

## **Formation of the Georgian National Discourse**

### *Introduction*

This article will discuss the formation of nationalism in Georgia. Even though national aspirations were somewhat present in medieval Georgia, at least among the ruling elite, the paper will not examine the medieval period. The year 1918 when Georgia achieved political independence and preceding events served as the turning point. The paper will consider the main social institutions, political trends, elite strategies and social reactions in the nationalism discourse of the period.

Georgian independence declared on May 26, 1918 was short lived—it was lost in 1921 when the Bolshevik army invaded Georgia. The three years of independence and earlier events are very important to look at. The liberation movement of this period was the first expression of Georgian nationalism. Leader of the movement, Ilia Chavchavadze (1837-1907)—who also was the publisher and owner of the first Georgian newspaper and the national bank—is considered the father of Georgian nation and was canonized by the Georgian Church. His famous trinity “Language, Fatherland, Faith” served as the basis of independent Georgian state and remains the cornerstone of Georgian identity. The main social institutions of the period were printed media, educational system, banking sector, folklore and museum. With these social tools the elite wanted to introduced national awakening among Georgian population and subsequently achieve cultural and political autonomy from the Russian Empire.

Despite obvious emphasis on faith and language, nationalism discourse of this period can be regarded as civic rather than ethnic. This can be argued based on the policy towards Muslim minorities, strong efforts to reach social equality through anti-feudal policy, permanent financial support for local peasants from the national bank and Western orientation of the leaders of liberation movement—it is well-known that Chavchavadze and his companions were heavily influenced by liberation movements in Italy and Ireland.

## *Georgia in the Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century and the First Independence*

Before describing historical events in Georgia and analyzing them theoretically, it will be useful to sketch some general ideas about this period. National consciousness, and consequently the first Georgian Republic, first appeared at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In modern Western terms this implies a democratic republic, free from a feudal system and religious legitimation of rulers. Many constructivists argue that the concept of a modern state was created after the French Revolution of 1789 (Gellner 1983, Anderson 1991, Hobsbawm 1991)<sup>1</sup>. Appearance of national consciousness is an artificial phenomenon and is based on several social trends — development of household, publishing houses (printed media), creation of universal and mandatory educational system based on national language. Dissolution of the feudal system and establishment of social equality are indispensable to national consciousness. A national language is artificially created and institutionalized by a small group of individuals. The newborn national consciousness requires a “new-old history”, which is recreated. Any liberation movement is not a common mass movement initially and does not have wide support. It is in the hands of small intellectual elite who will come to power if successful. This elite group makes political decisions, which affect the social life of common people. National consciousness is spread through masses and liberation movements gain more power.

### *The Beginnings — Western Influence*

To trace the path to Georgia's first independence it is vital to describe and analyze the liberation movement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and the disposition of intellectual elites of the time, especially activities of Ilia Chavchavadze. This person played the most significant role in the struggle for independence and therefore, it is important to focus on his socio-political life. According to constructivists, modern nation-states and nationalism as an ideology and social movement have its origins in Western Europe, namely France and England. Anderson ascribes this phenomenon to the decline of religious society, development of print capitalism and the Enlightenment<sup>2</sup>.

According to Gellner the main trigger for this transformation was industrialization and modernization<sup>3</sup>. The western model of self-determination and the strategy of liberation movement were spread from these regions to other parts of the world. Even anti-colonial liberation movements in Africa

and East Asia followed this pattern, as it provided efficient means to incite the masses. Therefore, it is not surprising that Western education was a crucial move for resistance groups in Georgia.

It is not an overestimation to say that Chavchavadze and his companions were heavily influenced by their studies at St. Petersburg University. At the time, the University was the best place to gain Western education without knowing European languages. Besides acquiring theoretical knowledge of world history, state law, social law, economy, political economy, French and German languages, Chavchavadze and his team members had their first experience in the struggle for national values, namely for the Georgian language. Georgian students demanded to establish Georgian as the language for the country's internal affairs. In March 1881 Chavchavadze wrote that *"it is necessary to introduce judicial changes in regard to the national language. Nationality, as well as religious belonging, is a personal matter. It is easier to teach the language of people to several officials than to force the whole nation to learn a foreign one"*<sup>4</sup>. According to Hobsbawm, definition of national language and its establishment for official usage are necessary conditions for becoming a nation-state<sup>5</sup>.

The second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century was the period of national unrest in many regions of Europe. Students in St. Petersburg closely observed these developments: the Irish people's struggle for independence from Britain, national riots against the Habsburg Empire in Hungary, the Italian revolutionary movement led by Giuseppe Garibaldi. These socio-political events inspired the future leaders of Georgian liberation movement. A poem by Chavchavadze written in 1860 is dedicated to the Italian liberation movement and hopes for similar course of events in Georgia:

*"I hear the long wished voice of people  
Crushing the chains of obedience,  
Voice of truth is heard over the world  
To defeat the slavery.  
This voice encourages me  
And evokes hope...  
Dear Lord, I am begging you  
Make this voice sound in my fatherland too!!!"*<sup>6</sup>

He also dedicated many poems and publications to other liberation movements and political processes in Western Europe. Moreover, he wanted to join Garibaldi's army as a volunteer. From these chronicles it is evident that in its formative period Georgian elite was heavily influenced by Western liberators. After their return from Russia, Chavchavadze and his team started acting immediately. To explain the motivation of national movements in mul-

tiethnic empires, it is helpful to refer to Gellner's hypothetical Megalomanian Empire and its periphery region Ruritania<sup>7</sup>. Ruritanian population, primarily made up from the proletariat and illiterate lower classes, is oppressed and passive under the Megalomanian government. Ruritanian peasants speak mutually more or less comprehensible kindred dialects, their habits and lifestyle are also similar, making up a close to harmonious society inside the empire. Ruritanian language does not exist; there are only dialects, which could potentially become a single language. The dialects are spoken only by the lower strata since aristocracy and nobility speak the official language of Megalomania, which is completely different from local dialects and used for official purposes in Ruritania. At the onset of industrialization the small elite of Ruritanian intellectuals educated in Megalomania have better qualifications and skills than their countrymen. However, they cannot compete with the center and have better prospects in independent Ruritania. The establishment of independent Ruritanian Republic requires many efforts. The first priority is to equip the masses with national consciousness. The national movement is led by the intellectual elite. It is also evident, however, that mass support of the proletariat is essential—Gellner is referring to peasants living in cities and slums, away from their place of birth<sup>8</sup>. Development of nationalism in Georgia closely resembles Gellner's model—a group of young people travelled to the centre of the Russian Empire, were introduced to the Western world and were inspired by the ideas of liberation. After returning to peripheral Georgia they formed intellectual elite, which was later transformed into governmental elite and initiated a Georgian liberation movement.

Chavchavadze returned to Georgia after the completion of his studies in 1861. During his journey back, he wrote one of his greatest masterpieces, *The Travelers' Diaries*, where he outlines the importance of nation-building. After the return from St. Petersburg, which clearly was the educational centre of the Russian Empire, Chavchavadze and his companions started to create an effective strategy for establishing national consciousness among Georgian population<sup>9</sup>. The first step was the founding of the first Georgian newspaper.

### *Tools of Nationalism — Language, Newspaper, Education*

In the process of establishing the new Georgian language the obsolete Georgian and writings of its supporters were sharply criticized. One periodic publication of the time, a monthly journal *Tsiskari* (eng. *Sunset*, first published 1852) was written in the outdated language and partly because the

population was illiterate, it remained an elitist publication not accessible to the masses. Chavchavadze published his critical letter about *Tsiskari* in 1861, which received immediate reaction that soon transformed into the conflict of “fathers and sons”<sup>1</sup>. To maintain new orthography and language, Chavchavadze’s team decided to establish its own periodic publication, *Sakartvelos Moambe* (eng. *The Georgian Chronicle*, 1863–1877) and later, *Iveria* (an old name of Georgia, 1877–1905) first as a weekly journal (until 1885) and then as a daily newspaper<sup>10</sup>.

Publication of a daily newspaper was a very important step in the formation of Georgian nation. Anderson’s theory about “imagined communities” suggests that newspapers change the perception of time by providing sense of simultaneity. The importance of this change in the creation of a nationally imagined community becomes evident when observing two main structures of imagination—the novel and the newspaper, first introduced in the 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe<sup>11</sup>.

Examining the structure of novels, Anderson concludes that they create a feeling of simultaneity by distinct events from different dates at the same time. This provokes a sense of social unity in the readers’ mind, an imagination that their “brothers and sisters” whom they will probably never meet, act rationally and unanimously, independently and in unison. The feeling of unanimity is further reinforced by newspapers since they describe many events about different people from faraway regions. When a newspaper is issued, all events are united into one single day. Readers have a feeling that thousands of members from their community read the same paper. In Hegel’s words, “*newspaper, for a modern man, is the replacement of morning pray*”<sup>12</sup>. This is an endlessly repetitive process crucial for the creation of an imagined community.

Secondly, periodic publications allowed the movement to directly appeal to the masses via national propagandist appeals, scientific and social articles, and belles-lettres, which were packed with national and patriotic content. In fact, the first Georgian newspaper served as the main factor in the emergence of national sentiments, as suggested by Anderson—feeling of simultaneity, establishment of Georgian language and creation of an imagined community. Moreover, the newspapers mostly covered Georgian nation and state — “*most of his [Chavchavadze’s] work dealt with Georgia and Georgians. He was a devoted defender of Georgian language and culture from Russification*”<sup>13</sup>. For the movement to represent the majority of Georgian population it was crucial to a) establish one, universal and simple language b) build an effec-

---

1 Polemic between old and new generations about Georgian language.

tive educational system to teach this language even in the periphery and c) use this language not only in the movement's publications, but also in official state matters. All these problems were on the agenda of the liberation movement and it is worth considering them.

Establishment of one official language did not only oblige people to learn and use it, but also unified the broad variety of dialects all around Georgia. Anderson sees a direct link between the creation of national language and the development of print capitalism. Related languages began to confluence under capitalism which produced publishing languages that were mechanical in terms of grammar and syntax and thus, could easily be sold on the European market<sup>14</sup>. These artificially created languages aimed at increasing the profit of publishers had an important side effect. They generated a strong sense of national identity and space which linked and distinguished different groups of people. Moreover, printed literature in these local languages equipped them with durability and permanent character so that they could not be changed easily. This feature was one of the main factors in maintaining a strong feeling of common past, which is crucial for national self-consciousness. In general, Anderson argues that cooperation between the capitalist system and publishing business provided the basis for the emergence of imagined communities, which later transformed into nations<sup>15</sup>.

To roughly outline the content of *Iveria* and to evaluate its rich nationalistic discourse it is enough to say that besides articles with direct national appeal, there were chronicles from Georgian and world history, as well as folklore section which covered popular art. These two aspects are crucial in the process of gaining mass support for national ideas, or in Hroch's<sup>16</sup> terms, in shifting from phase B to C. Miroslav Hroch divided the process of nation-building into three phases: "*in nineteenth-century Europe, phase A was purely cultural, literary and folkloric, and had no particular political or even national implications. In phase B we find a body of pioneers and militants of 'the national idea' and the beginnings of political campaigning for this idea. And phase C when — and not before — nationalist programs acquire mass support, or at least some of the mass support that nationalists always claim they represent. The transition from phase B to phase C is evidently a crucial moment in the chronology of national movements*"<sup>17</sup>. According to constructivists, recreation of history — shaping myths about the past, is a vital part of this transition<sup>18</sup>.

The new newspaper provoked an ambivalent feedback. On the one hand, the new generation wanted to reach the lower classes with simplified language. On the other hand, the old generation was against corrupting the purity of Georgian language. However, both sides agreed that the newspaper and Chavchavadze's team were working against the feudal system and

for national interests<sup>19</sup>. It needs to be noted that simplification was not the only task of the language policy. Via the printing business the movement introduced new Georgian words which allowed the transmission of national ideas: nation, radical party, volunteer, national guard, tractate, slogan, confederation, municipality, tyranny, autonomy, republic, revolution, agitation etc. In this period Chavchavadze also came up with his famous trinity—Language, Fatherland, Faith—which he considered (or at least encouraged the masses to consider) as the basis of Georgian national values. Even though the movement addresses all three issues, it is obvious that the trinity was a propaganda devised to reach the masses.

Erik Hobsbawm provides plenty of examples from European countries where national languages was chosen and institutionalized by intellectual elite. He states that the languages were selected from many spoken and mutually incomprehensible vernacular dialects. To maintain the chosen dialect it had to be declared as the official language of a certain territory i.e. used in every public agency, government system, bureaucratic apparatus and written language. It is notable that even after the change the majority of population was unable to use the official language. However, this did not hinder its development—people were forced to learn it in order to become full members of society. The final push in the process of transformation into an official language was printed media and publishing business. Spoken language is limited to narrative and is easily changeable and forgettable, whereas the printed one has much more durability and slowly replaces all spoken dialects. That is how Croatian, Serbian, Hungarian, Modern Greek, Bulgarian, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Latvian and other languages were created<sup>20</sup>. Georgian language can also be added to this group.

Constructivists agree that the first target group in the process of founding and evolving national sentiments and consciousness are the lowest illiterate classes, which make up the majority of population. Religious identification, visible national symbols (national flags, icons, anthems etc.), elements of folklore, common past and memories supported by historical myths,—are the mechanisms for indoctrinating the masses. Hobsbawm calls it “*popular proto nationalism*”<sup>21</sup>. To gain and maintain support of the masses Chavchavadze tried to appeal directly to this class with the means of printed media: “*there are two groups among our newspaper’s potential and actual readers. On the one hand, there are the uneducated and illiterate people who barely read and on the other, scholars and intellectuals ... the last one outnumbers the first, but between these two strands of society are many other social layers as well ... Thus, the duty and responsibility of our newspaper is greater ... to lessen the gap between them...*”<sup>22</sup>. Here we can already observe strife for social equality and care for

lower classes. It is unquestionable that this appeal had a reason—national movement could gain legitimacy and mobilize the masses to transform national ideas into a real, official policy of the state and as a final result, national independence of Georgia. However, as it was already mentioned, the newspaper would be ineffective even with the simplest language if the majority of the population would remain illiterate.

To create a strong educational system the movement established the Society for the Spreading of Literacy among Georgians in 1879 (also translated as the Society for the Extension of Literacy among Georgians). This was a charity founded by a group of leading Georgian intellectuals aimed at promoting a cultural renaissance among the peasantry of Georgia, then part of the Russian Empire. It survived into the early Soviet period and operated until 1926/7. Organized by Ilia Chavchavadze, Dimitri Kipiani, and an educator Iakob Gogebashvili (the author of the first schoolbook for Georgian language), the Society ran a network of schools, bookshops and libraries throughout the country, trained teachers and sponsored Georgian press. Chavchavadze went on to play a leading role in the Society, succeeding the first chairman Kipiani in 1885 until his assassination in 1907. The organization, tolerated by the imperial authorities, involved virtually all active Georgian men of letters, several philanthropists and officials, and was instrumental in Georgian national revival in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>23</sup>. The goal of the Society was to teach Georgian language to the population, to support young writers, novelists and publicists in publishing their works, to translate and publish socio-political articles from Western Europe and most importantly, to establish Georgian as a teaching language in the country's public schools<sup>24</sup>. These goals, accomplished in 1879, provided a good basis for the development of national consciousness.

### *Ethno-Cultural Popular Nationalism and Social Equality*

Many scholars underline the importance of ethno-cultural elements in the process of nation building. Hobsbawm argues that in the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century one of the main socio-political trends in Europe was romanticism towards the pure and simple peasantry<sup>25</sup>. Folkloric rediscovering of these people and their cultural Renaissance is regarded as a turning point in gaining mass support for national ideas. Hroch, however, does not attach any political significance to the phenomenon and argues that rediscovering was initiated by elites in order to artificially excite national sentiments among the peasantry<sup>26</sup>.



Permanent efforts of the 19<sup>th</sup> century national movement in Georgia to popularize folklore and ethnic culture generally, was evidently the result of this trend, despite the claims that it was a reaction against the cultural Russification policy operated by Moscow. It has been argued that the centre was trying to weaken the cultural identity of imperial periphery and to obliterate memories of the past in the population<sup>27</sup>. In the scope of this policy, Chavchavadze and his team members were regularly publishing old popular narratives in a weekly newspaper under the headline “Peasant’s Songs”. Moreover, one of the main tasks of the movement was to collect, register and publish scattered and vanishing manuscripts from Georgian churches and monasteries. Chavchavadze appealed to the public to collect and bring all manuscripts of importance to the editorial office, claiming that it was “*a great favor to our fatherland*”<sup>28</sup>. The manuscripts had to be catalogued and preserved as well, which contributed to the establishment of the first Georgian museum in 1888.

Gellner and Hobsbawm emphasize the significance of national treasure and material evidence of a nation’s antiquity. As was already mentioned, Hobsbawm labels the first stage of development of national consciousness as “proto nationalism” i.e. the process when the intellectual, ruling elite is allocating the existent national sentiments among people into formal frames of state policy. If society will be able to worship itself, these sentiments will heighten. National antiquity, museums, artifacts, icons, flags, manuscripts, tales, poems — are visible symbols of self-worship Emile Durkheim referred to this trend as a new kind of religion<sup>29</sup>. In the age of nationalism societies adore themselves without any camouflage<sup>30</sup>.

National symbols and artifacts are significant for nationhood, but they are paralyzed without good economical conditions of citizens, especially the lower classes. There is plenty of evidence that Chavchavadze and his team were active supporters of social equality, despite the fact that most of them were nobles and princes. Chavchavadze clearly understood that without economical satisfaction of lower classes the movement would not gain mass support for national ideas. Thus, they started to fight for peasants’ rights and welfare and against the feudal order. On the one hand, there was an ideological strategy for achieving these goals with the means of newspaper and public rhetoric. *The Georgian Narrator* condemned feudalism and took a lead in Georgian national movement<sup>31</sup>. On the other hand, there a practical strategy which involved the establishment of the first Georgian national bank.

In November, 1864 liberation of peasants from servile dependence had already been reinforced in Tiflis province (former name of Tbilisi, capital of Georgia), and Chavchavadze was appointed as an Arbitrator of Peace in Du-

sheti district. He remained in the office until 1868 when the position of Justice of Peace was introduced in the Caucasus in the framework of the new judicial system<sup>32</sup>. Chavchavadze was appointed as a Justice of Peace in Dusheti district and remained in the office until 1874. Having received an imperial grant upon the abolition of servitude, the nobility of Tiflis allotted part of the funds to the establishment of a credit institution with the provision that its profits would be dedicated to educating and instructing their children. After much hesitation in their search for a suitable form of credit institution, on Chavchavadze's advice, the nobility decided to establish a Land Bank in 1874 and entrusted a special Committee led by Chavchavadze to draw up the statute<sup>33</sup>. The statute was formulated in accordance to the governmental model and was passed in the same year. It differed from other statutes since all profits, excluding the obligatory deductions on account of sundry capital sums, were applied to the satisfaction of common needs — not only of the landowning nobility, but also of the agricultural population in Tiflis. Thus, the Land Bank of Tiflis nobility was probably the only agrarian credit institution in the Russian Empire whose statute entirely eliminated personal gain for social purposes. Oliver Wardrop (benefactor of Georgian studies at Oxford University) characterizes the Land Bank as “*an institution founded for the relief of the farmers*”<sup>34</sup>. This institution was an additional tool in the formation of Georgian nation and in the process of equipping it with national consciousness.

### *New Territory and New History*

Hobsbawm argues that a territory defined within certain boundaries is one of the vital features of a modern nation-state. The boundaries are determined by the intellectual ruling elites. The population encompassed within these boundaries does not necessarily have a common language, religion, traditions, and habits, not to mention the feeling of national belonging<sup>35</sup>. Indoctrination of the population with national consciousness takes place post-factum primarily through the invention of “new history”. In his book *The Invention of Tradition*, Hobsbawm suggests that a nation can be constructed on invented traditions by means of primary education, print language, public ceremonies, public monuments, etc. The theory emphasizes the importance of myths in the invention of particular nations, arguing that such stories might foster certain political policies. Hobsbawm also suggests that “state, nation and society converge”<sup>36</sup>.

Invention of tradition took place during the struggle for Georgian “ancient lands” in Turkey in 1877-1878 and the transformation of these regions

and their population into Georgians. After their defeat against the Russian Empire in 1878, the Ottomans conceded the mentioned territories to Georgia (as part of the Russian Empire) and thus, a new region, Adjara emerged in south-western Georgia<sup>37</sup>.

Obviously, the Georgian National Movement closely observed the Russo-Turkish war and led its ideological battle on the pages of newspapers. In 1877 alone Chavchavadze published nine articles about the “ancient” Georgian region, which he called “Osmal Georgia” (Turkish Georgia)<sup>38</sup>. The main message of these articles and generally of the propaganda was that a) this territory was historically Georgian and thus, should be returned to its legal and cultural nation-state b) despite linguistic (several dialects of Turkish), religious (Islam) and cultural differences, these people were *“our brothers and sisters ... we share common past ... they were forcefully cut off from their fatherland ... they are equally lawful citizens of Georgia”*<sup>39</sup>. These articles also provided some scientific evidence of the common past to justify the annexation of the region. Observing this type of approach to ethnically, linguistically, religiously and culturally different people, it can be assumed that the ruling elite in Georgia were trying to create a civic rather than ethnic form of nationalism. To quote Chavchavadze, *“our brothers, our flesh and blood, our compatriots, our comrade-in-arms, our ancient cradle of education, our old Georgia is today with us... and if we will care for it, it will stay with us forever”*<sup>40</sup>. However passionate the nationalistic rhetoric might have been, it is clear that the movement considered Adjarians as equal citizens of Georgia.

The meaning behind “caring” for the region became clear when the movement began its active policy of integration. A public school was established in Adjara to teach Georgian language. Careful integration of the region was a crucial matter for the government at the time. A passage from a letter sent by Chavchavadze to the regional school principal in Adjara, Mikheil Shervashidze illustrates the general disposition: *“it was my personal choice and decision to send you for such a responsible job. Georgian Muslims must be treated very carefully; remember, they are our brothers... they are Georgians”*<sup>41</sup>.

Establishment of mandatory public education and recreation of history had one goal—formation of Georgian national consciousness in the minds of Adjarian population. According to Gellner, mythologization of history—direct ideological messages instead of specific facts and independent analysis, is a necessary part of a national movement’s propagandistic policy<sup>42</sup>. This was the case in Georgia as well: *“the history of our people and our country is dark and incondite, there is a huge lack of facts about the life of common people, and the ones that exist are uncertain. We are talking about the events in which common people are the main actors and reveal themselves, their character and their*

*participation in history. Our history contains mainly stories about our kings and rulers and it is obviously not enough to learn the people's and country's history*<sup>43</sup>.

### *The Democratic Republic of Georgia 1918–1921*

On the onset of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Russian Empire began to shatter. The process of transformation was accelerated on the one hand, by Russia's several defeats in the war with Japan, and on the other hand, by general dissatisfaction with Tsarism. The revolutionary temper was also spread to the Empire's peripheries. Several groups of people and their leaders realized that it was the best time to escape social oppression and to obtain national liberation.

Chavchavadze and his team took advantage of the situation and founded the Committee of Georgian Nobles. The Committee issued an official appeal demanding autonomy for Georgia and sent it to the Emperor<sup>44</sup>. The request was diplomatically refused, but the process was already irreversible. Meanwhile, Tsarism was replaced by constitutional monarchy in Russia and dialogue with the centre administratively changed its form. Chavchavadze founded the National-Democrats Party aimed at cultural and political autonomy of Georgia. To have a rough image of what kind of state the liberation movement was trying to create it is sufficient to list some main points of the party's program: a) Education—the right of education without distinction as to ethnic origin, sex, religion or posterity; right for public and private initiatives to found educational institutions, to teach in Georgian language, to establish a mandatory public educational system consisting of free of charge public schools; b) Church—to restore the autocephaly of the Georgian Church and grant maximum freedom to all religions; c) Autonomy—the right to establish an autonomous government, set up the system of civil freedom, defend the rights of national minorities; to determine the borders of Georgian autonomy by elected deputies from all regions of the country; to establish the Georgian Parliament as the official head of state<sup>45</sup>.

Unfortunately, Chavchavadze did not witness Georgia's independence as he was killed in 1907. His assassination remains a controversial topic today. Based on recent archival discoveries, it was a joint operation by both wings of the Socialist Democratic Party—the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks, provoked by his condemnation of their violent terrorist ways, his socially conservative vision of Georgian nationalism, and his tremendous popularity among the public<sup>46</sup>.

Chavchavadze's successors continued his work and Georgia declared independence on May 26, 1918. The Act of Independence outlined the main principles of Georgia's future democracy. In accordance with it, "*the Democratic Republic of Georgia equally guarantees to every citizen within her limits political rights irrespective of nationality, creed, social rank or sex*". The first government formed on the same day was led by Noe Ramishvili. In October 1918, the National Council of Georgia was renamed as the Parliament of Georgia, which held new elections on February 14, 1919<sup>47</sup>.

During its two-year history (1919-1921), the newly elected Constituent Assembly of Georgia adopted 126 laws. Notably, the laws on citizenship, local elections, the country's defense, official language, agriculture, legal system, political and administrative arrangements for ethnic minorities, a national system of public education, and some other laws and regulations on fiscal/monetary policy, the Georgian railways, trade and domestic production, etc. On February 21, 1921, facing the onset of Soviet aggression, the Constituent Assembly adopted a constitution of the Democratic Republic of Georgia, the first fundamental law in the nation's history<sup>48</sup>.

Chairman of the Government was the chief executive post approved by the parliament for one-year term of office (the post could not be held more than two times running). The Chairman assigned ministers, was responsible for governing the country and represented Georgia in foreign relations. The Government of the Democratic Republic of Georgia in Exile continued to be recognized by Europe as the only legal government of Georgia for some time. The 1919 Government of Georgia adopted law on jury trials. The right to jury trials was later incorporated into Constitution of Democratic Republic of Georgia of 1921<sup>49</sup>. However, on 25 February 1921 the Red Army occupied Tbilisi, independence was lost and the Soviet government took power.

## Conclusion

*"In our opinion, neither the unity of language, nor the unity of religion and kinship can fuse the people with each other as the unity of history"*—proclaimed the founder of Georgian nationalism.<sup>50</sup> It was precisely this secular nationalism that was decisive in the development of Georgian culture in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Without it cultural integration of the linguistically and religiously diverse population of Georgia would have been far more difficult, if not impossible.

Although Ilia Chavchavadze was canonized by the Georgian Church, as we have seen religion was not part of his project. There were several reasons

why the religious factor was not important in the development of nationalism in the nineteenth century. The Georgian Orthodox Church had been in decline since the 17th century and the nationalist mobilization of Georgians within the Russian Empire concentrated on other institutions and issues, such as dynastic and territorial ones. It is also significant that Orthodox Christianity was a factor through which occupied Georgia was brought closer to the occupying Russian Empire. It was the relative weakness of the institution and the nature of the confession which gave the Russian Empire the possibility of to abolish the autocephaly of the Georgian Orthodox Church without too many problems. In many places Russian became the language of liturgy, which increased the distance between the Georgian population and the Church.<sup>51</sup>

---

### **Notes:**

1. Tevzadze, Gigi. "Secularization and the Birth of a Nation". *Identity Studies*, Ilia State University. Vol. 2, 2010, p. 8.
2. Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983) Verso.
3. Gellner, Ernest, *Nations and Nationalism* (1983) Cornell University Press.
4. Lebanidze M. "Ilia Chavchavadze, Works". *Internal Review*, March 1881, 828
5. Hobsbawm, Eric. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (1991) Cambridge University Press.
6. Tsitsitshvili G. *Ilia Chavchavadze Works*. Vol. I. Tbilisi: Soviet Georgia, 1987.
7. Gellner, Ernest, *Nations and Nationalism* (1983) Cornell University Press.
8. Ibid. 77-78.
9. Sharadze, Guram. "Ilia Chavchavadze — Life, Activity, Works". *Khelovneba [Art]*, Tbilisi, 1990. Vol. 1, 83
10. Ibid. 87
11. Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983) Verso, 24.
12. Ibid. 35.
13. Jones, Stephen F . *Socialism in Georgian Colors: The European Road to Social Democracy, 1883-1917* (2005) Harvard University Press

14. Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (1983) Verso, 44.
15. Ibid.
16. Hroch, M. *From National Movement to the Fully-formed Nation: The Nation-Building Process in Europe*. (1996) Verso.
17. Ibid.
18. Renan E. *What is a Nation?* 1882 lecture at the Sorbonne.
19. Sharadze, Guram. “Ilia Chavchavadze— Life, Activity, Works”. *Khelovneba* [Art], Tbilisi, 1990, vol. 1, 191, see also *Kvali* 1897, #46.
20. Hobsbawm, Eric. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (1991) Cambridge University Press, 54-61.
21. Ibid.
22. Chavchavadze cited in Sharadze, Guram. “Ilia Chavchavadze— Life, Activity, Works”. *Khelovneba* [Art], Tbilisi, 1990, vol. 2, 58.
23. Jones, Stephen F . *Socialism in Georgian Colors: The European Road to Social Democracy, 1883-1917* (2005) Harvard University Press, 37.
24. Chavchavadze, Ilia. *Internal Review*. (April, 1879).
25. Hobsbawm, Eric. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (1991) Cambridge University Press, 92.
26. Hroch, M. *From National Movement to the Fully-formed Nation: The Nation-Building Process in Europe*. (1996) Verso.
27. Sharadze, Guram. “Ilia Chavchavadze— Life, Activity, Works”. *Khelovneba* [Art], Tbilisi, 1990, 133.
28. Newspaper Iveria 1886, # 159
29. Durkheim, Emile. *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. (1912) London: Allen & Unwin.
30. Gellner, Ernest, *Nations and Nationalism* (1983) Cornell University Press, 72.
31. Newspaper *Kvali* 1897, # 46.
32. Sharadze, Guram. “Ilia Chavchavadze— Life, Activity, Works”. *Khelovneba* [Art], Tbilisi, 1990, vol. 2, 87.
33. Ibid. 92.
34. Cited in Sharadze, Guram. *Ilia Chavchavadze Works*. Trans. Marjory and Oliver Wardrops. Tbilisi: Ganatleba, 1987, 56.
35. Hobsbawm, Eric. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (1991) Cambridge University Press.
36. Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger. *The Invention of Tradition*, (2003) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 77.
37. Berdzenishvili, N. Dondua, V. Dumbadze, M. Meliqishvili, G. Meskhia, Sh. Ratiani, P. *History of Georgia*. (1958) Vol. I. Tbilisi, 521.

38. Newspaper *Iveria* 1877, # 9.
39. Sharadze, Guram. "Ilia Chavchavadze — Life, Activity, Works". *Khelovneba* [Art], Tbilisi, 1990, vol. 2, 289.
40. Chavchavadze, Ilia. *Internal Review*, April, 1879.
41. Sharadze, Guram. "Ilia Chavchavadze — Life, Activity, Works". *Khelovneba* [Art], Tbilisi, 1990, vol. 2, 292.
42. Gellner, Ernest, *Nations and Nationalism* (1983) Cornell University Press.
43. Sharadze, Guram. "Ilia Chavchavadze — Life, Activity, Works". *Khelovneba* [Art], Tbilisi, 1990, vol. 2, 303.
44. Newspaper *Iveria* 1905, # 42.
45. Sharadze, Guram. "Ilia Chavchavadze — Life, Activity, Works". *Khelovneba* [Art], Tbilisi, 1990, vol. 2, 270.
46. Ibid. 281
47. Berdzenishvili, N. Dondua, V. Dumbadze, M. Meliqishvili, G. Meskhia, Sh. Ratiani, P. *History of Georgia*. (1958) Vol. I. Tbilisi, 703.
48. Ibid. 705.
49. Ibid. 708.
50. Ilia Chavchavadze, 1877, cited in Sharadze, Guram. "Ilia Chavchavadze — Life, Activity, Works". *Khelovneba* [Art], Tbilisi, 1990, vol. 2, 298.
51. Zedania, Giga. "The rise of religious nationalism in Georgia". *Identity Studies*, Ilia State University, Vol. 3, 2012, 125.