splynul so starovekými gruzínskymi vierami. Kresťanstvo bolo uznané ako štátne náboženstvo v r. 326. Kráľ Mirian (Iberia, východné Gruzínsko) urobil toto rozhodnutie r. 323, pred konaním prvého svetového ekumenického koncil v Nicei (r. 325).

Pôvodne bola gruzínska ortodoxná cirkev pod právomocou apoštolskej stolice (Cirkev) v Antiochii, ale po povýšení biskupa z Mtschety (staré hlavné mesto Iberie/Kartli) do hodnosti Catholicosa Kartli r. 466, Gruzínska ortodoxná cirkev sa stala samostatnou.

Stredovek predstavoval pre Gruzínsko vojny a boje za kresťanstvo, keďže Gruzínsko je situované na križovatke východu a západu. V helenistickom období Gruzínsko slúžilo ako predná stráž ochraňujúca európsku kultúru. Akékoľvek bezprostredné nepriateľstvo ku kresťanskému svetu, pochádzajúce z východu, ohrozovalo Gruzínsko a dávalo prvý úder práve Gruzínsku.

### **Dočasná izolácia od Európy**

V roku 1453 otomanskí Turci dobyli Konštantinopol. Táto skutočnosť a zmena obchodných ciest z Európy na ďaleký východ podstatne politicky a hospodársky oslabili Gruzínsko. V tom čase sa dramaticky zmenila celá oblasť a to vo všetkých možných ohľadoch: jazykovom, kultúrnom, politickom, atď. Počas tohto obdobia sa Gruzínske



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kráľovstvo premenilo na izolovanú, roztrieštenú kresťanskú enklávu, pozostatok pominutej východorímskej epochy, obkľúčenú moslimským, predovšetkým truko-iránsko-arabským svetom.

### Ruský útlak

Odrezaná od Európy, nachádzajúc sa v prekérnej situácii (Perzia a Otomanská ríša ju trhali na kusy), Gruzínsko požiadalo o protektorát a podpísalo dohody s Ruskom, známu ako Zmluva z Georgievska. Podpísanie zmluvy bolo jedinou šancou pre slávneho kráľa z Kartli a Kacheti Ereklea II. navrátiť sa k Európe s pomocou svojho severného suseda. V jeho rozhodnutí hralo ruské kresťanstvo a jeho mocenské postavenie v Európe kľúčovú úlohu.

Keď r. 1787 vypukla ďalšia rusko-turecká vojna, Rusi stiahli svoje jednotky z oblasti a ponechali Erekleho kráľovstvo nechránené. V reakcii na ruský krok perzský šach Aga Mohammed Chán prepadol krajinu a do tla vypálil jej hlavné mesto Tbilisi.

Napriek ruskému zlyhaniu v dodržiavaní podmienok Zmluvy z Georgievska, gruzínski panovníci cítili, že nemajú nikoho iného, na koho by sa mohli obrátiť. Preto, r. 1801 sa Rusko zbavilo gruzínskej kráľovskej vlády, dedičov trónu premiestnili do ruského exilu, postupne okupovali a anektovali jednotlivé gruzínske kniežatstvá. Samostatný štatút Gruzínskej ortodoxnej cirkvi bol zrušený a jej správu prevzala Ruská ortodoxná cirkev.

### Sovietska železná opona

Revolučné dianie v Rusku roku 1917 vytvorilo podmienky pre to, aby Gruzínsko obnovilo historickú spravodlivosť – prijalo Deklaráciu nezávislosti a 26. mája 1918 vyhlásilo Gruzínsku demokratickú republiku.

Gruzínsku bol 16. decembra 1920 odmietnutý vstup do Ligy národov, no 27. januára 1921 získalo de jure uznanie od spojencov. Týmito štátmi boli okrem iných Rumunsko, Argentína, Nemecko, Turecko, Belgicko, Spojené kráľovstvo, Francúzsko, Japonsko, Taliansko, Poľsko, Československo a Rusko. Táto skutočnosť však nezabránila útoku zo strany Sovietskeho Ruska už o jeden mesiac neskôr.

### **Pokusy o únik zo sovietskeho režimu a zjednotenie s Európou**

Počas celej komunistickej epochy bolo Gruzínsko jednou z najneposlušnejších republík Sovietskeho zväzu. Roku 1924 neuspelo v Gruzínsku protisovietske povstanie. Po ňom nasledovala brutálnosť voči rebelom, ich rodinám a sympatizantom, ktorá do tej doby nemala obdobu.

V závere 80-tych rokov 20. storočia sa národnooslobodzovacie hnutie rozšírilo po celom Gruzínsku. Dňa 9. apríla 1989 ruské špeciálne jednotky bezmilostne zakročili proti mladým ľuďom zhromaždeným na protestnom zhromaždení na hlavnej ulici Tbilisi – 16 ľudí bolo zavraždených na mieste a stovky boli otrávené neidentifikovaným plynom. Napriek všetkým agresívnym opatreniam sa odpor stupňoval. Dňa 26. mája 1991 Gruzínsko opäť obnovilo svoju nezávislosť.

V 90-tych rokoch 20. storočia Rusmi vyprovokovaná občianska vojna zdevastovala Gruzínsko, prinášajúc do krajiny nepokoj a zmätok. Prvý prezident Gamsachurdia opustil Gruzínsko a na jeho miesto o niekoľko mesiacov nastúpil bývalý minister zahraničných vecí Sovietskeho zväzu Ševarnadze. Prvým vysokým predstaviteľom, ktorý navštívil Gruzínsko po jeho osamostatnení, bol Hans-Dietrich Genscher, nemecký minister zahraničných vecí, povedal: „Európa dvakrát zradila Gruzínsko, ale už to neurobí po tretí raz.“ Minister mal na mysli dvojnásobnú okupáciu Gruzínska Ruskom a chýbajúcu reakciu Európy.

Keď sa Gruzínsko objavilo na medzinárodnej scéne ako suverénna krajina, vláda mala jasný zámer dosiahnuť európske štandardy ľudských práv a integrovať Gruzínsko

do európskych štruktúr. Dňa 27. apríla 1999 sa Gruzínska republika stala členským štátom Rady Európy. Pred prijatím Gruzínska niektoré členské štáty nastolili otázku, či územie Gruzínska zemepisne patrí do Európy. Predstaviteľ Veľkej Británie predložil ako dôkaz starú kráľovskú zemepisnú mapy z Encyklopédie Britannica.

### Na ceste k európskym hodnotám

Po „ružovej revolúcii“ a zvolení mladého prezidenta. Michaila Saarkašviliho v roku 2003 Gruzínsko otvorilo nové stránky svojej histórie. Cieľom nového vedenia je vstup Gruzínska do Európskej únie, jeho prechod k hodnotám a štandardom presadzovaným Európskou úniou v politickej, hospodárskej a sociálnej oblasti.

Dňa 1. januára 2007, keď Bulharsko a Rumunsko vstúpili do Európskej únie, sa Čierne more stalo spoločným európskym morom. Gruzínsko dúfa, že táto tendencia sa bude šíriť ďalej do ďalších čiernomorských krajín a Gruzínsko sa bude môcť stať plnoprávnym členom európskej rodiny.

Avšak taký výhľad pre budúcnosť Gruzínska naráža na výslovný a nezakrytý odpor zo strany Ruskej federácie, pokúšajúcej sa udržať si svoju „sféru záujmov“ v post-sovietskom a postsocialistickom susedstve, bez ohľadu na dôsledky.

Podnietené konflikty v juhoosetskej oblasti Gruzínska, ako aj v gruzínskom Abcházku, sú pravidelne využívané Ruskom na brzdenie rozvoja krajiny. Ako preukázala rusko-gruzínska vojna v auguste 2008, nebol to ani gruzínsko-abcházky, ani gruzínsko-osetský etnický konflikt, ale v skutočnosti to bol gruzínsko-ruský politický konflikt s ďalekosiahlymi medzinárodnými cieľmi a dopadmi.

Napriek jej negatívnemu dopadu, vynútená augustová vojna ani nebola schopná zastaviť snahy Gruzínska o nezávislosť (únik zo „sféry záujmov“), ani hatiť jej demokratickú transformáciu.

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