

Anti-Modern and Anti-Globalist Tendencies in the Georgian Orthodox Church

“A closed society, unlike an open society, is a condition of the public that voluntarily tries to detach and isolate itself from the outside world. The outside world does not exist, and if it does, it is inhabited by hostile forces from which constant protection is required. This type of society deeply opposes all forms of novelty capable of introducing certain changes”¹

Georgia was part of the Soviet Union for 70 years and managed to revive its independence only in 1991. The independent status turned out to be a challenge for the country, which faced both external threats and internal civil turmoil. Restoration of independence was decisive in the formation of Georgian identity, the transformation of which was determined by numerous other factors. Strive for isolation, so endemic to Soviet propaganda, persisted in Georgian society even after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The only institute that retained its stability in the 1990’s was the Georgian Orthodox Church. The Orthodox Church replaced Soviet ideology, becoming increasingly authoritarian and successfully preserving a closed society. Open borders and free flow of information had a twofold impact. On the one hand, people started to live in a global world: they use internet, buy clothes of international brands, and travel to different countries. On the other hand, fear of the outside world has intensified, which according to this research, is an outcome of the closed politics advocated by the Orthodox Church. As a result, there is a conflict between people’s desire for isolation and their lifestyle, which can no longer sustain its “out of context” nature in global context.

The first stage of this research is press analysis, divided into three periods: 1989-1991, 1999, and 2008-2011. Studying three different periods allowed us to observe the dynamics of basic indicators. In-depth interviews with clergy and politicians helped to determine the dispositions of our interest groups. Questions related to isolation were aimed at outlining public threats during different periods and actors who could have benefitted from manipulating these threats.

Years 1989-1991

First, we analyzed press releases from 1989 to 1991. First decade after the declaration of independence and dissolution of the Soviet Union marks the collapse of social, political and economic institutions and subsequent social hardships in Georgia. This period was preceded by a long phase of stagnation in the Soviet Union, which generated major transformations with no gradual transition. Every social institution and state apparatus was affected in the process. Erroneous emphasis on ethno-national identity in a country with 30% ethnic minorities produced almost fatal problems for independent Georgia.

By 1991, the newly-elected president and the majority of the government's legislative organ advocated a practically dictatorial national ideology. The president of Georgia, who was popular among the population thanks to his ethno-national rhetoric, was soon subjected to criticism both by his opponents and supporters. Georgia turned into a hotspot for an armed confrontation between the newly emerged armed forces from Tbilisi and other regions, Ossetian and Abkhazian separatist armies, and Russian military forces fighting against Zviad Gamsakhurdia and in favor of the separatists.

Zviad Gamsakhurdia was a prominent advocate of closed foreign politics and isolation from the outside world. Press analysis from the period reveals the appropriation of Orthodox ideology by Zviad Gamsakhurdia's government, and intensions of proclaiming Orthodox Christianity as the state religion. The president's speeches were imbued with references to Georgia's spiritual mission, linking nationality with faith: *"today's movement [the Georgian National-Independence Movement (author's note)] is a national-religious movement since it does not only strive to achieve national-political goals, but also aims at the revival of Georgian faith and consciousness"*². However, Gamsakhurdia simultaneously dissociated himself from the Church, which in his words was filled with KGB agents. On account of Gamsakhurdia's popularity, the Church was not the main actor during this period and the Patriarch's authority was fairly weak. One can rarely find articles on religious topics.

Year 1999

Eduard Shevardnadze, an opponent of Zviad Gamsakhurdia and an invited leader of the opposition movement, was elected as the president of Georgia in 1995; during the Soviet Union he was also a minister of foreign affairs. Throughout the following years Shevardnadze managed to stabilize political situation in the country. However, he did not implement any effec-

tive reforms and the level of corruption drastically increased. During this period the Church and state acted in accord, and the Concordat was signed³. We chose 1999 as the second period of interest since it is when the Georgian Orthodox Church gained its popularity. It advocated religious nationalism and merged the notion of being Georgian with being an Orthodox Christian. Increased recognition of the Georgian Orthodox Church coincided with an ineffective government. The Church's anti-Western was in harmony with the state's foreign policy oriented towards Russia. The belief that "the Orthodox Christian world is under threat" was already widespread⁴. This idea can be ascribed to Zbignev Brzezinski who argued that Orthodox Christianity is the prime enemy of global integration (from "Kviris Palitra")⁵. Modern and global values generally represent a threat because they disconnect humans from Christian teachings⁶, directly oppose Orthodox Christianity⁷ and welcome the devil⁸, who is insidious and cautious: "the Satan, veiled as kindness, will quietly slither into our bosom like a snake. For example, democracy is a benevolent veil"⁹. The devil impacts human thought through different 'zombifying' methods, including modern and foreign product advertising, such as "Coca-Cola" or "Sprite", as well as the "unbearable noise on the streets, at work, marketplace; endless, simple-plotted TV-shows; giddy, infinite information flow. Power shortages, social issues, fear of tomorrow, etc. These "natural" sources of zombification involuntarily become the reason of our stupidity and deception, which becomes a tendency or sometimes a lifestyle, provoking tragedy"¹⁰.

When analyzing 1999 press releases we came across two important incidents that caused an uproar in the Orthodox Church, and can be viewed as a clear sign of isolationism.

1. Protests against the exhibition of Georgian icons abroad (USA)¹¹

April issue of the newspaper "Kviris Palitra" informed that *"the Georgian Patriarch expressed his indignation against the exhibition of religiously important Georgian ecclesiastic artwork abroad"* since they bear not only historical importance, but also belong to the Georgian Orthodox Church and should not be kept in a museum¹². In the same issue, two students showed complained in the name of all Georgian students: *"this means stripping Georgia of its history and culture, and is aimed at obliterating our past in favor of the countries that want to establish a new world order"*¹³. They urged the public to support student demonstrations in order to *"protect Georgia's national treasure preserved by our ancestors from foreign invasions until the 20th century"*¹⁴.

The discussion continues in the next issues and each article opposes the exhibition. One article depicts negative disposition of the clergy, and cites a

priest from the Patriarchate's conference: "when transporting icons from the country, the clemency associated with them also disappears"¹⁵.

In May, "His Holiness and Beatitude Ilia II informed the President of Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze that he deems it inappropriate to exhibit Georgian national treasure and relics abroad"¹⁶. These words allowed journalists to assume that supporters of the exhibition in the USA were promised certain "benefits"¹⁷. In an interview given to "Nezavisemaja Gazeta", Ilia II once again confirmed his position: "in this crucial moment (in history), Georgia cannot and does not want to even temporarily part with its treasures... The invaluable icons and other relics should not leave the country"¹⁸.

2. The Pope's Visit in Georgia¹⁹

The Pope's visit in Georgia provoked an even sharper reaction. "The Catholicos-Patriarch of Georgia delicately hinted that the Pope's visit in Georgia is equivalent to an ordinary politician's visit and will not be respected in any manner!"²⁰

It is emphasized that the Pope was first invited by President Eduard Shevardnadze, and only after that—by Patriarch Ilia II²¹. The Pope is accused of having ecumenist ideas; it is also noted that "the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church is also refraining from inviting the Pope to their country. In addition, the Synod is weary that the Pope will request a transfer of presently Orthodox (previously Catholic) churches to Catholics"²². The same article talks about the disapproval of Georgian priesthood and the Patriarchate's advice to the Georgian public: "if we considered ourselves Orthodox Christian, we would not attend a Catholic liturgy since our religious law prohibits praying at the gatherings of other religious faiths. This action was and remains subject to ecclesiastic punishment"²³.

"Kviris Palitra" has a rubric, "Write Us", where readers can address the editors. When asked whether one can attend a joint liturgy for the sake of interest, a representative of clergy answered in an interview: "going there and attending, even for the sake of interest, is perceived as the approval of dogmatic and moral faults endorsed by the Catholic Church. So, for an Orthodox Christian it is a sin"²⁴. The rubric is followed by another article, where a journalist notes that "in the wake of the Pope's visit, the Patriarchate categorically demanded that a Catholic mess is not held at Rike". The article also tells us about the fears of a "certain number of clergy" that "despite the Patriarchate's announcement that no combined religious arrangements should be made, things could not go as planned and the Pope could attempt to go to Svetitskhoveli's altar. ... They also fear that the Pope's visit is based on a preconceived plan designed by the Catholic Church to proselytize—gain followers..."²⁵ The author of the article, alluding to the Patri-

archate's press-center, notes that not admitting the Pope, not welcoming him with joy or making certain demands is not unprecedented around the world (he cites examples from Russia, Iraq and India). On the other hand, he suggests that the Pope's visit in Georgia does not signify a pro-Western path for Georgia, and the refusal to organize a liturgy on Rike is not an expression of a pro-Russian orientation— "*Georgia defended Orthodox Christianity even when Russia did not yet exist*"²⁶. The journalist concludes the article in the following manner: "*representatives of the Patriarchate's press-center advised that we do not get 'baptized' or receive the Eucharist at a Catholic liturgy since according to Orthodox Christian law, praying, confessing, or receiving the Eucharist with the followers of other religions is prohibited*"²⁷.

The next issue explains why the Pope is a dangerous political force: he guides the efforts to create one religion, a union which the Orthodox Church "*that has never deviated from the true path, greatly condemns*"²⁸. Moreover, the author of the article refutes the Patriarch's responsibility for inviting the Pope: "*the president's official invitation was soon followed the Patriarch's invitation, which was determined by numerous requests from the Vatican... The situation was aggravated by the involvement of political circles, diplomatic missions or international organizations... After all, it is not hard to imagine the pressure exercised on the Patriarch since his invitation became decisive in making the visit possible*"²⁹. When the visit was over, "Kviris Palitra" published a long article validating all suspicions³⁰. According to the article, the world press emphasized that the Pope's expectations to bring the Orthodox and Catholic Churches together failed and Ilia II did not attend the liturgy due to the political nature of the visit. Newspaper "Mondi" noted that "*these events clearly reveal a crisis in the Orthodox Church. The Pope's visit stirred up nationalistic and fundamentalist segments of the priesthood that categorically oppose any closeness between the Orthodox and Catholic Churches*"³¹. Georgians who were not pleased with the poor reception of the Pope's are criticized for "*preaching future bliss for Georgia through the Pope's visit*". These are the same people who advocated "*long travels of Georgian national treasure abroad, removal of ethnicity markers in passports, merging of religions and churches and other similar abominations*"³². The author of the article, Doctor of Philology, argues that "*for the last two millennia national and religious awareness were firmly joined together in Georgian consciousness, while loyalty to Orthodox Christianity today is deemed as backward and dark*"³³.

Years 2008–2011

The third research period, between 2008 and 2011, is the most contemporary period and covers Mikheil Saakashvili's presidency. Ineffective administration and corruption of the government raised doubts about the 2003 parliamentary elections, also stained by parallel vote tabulation. The parallel vote tabulation results were considerably different from the official outcomes of the election, and according to OSCE observers, elections did not conform to international standards. The elections were followed by demonstrations christened as the "Rose Revolution", which ended with Eduard Shevardnadze's resignation. In 2004 new presidential elections were held and Saakashvili became the president with 96% of the vote³⁴.

The new government started implementing civic nationalist ideology, prioritized unification of the country and integration with NATO and EU. It successfully managed to stabilize certain social issues, but public discontent started to gradually rise. The main anti-government argument was violation of human dignity and anti-national disposition. The idea that Saakashvili's government aimed at destroying national traditions was inculcated exactly during this period. The conviction slowly found resonance in media.

In 2008 "Asaval-Dasavali" argued that the Rose Revolution and subsequent liberal reforms were initiated and manipulated by globalists³⁵. The article noted that, for globalists, the Georgian Orthodox Church was the primary obstacle in the country under the patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This substantiated the wicked intentions of globalists and their hostility towards the Georgian Orthodox Church. The author also revealed certain "pioneers of the liberal storm", including John Tefft, United States ambassador to Georgia at the time. "The Georgian Times" wrote that since masons aspired to govern the whole world, we need to change our lifestyle and become more god-fearing in order to deserve His support in warfare³⁶.

Globalization as a Threat

Both press analysis and interviews with clergy reveal that the Georgian Orthodox Church perceives Westernization, globalization, and integration with NATO and EU, as forced and artificially created processes that endanger nationality, faith, traditions and culture. These processes are guided by masons who want to become rulers of the world³⁷. According to a widespread opinion, masonry is a "*secret international-cosmopolitan organization, aimed at*

*establishing one world-wide country through a global revolution. It strives to unite all religions into one uber-religion and fights against the Orthodox Church and nation-states*³⁸. Religious figures often tell mythical stories about masons: *“on the internet one can find sixty billionaire Jews saying: we are members and leaders of a Masonic organization, we will do whatever we want in the world and however we want it. There should be three billion people in the world—one billion will consist of us and our relatives, second billion—of those who will serve and feed us, and the third billion will be those who will serve our servants”* (archpriest, Khobi and Poti eparchy). In 2008 it was proclaimed that any steps taken towards European integration and ecumenization are a deviation from Christ’s path and accordingly, a foreign investment sustaining the Antichrist agenda (performed with governmental funds acquired through selling Georgian land)³⁹.

According to some clergy, we can escape the dangers of globalization only by learning the difference between good and bad (which also implies being “god-fearing”): *“it’s inevitable, it will happen. Whether you want it or not, it will happen, and smaller nations face the threat of being washed away by pseudo culture. We are saying this to warn our youth to be god-fearing, diligent, assiduous, morally firm, loving, to be able to distinguish between culture and pseudo culture, good and bad. If our small nation will differentiate between these, then globalization is not a threat to us. On the contrary, we can contribute to the world with kindness and positivity. On the other hand, if we are not strong, we’ll get lost. A lot depends on us: what we are now and what we will be in the future”* (Archpriest, Batumi and Lazeti Eparchy, Batumi). Some see absolute control by the Church as the only solution: *“it’s unfortunate that you can’t exist within closed borders today. You are forced to... However, these relationships need to be controlled, the government should show its goodwill and transfer control to the Church so that we don’t overreact or underreact. The Church needs to be the primary catalyst”* (Archpriest, Creator’s Eparchy, Guria).

The conviction that globalization is a threat was also revealed when discussing Georgian identity: *“someone said: I am a Georgian and thus, I am a European. You either have to be a Georgian or a European. Do you remember these words? Zhvania voiced them in Strasburg. What does being a Georgian have to do with being a European? I am a Georgian and will always remain a Georgian, if you don’t protect yourself and your identity, then you won’t be anything, right? Sulkhan-Saba went through a similar stage. Even today many people think so, if you don’t save yourself, no one will save you. We are saying that we need to be united politically, create one system and be no worse than them. The Patriarch also emphasized this point—he said that globalization is good, and we need to keep up with life, but we should not imitate the bad, we need to copy the good”* (Archpriest, Poti and Khobi Eparchy, Khobi).

Attitude towards the West

Since Georgian population perceives globalization as dispersion of Western values, the Georgian Orthodox Church openly declares its anti-Western position. The media spreads the word that *“the West demagogically abuses freedom, equality and justice, sacrificing the true meaning of these notions”*⁴⁰. Western materialistic well-being is based on violence and hypocrisy⁴¹. Educational literature is introduced to Georgia from the West, as well as humanitarian assistance that provides physical and not spiritual salvation⁴². Generally, the West is perceived as a soulless space oriented towards physical salvation. This was reiterated by the Patriarch Ilia II on December 26, 2004 during a Sunday sermon: *“according to statistical data, developed countries have highest rates of suicide. Rich people often end their own lives because they don't own anything except their wealth and their soul is empty; they don't have faith, hope and love”*⁴³.

Reponses from the priesthood also suggest that globalization and Western values have a weakening effect on the Church: *“our minister from France, Salome Zurabishvili visited us in Mtskheta and I asked her—she is a Catholic—whether she goes to church. She said that she remembered going to a Catholic church with her parents as a child. This was when she was 5, 6, 7 years old. By the way, she also said that her family fasted. When they grew up, they stopped going to church on a regular basis because no one took them there, and now, she said, that those Catholic churches are closed. The churches open once per year, during their major Saint's name day. This is precisely materialism changing a human, and one should not submit to materialism, soul should remain on the first place. God says to search for his kingdom and his truth, and it will be given”* (Archpriest, Poti and Khobi Eparchy, Khobi).

An archpriest interviewed in Tsalenjikha believes that education of clergy is also an important factor when discussing the threats from the West: *“the problem is that today many church figures are actively educated in the West, whether secretly or openly—and then these individuals, who practically have modern thinking... This modernism is moving towards Protestantism. So, in these circumstances, positive changes are impossible. As a rule, other forces take advantage of these changes. I would definitely not be happy if Kobakhidze's mindset dominated Georgia, well, he is not radically against religion, but anyway...”*

One can find historical rationalization for the fallacious character of the West: it all started in 1059 when Western church broke off from the Orthodox Christian domain⁴⁴, eternal values started depreciating, giving way to transient values. Dissociation of churches resulted in the formation of secret orders and societies, such as Masons and Zionists who fight against the Or-

thodox Church and nation-states⁴⁵. These societies preside over the world today because they are connected to large international organizations, such as “*the UN, the NATO, the Vatican, USA and special services of other countries*”⁴⁶.

In the media, Western and Eastern values are being compared and contrasted—the former is deemed as transient, and the latter as eternal: “*Western civilization is attempting to establish the kingdom of God on earth via this-worldly means. The West fetishized humans and made them infallible, while the East still depends on God*”⁴⁷. Religious individualism, as a European quality, is also negatively evaluated⁴⁸. Western values include “*entertainment, which often turns into immorality and debauchery. Debauchery has a false lure, it is easy but ruinous. They’ve turned mass depravity into a syndrome that is hard to stop. Everything is easy and simplified. Instead of our dogmatic Orthodox teachings, we get simplified and adverse teachings of different sects...*”⁴⁹ Consequently, the West cannot distinguish between good and bad, transient and eternal, it threatens to merge all religions, nations and cultures⁵⁰. It is not surprising that in 2010 the Patriarch did not approve of Georgian students studying abroad⁵¹. Certain members of priesthood also link the West and its values with the end of time: “*war, look what’s happening—depravity, human degradation, when so many young believers... are drug-addicts—this is a fact, it’s a reality. His Holiness often says that media and television drive us towards that (apocalypse)... Many religious sects exist—from America, Germany. We don’t constrain anyone, but I will directly say that all exists to spoil people... We are Eurasia, but we are not Europeans. Some are this, some are that. You know what? Georgia should not be learning from others because Georgia is a big culture. Yes, we can learn something—we are all humans and it’s natural—but what I consider a veto today hasn’t changed for centuries, and when America has existed only for a few centuries, it cannot teach you [...]. America is not a nation; it is a mixture of different ethnicities*” (Archpriest, Mtskheta and Tbilisi Eparchy).

Development of Technology and Science

“You can cut bread with a knife and you can kill a human with it”⁵²

Development of technology and science is also viewed as a threat that can mislead an Orthodox Christian. Ilia II notes in an interview that worldwide nihilism and indifference “*was aggravated by accelerated development of science and technology. Spiritual progress of society is seriously falling behind the technological progress*”⁵³. Each interviewed member of the priesthood mentioned that a lot depends on how technology is used; however, science without faith is utterly unacceptable and can be disastrous for humans. An article

in “Kviris Palitra” states that “*scientists have been developing a remote working tool that can affect human psyche*”⁵⁴. The article notes that human consciousness and thoughts are manipulated by technology, and tries to prove that with the help of technical jargon. For instance — “*waves of 7 Hertz frequency cause fear. If the pressure intensifies and continues, it can turn into psychosis, and the individual will not be able to understand what’s happening*”⁵⁵. Criticism is primarily waged against television, but also video and audio tapes, as well as the so-called “torsional generators” produced in the 80’s, which “*are used even today for criminal reasons. It’s not unlikely for religious sects to use them too*”⁵⁶. The author concludes that “*knowledge is power, but in today’s crazy world, — it’s a destructive power, which humans experience more and more intensely every day*”⁵⁷. Other articles analyze the harms caused by internet, computers and computer games⁵⁸; all of them have a common idea: “*when sitting in front of a computer, one’s perception becomes detached from reality and enters an artificial world. In this state it is possible to encode the player... to perform all sorts of actions. You can force them to kill a relative or hate their parents, children, because this information is in transmitted to the absolutely vulnerable subconscious mind. ... It does not need to be said that computer technology is a horrible and potent weapon that threatens civilization*”⁵⁹.

Fear of the Apocalypse as a Social Control Mechanism

An increasing number of clergy preach about the approaching cataclysmic apocalypse. A dominant opinion in the media and among the priesthood is that Westernization, globalization, modernization and associated modern processes represent the evil side in the transcendental-religious battle. Eschatological signs are identified in global political system and contemporary Western political ideology: “*the West uses all means to achieve its goals because it has both power and an insidiously elaborate policy. These are the markers of apostasy. Integration for subsequent universalization very much resembles cancer, with its metastasis spreading to the whole world. There is a hidden allegory here because cancer first kills the body and then dies itself*”⁶⁰. Also, liberal economy and global electronic banking system are perceived as mythical indications of the imminent Day of Judgment. Alarm in regard to this topic was most prominent in 1991; however, even in 2011 Georgian society protested against biometric passports based on the fear that the chips are harmful for humans⁶¹.

It is interesting that towards the end of the same year, the clergy changed its position on the topic. Even though the issue was not discussed in the Patriarchate and no official statute existed, the majority of clergy did not

hesitate to express their opinion. Greater part of them agreed that biometric passports are a human control mechanism that can lead us to the apocalypse, even in the absence of “satanic signs”. Lack of an official statement from the Patriarchate made it easier for the clergy to express their personal opinions: *“when the whole Church responds, then every preacher is responsible to conform to the voice of the Mother Church and the verdict of the Holy Synod; and no priest will be able to object. Until the question remains open, so to say—is not subject of discussion, and has not been weighed up by the Synod, every Orthodox priest has the right to express his opinion. Some can say that it’s dangerous and should not be accepted, and others can say that they don’t see it as dangerous. I am of the same opinion, I don’t find it the least threatening because it’s not a stamp. If we operate based on the principle that my fingerprints are on my passport, and all other personal information is there, my personal number is there; and I know my personal number by hard, because if I lose it I can tell them the number any time and they can renew it, or if there is a problem and I need it, I can tell them my personal number and they’ll have my personal information—my personal information is there anyway”* (Priest, Alaverdi Eparchy, Telavi). One member of the priesthood believes that the fuss about the Final Judgment overshadows other, more important issues: *“today there are a lot of discussions about the Final Days and, in my opinion, this is an attempt to run away from personal responsibilities towards God. God always emphasizes personal matters and when we start discussing the Last Days—we call these people apocalyptic—they always talk about salvation, chips, this and that... But it’s not mentioned that we are already overwhelmed by our personal sins.”* (Archpriest, Zugdidi and Tsaishi Eparchy, Tsalenjikha). An archpriest interviewed in Tbilisi noted that he does not find the ID cards dangerous, but the government could offer another alternative for those who are unsatisfied: *“I think this is not a religious problem. Whether a person has a passport, an ID card, or an ordinary card, does not make a difference for his religious life. I would be long lost if my Christianity depended on some card. But because there is a certain category of humans whose religious feelings are offended, the state could take that into account and have their personal information on other types of documents. Credit card separately, driver’s license—separately”* (Archpriest, Mtskheta-Tbilisi Eparchy, Tbilisi).

After our field work, the Holy Synod held a convention on December 20, 2011, where Father Job, appointed as the head of a ‘Commission on New ID Cards’, addressed the government: *“administrative enforcement of electronic documents (ID cards, biometric passports, any plastic cards for banking, different services and transportation) should be terminated and alternative documents of all sorts need to be developed. Payment in currency should continue everywhere in the country. All these processes, whether the introduction of new cards or complete re-*

placement of currency with plastic cards, are aimed at establishing electronic control through administrative enforcement, which once again infringes upon humans' worth, personal freedom, religious honesty and the supreme image of God. Examples from other countries also need to be considered, especially the demands of Orthodox churches in Ukraine and Moldova to introduce alternative documents without chips or identification numbers, because that is not in their countries' interests and because such numbering is a major means of electronic control. The mentioned countries answered the demands of Orthodox churches and allowed alternative documentation. We also agree that an identification number is a code and main lever of electronic control, and since similar demands are also advanced in Georgia, certain citizens should also be granted the option and be allowed to exist without identification numbers. Documents are vital for subsistence. The above-mentioned documents should strictly eliminate number 666—openly or secretly, disguised or undisguised”⁶².

Russia—An Enemy or a Monotheistic Ally?

It should be noted that Russia is never associated with “the West”. It is discussed separately, even independently from the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union might be negatively appraised (only when such evaluation becomes necessary), but Russia, as an Orthodox country, is addressed with respect and esteem. For example, an openly anti-Western and pro-Russian politician, Vakhtang Gogvadze, links the Western agenda to Lenin (an evil and anti-religious individual) and notes that Russia emerged strong and undefeated from Lenin’s grip: “instead of advancing the interests of Western satanic forces via revolution in Orthodox Russia (it’s not a surprise that the West supported the revolution, and specifically Lenin), it happened the other way around”⁶³.

Russia à priori cannot be part of the West because, as the author of the article argues, it is one of the enemies of the Western globalist plan: “Allen Dulles’ (founder of Central Intelligence Agency) program directly stated: we need to do everything to stupefy these people. We need to confuse them, so that they cannot distinguish good from bad. In order to do that, we need to eradicate their nationality, national spirit, corrupt their youth, make them hate each other, and especially Russian people”⁶⁴.

Loyalty towards Russia in the religious-nationalist program did not change even after the war of August, 2008. According to the pre-war outlook, Russia could not be bad or an enemy of Georgia, it even carried “a special burden” from Mother Mary⁶⁵. An article published in September, 2008 in-

cludes an appeal to the president: “*your main sin against our nation and God is turning Orthodox Georgia into a battleground for anti-Orthodox forces fighting against the most powerful country of the Orthodox world—Russia*”⁶⁶; the author also urges the president to repent. The best-selling newspapers from the period claim that Georgian pro-Western government is responsible for the war, while Russia is a supreme judge, a power that balances out the West. Western globalist culture is consistent with Masonic scenario, and its only unbeatable enemy is Orthodox Christianity⁶⁷.

On a Sunday sermon of December 12, 2010 the Georgian Patriarch criticized the West, alluding to Dostoevsky (a Russian writer from the Orthodox Christian world): “*Iliia II also spoke about human understanding of beauty. Dostoevsky said that beauty will save humanity. He meant the supreme beauty—God, —commanded His Holiness. According to the Patriarch, it’s almost impossible to find a woman wearing a dress in Europe—everyone is wearing pants*”⁶⁸.

Interviews with the clergy demonstrated their loyalty, rather than critical approach, to Russia. This attitude can be explained by the Orthodox majority in both Georgia and Russia: “*there is a prophecy that several countries will be enlightened, including Russia, by the way, —some Russian monasteries will be excluded (the Antichrist). There will be a battle in Georgia, the Antichrist will start advancing towards Georgia, but will injure his leg and Virgin Mary will not let him in*”⁶⁹. Some view Russian in a more political light: “*what they are offering us today is two paths—Russia and Europe. I find that strange. How can Russia... look, this is our choice: you will go this way and you will die, and you will go that day and still die. How can Russia or Europe be the goal? None of them is the goal. We are experiencing a shortage of ideas and as a priest I am saying that a nation should have a spiritual goal*” (Respondent #1, Mtskheta-Tbilisi Eparchy).

Conclusion

One of the strongest institutions determining social values in Georgia today,—the Orthodox Church, has an anti-modern orientation and is openly antagonistic towards the West and globalization processes—it perceives globalization and intercultural exchange as a genuine threat. In this regard, Sabrina Ramet’s words perfectly fit the Georgian Orthodox Church: “*the EU Constitutional Plan (published in 2003) expresses the belief that educational values are universal, and institutions and legislation that work for the standardization of these values, come close to the transcendent truth to some extent. But from Orthodox Christian perspective, pressure from the EU on Orthodox Chris-*

*tian countries to compromise certain issues that are deemed as part of the Church's doctrine—in order to harmonize the countries' legislation with the seemingly universal standards of the EU,—turned the natural order upside down. From the Orthodox standpoint, the EU needs to modify its standards based on the model of the Orthodox Church!*⁷⁰

With this attitude, the Orthodox Church precipitates isolation and thwarts the development of an open society. Subsequently, its propaganda is oriented towards closed politics: it accentuates (Georgian) Orthodox practicality and diminishes the motivation to communicate with representatives of other religions. The Church offers a formula, based on which, being a Georgian is directly linked with Orthodox Christianity—the Christianity that nourished the great Georgian kings and saints, and preserved the country, which was surrounded by idolatrous enemies lurking in the vicinity. Association of identity with obscure past illuminates the Church's self-image as a representative of pre-modern world and a warden of past values. In addition to all that, the Georgian Orthodox Church is not only anti-Western, it is also pro-Russian. Natural development of the Church and Georgian society came to an end in 1811, when the Russian Imperial Family unlawfully abolished the autocephaly of the Georgian Church, eradicated Patriarchal leadership and subordinated the Church to the Russian Synod with the status of exarchy⁷¹. Although the Georgian Church revived its autocephaly in 1917 and re-introduced Patriarchal leadership, Russia's policy radically altered its path of development. After the policies implemented by Russia and years spent in a totalitarian system, it is not surprising that Georgia was not prepared for the country's independence when thousands of people turned to the Church to fill the ideological vacuum left behind by the Soviet government. The Church responded to this challenge by instilling an anti-liberal, xenophobic and often nationalist ideology in society. It is worth noting that the Russian Patriarchate continually influenced the Georgian Church. A good example of this tendency is the decision of the Georgian Catholicos-Patriarch to leave the World Council of Churches in 1997. The Georgian Patriarch's support of radical groups, such as the Orthodox Parents' Union, which actively fought against the introduction of Western values in Georgian society, is a good measure of the ideological climate within the Patriarchate.

Starting from the 1990's, the Georgian Orthodox Church was one of the institutions to unify Georgian society. However, its intolerant ideology against modernization, the West, sects and sexual minorities, continues to generate significant obstacles in the formation of civil society with liberal values. Around 15 years after the independence, with stronger state institutions and increased trust in the government, new civil rhetoric of politi-

cal elites emerged alongside with the traditional ethnic-nationalist rhetoric of the Church. Despite certain changes in legislation, monopolistic position of the Georgian Orthodox Church has been preserved, which would be unthinkable without governmental support.

During the interviewing process, personal opinions and thoughts of the clergy somewhat deviated from the Church's official stance. Their answers showed that they were not as intolerant and anti-Western as suggested by the Patriarchate. Overall, certain dissonance and lack of unanimity was evident within the Church: members of the priesthood from different cities or even different churches offered dissimilar positions regarding the same issues. The respondents' lack of independence was often obvious—as though they were not where they ought to be, meaning that they did not serve in an ideologically harmonious manner. We had an impression that if administrative or dogmatic reforms were to be introduced, they would be ready to welcome some changes.

One of the major roles of this research is its focus on the development of democracy and religious nationalism in South Caucasus, based on the Georgian case study. As the study has shown, on the one hand, there are certain Western values in Georgia and attempts to popularize them, especially from 2003 to 2011. This is evident from the relevance of such topics as human rights, minority rights, debates about different religious issues, etc. On the other hand, confrontation between the Orthodox Church and Western and democratic values is apparent, which facilitates an anti-Western outlook in society. The research clearly illustrated that if the Church prevents the formation of an open society, defies democratic values and hence, obstructs the development of civil society, then it assumes the role of a civil institution—a mediator between people and the state. As paradoxical as it may seem, it is from this stance that the Georgian Orthodox Church confronts Western values and the spread of democracy in Georgia.

Notes:

1. Giorgi Maisuradze, *Closed Society and its Guardians*, Bakur Sulakauri Publishing, (Tbilisi, 2011), p.120.
2. From the inauguration speech of President Zviad Gamsakhurdia (June 7, 1991) <http://besarion.wordpress.com>

3. In October, 2002 the President of Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze and the Georgian Patriarch Ilia II signed the so called Concordat, a constitutional agreement between the Georgian state and the Georgian Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church. This agreement granted a privileged status to the Georgian Orthodox Church and exempted it from taxes in order to compensate for the losses experienced during the Soviet persecution.
4. Davit Didebulidze, "Mother the Virgin Shelters Georgia", *Kviris Palitra*, #30 (223), July 26—August 1, 1999, 25.
5. Mamuka Giorgadze, "From Philosophy to Art...", *Kviris Palitra*, #20 (213), May 17-23, 1999, 12.
6. Nino Tarkashvili, "Reinforcement of Christian Faith—A Pre-condition for Solving Demographic Problems", *Kviris Palitra*, #20 (213), May 17-23, 1999, 12.
7. *Ibid.* Davit Didebulidze, 25;
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.* Mamuka Giorgadze, "From Philosophy to Art...", 7.
10. Piruz Purtseladze, "They could not Think for a Long Time, then Water Came and Washed them Away", *Kviris Palitra*, #50 (243), December 13-19, 1999, 6.
11. "The Patriarchate is Shocked", *Kviris Palitra*, #17 (209), April 26—May 2, 1999, 2.
Nino Tarkashvili, "Clemency of the Icons will be with Them", *Kviris Palitra*, #18 (210), May 3-9, 1999, 5.
"Treasure for Utilitarian Purposes...", *Kviris Palitra*, #19 (212), May 10-16, 1999, 2.
"God's Voice—Nation's Voice!...", *Kviris Palitra*, #19 (212), May 10-16, 1999, 2.
Nino Tarkashvili, "Treasure—Foremost!", *Kviris Palitra*, #19 (212), May 10-16, 1999, 5.
"Still about the Treasure", *Kviris Palitra*, #20 (213), May 17-23, 1999, 2.
Nino Tarkashvili, "Why not Transport the Treasure?", #21 (214), May 24-30, 1999, 8.
"The Demonstration Continues... With Physical Violence", #23 (216), June 7-13, 1999, 2.
Izo Rikadze, "An Injured Student 'Questioned' by 'Kviris Palitra' before the Police", #23 (216), June 7-13, 1999, 7.
Nino Tarkashvili, "Actions Speak Louder than Words", #24 (217), June 14-20, 1999, 10.
Ketevan Jakheli, „Вероятность продажи (!) экспонатов в другиестраны...“, #24 (217), June 14-20, 1999, 10.

- “Georgian Icons to America in Exchange for the Debt?”, *Kviris Palitra*, #27 (220), July 5-11, 1999, 2.
- Nino Tarkashvili, “Should we Transfer the Treasure?”, *Kviris Palitra*, #27 (220), July 5-11, 1999, 7.
- Manana Chirakadze, “We will Survive”, *Kviris Palitra*, #29 (222), July 19-25, 1999, 25.
- Ibid.*, Davit Didebulidze, 25.
- Nezavisemaja Gazeta*, “Morality should be Based on Faith”, *Kviris Palitra*, #31 (224), August 2-8, 1999, 8.
- Ibid.*, Nino Tarkashvili, 25. .
12. *Ibid.*, “The Patriarchate is Shocked” , 2..
 13. Tsotne Sivsivadze, Giga Chachanidze, “We Address you in these Hard Times for Georgia!”, *Kviris Palitra*, #17 (209), April 26- May 2, 1999, 12.
 14. Tsotne Sivsivadze, Giga Chachanidze, “We Address you in these Hard Times for Georgia!”, *Kviris Palitra*, #17 (209), April 26- May 2, 1999, 12
 15. *Ibid.*, Nino Tarkashvili, “Clemency of the Icons will be with Them”, 5.
 16. *Ibid.*, “God’s Voice— Nation’s Voice!..”, 2.
 17. *Ibid.*
 18. *Ibid.*, *Nezavisemaja Gazeta*, 8.
 19. *Ibid.*, Davit Didebulidze, 25.
- Nino Tarkashvili, “The Pope’s Visit is not a Joke”, #41 (234), October 11-17, 1999, 6.
- “Turmoil around the Pope’s Visit”, #42 (235), October 18-24, 1999, 2.
- “Better to Trust God than Trust a Human”, *Kviris Palitra*, #44 (2376), November 1-7, 1999, 8.
- Nino Tarkashvili, “We will not Betray You, Orthodox Christianity”, *Kviris Palitra*, #44 (2376), November 1-7, 1999, 8.
- Mamuka Giorgadze, “Important Factors behind the Pope’s Visit”, *Kviris Palitra*, #45 (2377), November 8-14, 1999, 6.
- Nino Tarkashvili, “Guest is a Blessing of God”, *Kviris Palitra*, #45 (2377), November 8-14, 1999, 6.
- Nino Tarkashvili, “After the Pope’s Visit, Orthodox Christians should no Longer be Afraid of Welcoming Him”, *Kviris Palitra*, #46 (2378), November 15-21, 1999, 6.
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- Manana Chirakadze, “Let us not be more Catholic than the Pope!”, *Kviris Palitra*, #47 (240), November 22-28, 1999, 8.

- Ibid., Mamuka Giorgadze, “Orthodox Christianity has Nothing to Compromise”, 8.
20. Davit Didebulidze, “Mother the Virgin Shelters Georgia”, *Kviris Palitra*, #30 (223), July 26—August 1, 1999, 25.
 21. Ibid., Nino Tarkashvili, “The Pope’s Visit is not a Joke”, 6.
 22. Ibid
 23. Ibid
 24. Ibid., “Better to Trust God than Trust a Human”, 8.
 25. Ibid., Nino Tarkashvili, “We will not Betray You, Orthodox Christianity”, 8.
 26. Nino Tarkashvili, “We will not Betray You, Orthodox Christianity”, *Kviris Palitra*, #44 (2376), November 1-7, 1999, 8.
 27. Ibid.
 28. Ibid., Mamuka Giorgadze, “Important Factors behind the Pope’s Visit”, 6.
 29. Ibid
 30. Ibid., Nino Tarkashvili, “After the Pope’s Visit, Orthodox Christians should no Longer be Afraid of Welcoming Him”, 6.
 31. Ibid., Zura Mchedlishvili, 6.
 32. Ibid., Manana Chirakadze, 8.
 33. Nino Tarkashvili, “We will not Betray You, Orthodox Christianity”, *Kviris Palitra*, #44 (2376), November 1-7, 1999, 8.
 34. Zedania, Giga. “The Rise of Religious Nationalism in Georgia”. *Identity Studies*, Ilia State University, Vol. 3, 2012, pp. 120-128.
 35. Ibid. Giorgi Gigauri, 24.
 36. Ibid. Zviad Nodia, 10.
 37. Paata Tsutskiridze, “Metastases Spreading all over the World”, *Kviris Palitra*, #5 (197), February 1-7, 1999, 23.
 38. Ibid.
 39. Ibid., Zviad Nodia, 10.
 40. Paata Tsutskiridze, “Metastases Spreading all over the World”, *Kviris Palitra*, #5 (197), February 1-7, 1999, 23.
 41. Ibid.
 42. Ibid., Davit Didebulidze, 25.
 43. Ibid. Sunday Sermon of His Holiness and Beatitude Ilia II.
 44. Paata Tsutskiridze, “Metastases Spreading all over the World”, *Kviris Palitra*, #5 (197), February 1-7, 1999, 23.
 45. Ibid.
 46. Ibid.
 47. Ibid., Paata Tsutskiridze, 23.
 48. Mamuka Giorgadze, “From Philosophy to Art...”, *Kviris Palitra*, #20 (213), May 17-23, 1999, 12

49. Ibid.
50. Ibid. Davit Didebulidze, 25.
51. The Patriarch: "We Need to Avoid Sending the Youth Abroad for Education", October 3, 2010, Civil Georgia <<http://civil.ge/geo/article.php?id=23206&search=>>, (Accessed 19.09.2012).
52. The most common answer of the clergy to the question—"what do you think about technology and science?" In their words, these words belong to Ilia II.
53. The Patriarch: "We Need to Avoid Sending the Youth Abroad for Education", October 3, 2010, Civil Georgia <<http://civil.ge/geo/article.php?id=23206&search=>>, (Accessed 19.09.2012).
54. Nino Lursmanashvili, "Everything is Going Wrong Because of Technology", Kviris Palitra, #18 (210), May 3-9, 1999, 6.
55. Ibid.
56. Ibid.
57. Ibid.
58. Tamaz Khabeishvili, "Do not Access a Web Page Called 'Eshma -666'", Kviris Palitra, #25 (218), June 21-27, 1999, 12.
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59. Ibid., Tainaia Vlast, #18, 23.
60. Paata Tsutskiridze, "Metastases Spreading all over the World", Kviris Palitra, #5 (197), February 1-7, 1999, 23.
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62. "Appeal to the Government by the Head of Commission on New ID Cards, Father Job", What is Going on in Iveria under the Patronage of Virgin Mary?! <<http://www.bolojamze.ge/komisija.htm>>, (Accessed 18.09.2012).
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64. Ibid.
65. Ibid. NLO, #26, 23.
66. Guram Muchaidze, "This is Your Last Chance! An Open Letter to Mikheil Saakashvili", Asaval-Dasavali, #35 (729), September 1-7, 2008, 34.
67. Ibid., Giorgi Gigauri, 24. Ibid
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- Ibid. Zviad Nodia, 10.
68. Ibid., "Blessed is the One who Reaches Paradise— Said the Patriarch".
- 69.
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71. History of the Georgian Orthodox Church, The Georgian Patriarchate <<http://www.patriarchate.ge/?action=istoria>> (Accessed 17.09.2012).