

Modernization and Secularization—Georgian Case Study

When discussing national identity and its association with certain religious institutions, we often avoid the topic of secularization. On its own terms, secularization is linked with modernization. In secularization debates both sides—its supporters and opposers—agree on one issue: modernity, as well as technological development, contributes to the circulation of ideas, whether secular or religious. As a result, link between modernity and secularization is incidental—any identity (including religious identity) is reinforced with modernization¹. However, this does not mean that secularization would be possible without modernization. On the contrary, modernization is not automatically followed by secularization, but it creates favorable conditions for its subsistence. Thus, in order to determine how to discuss secularization, it is crucial to verify the presence of its precondition—modernization. Besides, identifying whether a society is modern or traditional has wider significance: it allows to measure whether the society is open or closed.

Theoretical Overview

At one glance, Georgia has long been involved in the process of modernization—there were times when the Soviet Union was considered to be as modern as the US or the West. But everything depends on how one defines modernization. If modernization only means industrialization and technical progress, then skepticism would not be justified. However, it is a little more complicated. Broadly speaking, modernization is a Western phenomenon, which implies transition of society from traditional to modern order. To define central characteristics of traditional and modern societies, we relied on two classic scholars, Max Weber and Emil Durkheim.

As Weber would say, changes in social order, in addition to techno-economic progress, are linked with non-traditional “ethnicity”², mindset, and values.

Modern consciousness originated from the European Reformation, which introduced three major value changes:

1. This worldly love became more valuable. *“Traditional church, both Catholic and Orthodox, prioritizes love of God over this worldly love. Consequently, monks and nuns are more virtuous than a family man. Earthly love is crucial for Reformation as the most genuine expression*

*of the love of God. Family men and family, consequently, become more central*³. Love of God did not become secondary, but earthly love became its foremost expression.

2. Transformation of work ethics: *“for traditional Christian churches poverty is more virtuous than affluence, while in Reformation riches attained as a result of hard work are blessed by God*⁴.

*“According to modernization theory, universalism, functional specificity and status attained through individual effort are dominant in modern society*⁵. Hence it follows that taking pride in one’s nationality is absurd in modernity because it is not a personal accomplishment, one should take pride in personal achievements.

3. Increased importance of personal freedom over obedience, which was a central virtue for traditional churches (and, accordingly, societies)⁶.

This change augmented the value of personal responsibility, which replaced collective principles and to some extent, social control. If we use Durkheim’s terminology, social collectivity and strong social control echo mechanical solidarity characteristic to homogenous societies (traditional or non-modern). Respect for authority is crucial for traditional societies⁷, and emancipation from it was the main goal of Reformation and the secular project.

When we discuss modernity, we cannot disregard its most prominent symbol—differentiation and dissociation of fundamental institutions. Previously, religion was not detached from other social institutions (for example, politics, science, art). Today, whether we call it secularization or not, these institutions are strictly differentiated. European modernization changed social order and transformed separate human institutions so that intervention is inadequate or insulting. Separate institutions, as well as links between them, have changed. Different public domains—*“art, science, education, politics—increasingly detach themselves from religious lifestyle. This detachment is called secularization, or emancipation*⁸.

In conclusion, religion has lost its universal value in contemporary society: it no longer defines political structure. A theory emerged that faith was different in traditional societies. The concept of faith corresponds to the notion of plurality. Pluralism, in this case, implies more than tolerance, acceptance of differences—it in itself becomes part of faith⁹. *“Faith is being ‘relativized’, that is, democracy is penetrating faith. The last product of this process is the conversion of faith into identity. According to contemporary sociologists, modern believers no longer chose a religion because of its universal validity, but in order to define their identity and subjectivity. New believers do not try to convert others.*

*Moreover, they do not assert superiority of their religion, but also do not tolerate arguments against their faith*¹⁰.

Family, Work Ethics, Personal Freedom

As noted above, modernity is measured by at least three indicators: contemporary understanding of values, work ethics, and personal freedom. If we observe the quantitative data at hand, situation in Georgia does not look too bad in regard to these values. Based on 2008 World Value Survey, family is very important for 98,9% of Georgians. However, these findings might not be indicative of contemporary family image. On the one hand, the same survey showed that 60,8% of Georgians consider tradition as very important. On the other hand, unlike the modern view of family as an expression of earthly love, and a product of voluntary, future-oriented decisions, in our society family is associated with tradition and past: it is a family of father, and parents, where one is still an adolescent. It should not be surprising that, based on the survey, 44,6% of respondents completely agree and 45,7% agree with the idea that one of their primary goals is to make their parents proud¹¹. European Values Study of 2008 revealed that 95,6% consider that parents deserve unconditional love, and the remaining 4,4% think that they should acquire their parents' respect with their actions¹².

If work, just like family, is valuable in our society (in 2008, it was important to 64,1% and fairly important to 22,6%¹³), it is simply for materialistic reasons, rather than its religious or public benefits. This is logical since only 4,2% picked the statement that "ideas stand above money" (from four possible choices) as their first choice, and 19,2% as their second choice¹⁴. Also, only 27,3% fully agreed and 32% agreed that acquiring money without working is humiliating¹⁵. Our national pride is also an indicator that labor and personal effort are not important in our society: we are very much (76%) or simply (21,7%) proud of our nationality¹⁶.

Freedom of choice and capacity of control, as indicators of personal freedom, were directly measured in a 2008 value survey. Georgian respondents seem to recognize these values: more than half of them (51,7%) fully agree, and 40,1% agree with the statement: "I see myself as an autonomous individual". Nevertheless, other questions in the survey present the issue of personal freedom in a different light. For example, 70,4% think that increased respect for authority would be a positive change (72,8% according to 2008 European Value Survey). Only 4,6% assess this as a negative change, and 24,9% remain neutral. Also, only 8,7% picked "less homogenous and more

humane society” as their first priority (from four possible choices) and 20% as their second priority¹⁷.

As for privatization of religion and collective lifestyle, based on the data from 2008 World Value Survey, 78,2% think that the Church can solve family problems. It is well known that since 2007 Georgia had higher birth rates compared to previous years¹⁸. The Patriarch Ilia II is considered to be accountable for this shift since he baptizes every third child in a family. Moreover, owing to the Patriarch’s initiative, starting from 2011, every fourth child in a family will be awarded the title of “A Patriot Dedicated to Fatherland and Protector of the Patriarch’s Throne”¹⁹.

Differentiation of Domains

When discussing separation of secular and sacred domains, we first need to remember that Georgia is not an ideologically neutral country. 2002 constitutional agreement (“Concordat”) between the Georgian Orthodox Church and the state grants legal privileges to the Church. The document recognizes the special role of the Church in Georgian history and gives it certain privileges in decision-making and in economic affairs²⁰. However, as Sabrina Ramet notes, “*the constitution is silent about practical repercussions*”²¹.

The Georgian Orthodox Church demanded the division of religious organizations into three categories. The Orthodox Church would be the only member of the first, privileged category; the second category would include “other traditional faiths”, such as Catholicism, Judaism, Islam and Armenian Church, which would be granted the right to exist; all other faiths would be unified in the third category, and would “*at best, undergo strict control, if not a full ban*”²².

Even before the “Concordat” was signed, the Georgian Orthodox Church had enough power and authority to impact secular events and fight for the establishment of its ideas in public domain. For example, Ilia Chavchavadze’s famous motto, “Fatherland, Language, Faith” acquired a strong religious connotation. In 1999, a bishop from Bodbe, Father Nikoloz stated that genuine patriotism is not feasible without religion, and Ilia Chavchavadze was possibly reiterating the words of Grigol Khandzteli, a VIII-IX century monk²³.

On the other hand, the majority of clergy is disappointed by the agreement between the state and the Church. They think that it is ineffective and ornamental in nature: “*it does not have any real bearing because the Concordat does not provide practical judicial basis, it needs a judicial foundation, enforcement*

*of laws. That is to say that this agreement... there is a vacuum between it and the executive government, no connection*²⁴. It must be noted that people do not understand the difference between sacred and secular domains. 2008 World Value Survey provides evidence: 58,7% think that religion can solve social issues. Besides, the following statements were evaluated: 1. “politicians who do not believe in God, should not serve”—51% fully agree, 32,2% agree. 2. “it is better if religious individuals work at public jobs”—47,9% fully agree, and 37,1% agree. On the contrary, 22,7% fully agree, and 28,7% agree that “religious leaders should not influence the government”.

A good example of the Church’s intervention in public domain was the Patriarch’s indignation against the discussion of the Church’s decisions on December 17, 2010 on Davit Paichadze’s show aired on Public Broadcasting Station²⁵. The Patriarch stated during his sermon: “*I am concerned that the show was transmitted on Channel One, that is, the Public Broadcasting Station. It is even worse if it was commissioned by the state. I want to say that this is huge sin and will not remain unpunished. ... This show was against the state and not against the Church. The faith of believers will not be wavered by these types of shows. ... These are anti-national shows. ... I want to warn them like a father warns his son, that God will not leave this unpunished and they should not ask later why they are being punished*”²⁶.

Although intervention in politics is the most prominent topic in today’s Georgia, the Georgian Orthodox Church does not disregard other domains either. Public education shows outward signs of the Church’s influence. Persistence of the Orthodox Parents’ Union ended with the removal of Religion and Culture from the school program in April, 1999. The reason was that “*the textbook devoted too much space to other religions, which according to priests, can confuse children*”²⁷. One month after the incident, 6th graders from a public school, instructed by their teacher, honored their homeland and Georgian language. They said the Lord’s Prayer, followed by episodes from Jesus’ life, his teachings and church hymns. At the end, they were blessed by a priest²⁸.

On April 8, 2005 the Georgian parliament introduced the Law on General Education. Article 18 addresses freedom of faith and declares that “*religious symbols in public schools should not serve non-academic purposes*”²⁹. This situation angered one of the monks: “*there are no icons now, and they don’t allow them... unfortunately, they don’t allow them to wear crosses. ... Maybe not crosses, but at least ... they made them remove the icons, they just made them remove them. And this is... condemnation of God starts with the condemnation of icons. ... What does the Devil do? Separates school and that [religion] and it does not suit the Devil to teach God at school.*” However, inspection of other public schools in Georgia offers a different picture: despite the law, classroom walls

are adorned not only with portraits of great public figures and photographs of Georgian churches, but also icons, and even special corners for prayer. Prayer rooms also exist in some universities (for example, a church was built in the courtyard of Tbilisi State University).

Article 13 of the law on general education states: “*use of religious indoctrination, proselytism or forced assimilation is forbidden in the process of education at public schools*”³⁰. An expert on education, Simon Janashia explains that public schools are obliged to teach world religions in the framework of history courses. Moreover, if there is interest, schools can decide to introduce a course on world religions. The law also allows students to receive information about specific religions, but this should happen only after classes or during weekends³¹.

The priesthood is usually negatively disposed towards teaching other religions in Georgia. One archpriest explains his position: “*Apostle Paul declares in one of his epistles: whoever defaces the gospel and teaches it incorrectly, he denounces God. He says that. I don't think it would be justified if we allowed denunciation of God in our country. It is definitely not all the same to us if someone opens a school, where they spiritually corrupt and incorrectly interpret the gospels*”³². In the words of one priest, “*they should pray wherever they want. They should pray in their own countries*”³³.

We also found someone with a more tolerant attitude among the interviewed priests: “*the teaching should simply not be compulsory. Of course, they need to be taught—humans should know the foundation of their national traditions, the basis of their culture, how their ancestors lived. How can you understand Shushanik's life, if you do not know Orthodox Christianity? ... People of all faith should have the opportunity to learn about their religion in school. This does not mean that they all should serve God, but they need to have basic knowledge. Why should Muslims not know about their religion? I am convinced that if they learn thoroughly, they will end up choosing Christianity. If you study a faith seriously, you start to see things differently*”³⁴.

The majority of politicians agree that ethnic and religious minorities should benefit from all the rights accessible to rest of the population. At the same time, they think that the state should not fund schools for religious minorities. If religious minorities want to establish a religious school, they need to provide the budget. A representative of the Christian-Democratic Party believes that the existence of religious schools depends on the religious minorities. For instance, if a religion belongs to the so-called ‘traditional confession’, historically represented in Georgia and with its own parish in the country, then it is permitted to have a status, schools, etc. But if it is a ‘sect’, then its rights need to be restricted³⁵.

Furthermore, the Church also intervenes in art—against specific theatrical plays. The Patriarch easily subordinates art to religion with the following words: “*in my opinion, we need to establish a Cultural or an Art Center where we will raise our new generation, our youth. . . . And young people who will be raised in this art and this faith—Orthodox faith, love, and dedication in the first place, this culture,—will never become drug-addicts, thieves, thugs, or any other wrong-doers*”³⁶.

Religious movements also demonstrate the Church’s intervention in arts: protests by the Orthodox Parents’ Union ‘protected’ Georgian youth from Joanne Rowling’s *Harry Potter*, and Georgian society from Dan Brown’s *The Da Vinci Code* and its cinematization. They also demonstrated against several contemporary Georgian writers (i.e. Paata Shamugia’s *Antitkhaosani*), TV programs (“Wall”, “Our expert”, “Geobar”). As Ramet writes, “*in Western eyes, Harry Potter is a children’s magical character and a commercial success. However, in the eyes of the Orthodox, Harry Potter is cosmopolitanism in its worst form, legitimating sorcery and black magic, a challenge to Orthodox monopoly over the interpretation of magic and supernatural. The detestation of Harry Potter by Orthodox Christians is linked with general distrust of liberalism, cosmopolitanism and even democracy*”³⁷.

In May, 2010 Orthodox Parents’ Union and Public Orthodox Movement protested presentation of a young Georgian writer’s work, *Saidumlo Si-roba*, at the bookstore of Ilia State University, and demanded a prayer room in the University building. Refusal to satisfy their request unleashed a wave of demonstrations against the University administration, and collection of student signatures demanding a prayer room. When part of the public held a peaceful gathering to support their right of expression, members of the Union attacked them, and subjected them to physical and verbal abuse. Police did not prevent the violence on behalf of the priesthood.

A culmination of the incident took place at the office of Caucasus TV Channel, where the two sides were invited for a discussion: university students and administration, as well as civil society members on the one hand, and the Orthodox Parents’ Union and the Public Orthodox Movement on the other. They raided the TV station. The incident was broadcasted on live television, and this time the police captured the instigators. Eight members of the movement, all of them priests, were brought to taken to court. Leader of the Public Orthodox Movement Malkhaz Gulashvili fled Georgia and sought refuge in Russia. It is interesting that during the court hearings the accused were consoled by the priesthood.

On May 9, a day after the television raid, the Georgian Catholicos-Patriarch Ilia II awarded the Movement chair Davit Isakadze at Svetitskhoveli

Cathedral. “Archpriest David Isakadze, who works for the wellbeing of our nation and our Church, is awarded with an embellished cross and the right to wear a mitre”—stated Ilia II³⁸. A week after the incident, the Georgian Orthodox Church urged the government to promptly issue a law that would “properly protect the population from perversion, protect public and individual honor and dignity and their religious feelings”³⁹. In a statement made on May 15, the Patriarch of Georgia declared that “for the past few years an active warfare was waged against national values and the Georgian Orthodox Church”⁴⁰.

Religious Faith in Georgia

One marker of a contemporary society is a switch from traditional universalist to tolerant faith. In Georgia, 81,1% believe that there is only one true religion and discount the possibility that other religions can teach truth⁴¹. As noted by a member of the clergy, “any faith, whatever it is, derives from an assumption that it is the truth. If an Evangelist says that a Baptist can obtain salvation, then he is not a real Evangelist”⁴². In a respondent’s opinion, speaking about truth in other religions only emphasizes the superiority of Orthodox Christianity: “all other religions took the kernel of truth from Orthodox Christianity. For instance, Muslims cannot deny Christ. They consider him a prophet, but ... cannot deny him. Neither can Buddhists, they believe him to be one of the reincarnations of Buddha, etc. Thus, everyone adopted Christ; he could not be disregarded since he stands for the absolute truth”⁴³.

The same idea was expressed in Kviris Palitra in 1999: “according to leaked information from the Vatican, Virgin Mary accuses Catholic priests of violating Christian commandments, blesses Orthodox Christianity and calls for the unity of Catholicism and Orthodox Christianity”⁴⁴. In another issue of the same newspaper, we are reminded that Orthodox Christianity is the only true religion since Easter’s holy fire in Jerusalem is only for Orthodox Christians⁴⁵. Consequently, representatives of other religions in Georgia experience a lower level of trust: they are fully trusted by 3%, and somewhat trusted by 36,1%⁴⁶. It must be noted, that 36,5% (more than 1/3 of the population) would not want to live in vicinity of a non-Christian Orthodox individual⁴⁷.

There is clearly a dominant religion in Georgia: 83% of the population is Christian Orthodox. The second largest religious group is Muslim (11%), and the parish of the Armenian Apostolic Church is on the third place. Unconventional religious movements make up 3% of the population⁴⁸. At first sight, church attendance is low: considering that 41% think that religion is really important, and 52% feel it is important, only 17% attend religious ser-

vices⁴⁹. However, it would be wrong to assume that religious life is declining in Georgia—if in 2008 only 16% attended religious services at least once per week, the number reached 22% in 2009, but declined to 17-18% in 2010-2011⁵⁰. The majority of religiously active individuals lives in the capital⁵¹, and primarily consists of young people with higher education who grew up in politically and economically harsh environment of the 1990's. On the other hand, even if the number of Orthodox Christians in the country is really high, some representatives of priesthood do not think it symbolizes strong faith: *“today, we have a real atheism, godlessness and not war against God, — when you fight God, you still acknowledge his existence, but when you do not take anything into account, he falls out from your consciousness. Nowadays, the environment is more atheistic than before. We should not be fascinated, say, by the number of people at church, or the Patriarch’s high rating... All this is a human approach—not a faith-based approach, but a human approach. There are positive things: they prevent evil, but this is not a living faith, this is something that can be taken away from humans easily. In Georgian consciousness today we don’t see God, and the mixing that’s taking place is the worst”*⁵².

Nostalgia

If we glance over the history of the Georgian Orthodox Church on the official website of the Patriarchate, we will notice that the last two centuries are practically not described:

“In 1811 the Russian Empire illegally annulled autocephaly of the Georgian Church. There was ceased the post of Patriarch and the Georgian Church turned under rule of Synod of Russian Church. In March 1917, the Georgian clergy revived the autocephaly and restored the Patriarchate. The prominent Bishop Kirion was elected the first Patriarch after the autocephaly restoration.

In 1989, the Ecumenical Patriarchate recognized existence of the autocephaly and Patriarchate of the Georgian Orthodox Church since V century.

*Since 1977 Catholicos Patriarch of All Georgia and Archbishop of Mtskheta and Tbilisi has been His Holiness and Beatitude Ilia II*⁵³.

The Church links its identity to the Georgian Church of the Kingdom of Georgia. The implication is that the Church ceased to exist after the 19th century annexation when its autocephaly was abolished and was revived only in the last years of the Soviet Union, when the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople approved its autocephaly.

The Georgian Orthodox Church, one of the (if not the primary) creators of national identity, links Georgian identity to pre-modern times. The

clergy they often appeals (mistakenly or not) to the Middle Ages Georgia, past kings and their actions.

Nostalgia for the “traditional” past can be detected both in society, and in the Church. The past stands in opposition to the contemporary world and even denounces it. As noted by a member of the clergy, *“unfortunately, modern humans have adopted European lifestyle and forget language, faith, traditions”*⁵⁴. Already in 1999, Kviris Palitra published an interview with a respected elder, who states: *“people have become smaller even physically, not to speak about morals and spirituality. Such depreciation of sex, spread and rule of immorality is a more severe adversity than hunger . . . humans used to fear God in the old times”*⁵⁵. Everything sinful derives from the modern Western values, otherwise *“were religions ever equal in Georgia during the Time of Kings?”*⁵⁶

When asked which leadership ensured best conditions for the Georgian Orthodox Church after the Soviet Union, the clergy still refers to the past and names King Tamara’s reign as the greatest. The desire to restore monarchy and appoint a king to rule Georgia is one of the best illustrations of the nostalgic attitude towards the past. We asked a question about the revival of constitutional monarchy in Georgia during the interviewing process and received varied answers.

Very few representatives of the interviewed clergy noted that monarchy is more of an anachronism than reality. In one case they also brought up Bagrationi wedding as a failed experiment. Some respondents believe that a king cannot have real power nowadays and would only officially hold the title, which would depreciate the whole idea: *“it is impossible today and instead of having a puppet, I think it is better the way it is—to govern in this manner”*⁵⁷.

The majority of clergy stated that constitutional monarchy is necessary in Georgia, but conditions are not ripe yet. They like the prospect of having a king in the future, but it is impossible today since it would require serious preparations. They also believe that restoration of the monarchy might even be risky: *“a king needs to be morally and spiritually ready. Unfortunately, however hard it is to hear this, we are in a fallen state today and this will last for years”*⁵⁸.

Third section of the clergy is in favor of establishing a constitutional monarchy. They believe that unlike a president, a king will rule more responsibly since presidents are elected for a certain period, while kings’ power is hereditary. At the same time, as a God-appointed ruler, a king will protect Orthodox Christianity, Georgian traditions and “Georgian foundation”: *“generally speaking, the idea is very good because he will be the keystone of Georgianness, traditions, which are merged with Christianity and Orthodoxy; ennobled, and a savior of the Georgian nation. A king needs to be a defender. Unfortunately, nowadays, throughout these years, I haven’t felt that these ideas are being defended”*⁵⁹.

King will also incorporate functions that only the Church is responsible for. However, the Church will exercise control over the monarchy. During the monarchy, the king will be a mediator between the Church and the state. To put it differently, the clergy imagined the state and the Church in a union: *“king and church do not exist separately. But the ideology needs to be Orthodox. It is our tradition, our faith, it is essential. [...] There is a prophecy that a king will lead Georgia. This is a prophecy”*⁶⁰.

It is worth noting that the majority of politicians positively assess the prospect of a monarchy. For the New Right monarchy is the only cornerstone of political ideology. They believe that only the Church is capable of raising an individual who can unify Georgia⁶¹. The National Forum is also an active supporter of monarchy. Respondent #1 stresses the role of the king in the process of unification. Also, he emphasizes the value of close ties between the future king and the Church. Respondent #7 from the Christian-Democratic Party believes that constitutional monarchy will allow reinforcement and protection of traditions, which is crucial today when society is facing so many challenges. It is interesting that the Laborist Party and a democratic movement—the United Georgia, also support the revival of monarchy. Parties that clearly do not approve are the United National Movement, the Republican Party and the New Democrats.

Royal wedding between two branches of Bagrationi family, welcomed by certain political powers, benefitted the prospect of a monarchy. Both religious and political circles were disappointed and regretful when the Bagrationi couple separated. An interview with achrimandrite Ilia Nasidze published in Kviris Palitra states: *“monarchs would often marry without love when the nation needed it... But it looks like neither Bagrationis nor Georgian society is ready for monarchy”*⁶². Nasidze noted with regret that Bagrationis were not able to create a strong family and give birth to an heir to the throne. In the same article, leader of the Traditionalist Union, Akaki Asatiani, suggested that Vano Merabishvili and the ruling power envy the Church. He advises them to change their approach, since the only solution lies in the Church⁶³. Asatiani believes that Bagrationi wedding was rushed, and required better preparation. He adds that he had a premonition that they (the ruling power) would come up with a silly gossip in order to discredit the event⁶⁴.

The contrast between the present world and the good old past times is also emphasized in arts: certain music genres, especially rock, are considered to be “linked with the Lucifer”, while some movies are viewed as sacrilege⁶⁵. 1999 issue of Kviris Palitra writes: *“listening to all music genres and watching all types of movies can easily “pollute” our consciousness without our ears and eyes noticing it”*⁶⁶. This attitude persists today, as evidenced by the Patriarch’s speech

on December 12, 2010: *“in the past, music would ennoble humans, now it destroys them. There is music and there is anti-music”*⁶⁷.

As a final point, attitude towards the most pronounced trait of modernity—technological progress and free flow of information, is also interesting. The Georgian Orthodox Church does not welcome these changes, and often discusses scientific and technological achievements as a means of exercising mass psychological influence⁶⁸. As the Patriarch stated in 1999, fast development of science and technology caused nihilism and indifference in developed countries, resulting in spiritual development lagging behind technological progress⁶⁹. On Sunday sermon of December 26, 2004, Ilia II clearly declared that globalization processes threaten the existing lifestyle and value system: *“for the past few years, humans acquired a lot of knowledge. I emphasize—a lot of knowledge, but not deep knowledge; and along with that, a relatively superficial mindset. Humans evaluate everything superficially in science, culture, and everyday life; they care for today as if the future does not exist. For example, if you ask students from a secondary school, they will list painters, composers, especially contemporary singers—our youth is captivated by modern music. However, unfortunately, their answers will be superficial, they will lack depth. Our ancestors were different. They knew less, but they thought more and their judgment was thorough. This helped them a lot”*⁷⁰.

Conclusion

Studying Georgia in the context of modern theories is often challenging since the topic has not been well researched. In this regard, modern values are especially significant—particularly, measuring religious influences and, identifying disparities between old and new perceptions. The information we have at hand today allows us to come up with certain conclusions.

Firstly, it is worth noting that Georgian population is still not modern, if not traditional. *“This means that we are in a transitional stage and do not fully belong to any system. To some extent, we are dealing with a system of hybrid values, which can be explained not only by deteriorating socio-economic conditions of the past twenty years, ... but also the fact that modernization implemented in the Soviet Union significantly differed from the Western modernization model”*—notes Giga Zedania⁷¹.

An accidentally odd situation emerged as a result of the Rose Revolution. On the one hand, reforms introduced by government can be considered as an attempt at modernizing the state and society. On the other hand, the Georgian Orthodox Church is more apparently condescending of mod-

ern values, and in these circumstances, is the most high-ranked institution in Georgia. Consequently, there is a conflict between the modernization project and traditional values⁷².

Veneration of the past is not unique to the Georgian Orthodox Church. However, contest for power and a simultaneous constitutional link with the state, is characteristic to it only. Existence of the “Concordat” is not consistent with the Index on Religious Freedom, which states that no religion can be privileged⁷³.

As we have seen, no objectives associated with modernization are being implemented in today’s Georgia. Family has a sacred value—95,8% believe that it would be beneficial to emphasize family life in political agenda⁷⁴. Western work ethic promotes appreciation of wealth and status acquired through one’s labor. In contrast, wealth acquired via other means (and not through labor) is still valued in today’s Georgia. At the same time, simple poverty is viewed as virtuous, and nationality as something to be proud of. Respect for authority still overshadows personal freedoms.

Contemporary model of faith advocates pluralistic approach and prohibits proselytism. In Georgia, however, trust and tolerance are problematic due to the belief that only the Orthodox Church professes truth and consequently, all other religions are dangerous. In addition to this, the Church is gradually becoming more intensively and legitimately (in the sense that it is perceived as a norm) involved in social, cultural, and political life. In these circumstances, it is hard to imagine that religion has adjusted to modernity, or that it has given up its monopoly over “the truth”.

Sergo Ratiani calls the intervention in public and secular domains, as well as overall religiosity of post-Soviet individuals, a reactionary movement, and describes it with Nietzschean sentiments: *“it is spite, harm, revenge, but not in its pure form, rather combined with powerlessness”*⁷⁵. It is reactive because it is a belated response, an action postponed for the future (better times) and not implemented when it was logically required. Ressentiment is always indicative of fear and helplessness. Its existence in the contemporary world can only signify contradiction: subjects who experience resentment favor past primates over present ones, and simultaneously, are not bothered by using modern—that is, the opponent’s—tools (technology, communication means). Accordingly, *“modernization without introduction of modern values will turn modernity into an incomplete project”*⁷⁶.

As Sergo Ratiani suggests, *“we do not want ecological pollution, but also do not want to contribute to the process; we want to be materially well-established, but do not want to work; we want to be believers but we not only reject religious lifestyle, but also are reluctant to learn about our faith”*⁷⁷. This can be explained

by our past, and specifically by Soviet “*form of modernization, which did not bring about modernity. ... The core principles of this concept were foreign to the system—personal freedom, property acquired via labor, success and its superiority over the cult of poverty, private life, and dedication to near relations; not just general, indefinite values, demythologization, desacralization, rationalization and many other*”⁷⁸.

As a result, modernization process in Georgia did not originate from natural social development. Since it was externally introduced, it functioned and continues to function only superficially, without its core values. Consequently, secularization (meaning differentiation of domains) is an unstable process even when certain domains are set apart (for instance, religion and politics). All this originates from and is reinforced by unripe modern values in society.

Notes:

1. Tevzadze, Gigi. „Secularization and the Birth of a Nation“. *Identity Studies*, Ilia State University. Vol 2, 2010, p.8.
2. Max Weber, *Selected Letters in the Sociology of Religion*, Tbilisi: Mars, 2004, 44.
3. Sergo Ratiani, “Secularization as an Unfinished Project of Modernity”. In: Zedania, Giga and Merab Ghaghanidze, *Secularization: Concept and Context*. Tbilisi: Ilia State University Press, 2009, 163.
4. *Ibid.*
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