

In this article I have tried to collate Georgia's political evolution in the recent period with historical developments and to show that nostalgia for "tsesrigi" (law and order) on the one hand and dross of the nonpolitical and feudal which became ingrained in Georgian culture on the other proved to be the controversial legacy on which the new political system, which bore the marks of personal qualities of some of the leaders, was built.

Despite the difference in conditions of the agrarian and postindustrial eras, Georgia, like an embryo which goes through the eons of phylogeny of its species in a very short time, has in the last 15 years reiterated in reverse order the modes of statehood of the preceding millennium and negated the violence and anarchy which took root through the negation of state power in the 13th century by restoring its statehood in the 21st.

In the 13th century, Georgia's political evolution was terminated in the final phase, and the ship of statehood capsized. In the 21st century, the surviving seafarers of the lifeboat that was cobbled up from the flotsam of that ship get the opportunity to arrive at the harbor for further improvements.

Nostalgia for "tsesrigi" (law and order)¹

Remote though this comparison might seem, the historical analogy of the situation which has taken shape today in building the Georgian state can be found at the time of King David IV the Builder's unfinished project...

In the political history of our country, two ruling systems have been intertwined from the very outset: *state and demesne*. David the Builder's kingdom first set a bridle on the demesne system and then subdued the

church and city-states with a republican form of government, *winning the exclusive right to exercise political power* and effectively met the minimal Weberian requirement for the existence of state. The last missing brick in building the Georgian state was nipping the chance of the revival of the demesne system in the bud. This could be accomplished in the form of constitutional or, indeed, absolute monarchy, but the Georgian state of the period proved unable to achieve such a morphological perfection. Furthermore, the state ceded its positions some time before accession to the throne of Queen Tamar.

Under Tamar's rule, several systems of authority vied for primacy. A talented politician and flexible diplomat, she managed to sustain mostly peaceful and, in terms of state security, successful coexistence of the incompatible systems of political power (monarchist, demesne, republican and theocratic systems) throughout the 29 years of her reign, but after her death, demesne lords exacted historical revenge and dramatically limited the state's rights to regulate social relations. The country split apart into demesnes or feudal provinces.

Separatist feudal lords in essence maintained only a *confederate union* with the kingdom at best.

Throughout the entire late Middle Ages, the state, reduced to the territory immediately surrounding the royal palace, fought with the demesne system to regain its old positions.

The instruments of exercising state power are law and justice. The state maintains law and order by using these tools. The demesne system was exactly the opposite. Although the feudal lords, together with the military and economic powers, combined the judiciary authority as well and set legal norms, they used to summarily violate their own laws and ruled at will over what had by then become their private estate and no longer was a territory which had been assigned to them for governing. The lords' officiousness also acted arbitrarily, and accordingly, violence established itself as a predominant norm or relations.

From the point of view of social evolution, the country was at an impasse which only the kingdom was trying to break, but besides internal enemies, neighboring empires also hindered the fulfillment of its plan to fully restore statehood. Ultimately, through the influence of

all these internal and foreign factors, violence and complete *anarchy* crystallized as a permanence which was handed down from one generation to the next. The fact that the kidnapping and selling of humans became the only profitable and successful business on the entire territory of what once was called Georgia was the result of precisely this situation.

Presumably, no social group or estate could have been pleased with the situation that had taken shape, although despite numerous selfless attempts, breaking the pattern kept proving unmanageable. So, *as a result of centuries-long bitter experience, the demand for "law and order" became the most fundamental social demand of Georgian society: for Georgian society most coveted goal was law and order, i.e. the state.*

In the conditions of an agrarian civilization, before it enters the urban phase, the state may develop in two diametrically opposite directions: it either becomes an *absolute monarchy* or yields to *absolute anarchy*. In Georgia's case, the latter option was realized and, because opposites attract, absolute anarchy was then replaced by absolute monarchy (tsarism) again.

The establishment of the Russian empire in the formerly Georgian territory put an end to chaos and internal disorder, but society remained disappointed. Organized violence replaced unorganized subsistence. This time around, violence emanated from the state and its officials. The fundamental purpose of state is the creation for its citizens/subjects of an environment conducive to the realization of their personal and social potential, which under the Russian absolute monarchy was just as nonexistent as during the Georgian absolute anarchy. So, the tsarist annexation of the Georgian states turned out to be swapping the devil for the deep blue sea for the Georgians. While the Georgian reality gave the option of slowly dying in the chaos of an agrarian state, on the opposite pole absolutism was committing suicide, which, incidentally, manifested itself, *inter alia*, in the growing single-mindedness of Russian society in its struggle against tsarism. The prospect of normalcy gleamed briefly with the February 1917 revolution, and, against that background, an independent country called the Democratic Republic of Georgia sparkled all too transiently

on the political horizon, but soon industrial absolutism (totalitarianism) substituted agrarian absolutism.

For all this time, both tsarism and totalitarianism oppressed Georgian society both socially and ethnically, which first (in the early 20th century) imparted a socialist hue to the aspirations for liberation, and then (late 20th century) molded these aspirations into the form of a national movement.

But still, what type of state was to be built following the restoration of national sovereignty?

Because the dismantling of totalitarianism became irreversible already in the Soviet era, the new Georgian state would not be able to become totalitarian even in the worst case. In addition, the results of the referendum on independence called for the restoration of statehood of the *democratic* republic, so it turned out that the Georgian people wanted to reform the system in a democratic way, but the Menshevik republic was a failed state (although Russia and several other states did recognize it *de jure*) which succumbed to the dictate of Russian Social Democrats and the only democratic component of it was its façade. Neither would the Shevardnadze-era Georgia avert the façade democracy later on, and would be christened a “Potemkin democracy”,² but before that, in the fuss of restructuring the political system (perestroika), the leaders of the liberation movement, including Gamsakhurdia, will try to restore national independence in abstraction from the typological strength and weaknesses of the future political system. Because democracy was yet to be built and independence was yet to be won, the standard-bearers of the liberation movement made the job easier and armed themselves with a tempting guiding idea: “First independence, then democracy!”³

Gamsakhurdia – tragic herald of the agent era

The Gamsakhurdia period of the liberation movement, as well as the initial period of Shevardnadze’s rule until August 1995, might well be called the “agent era”.

The Russian propaganda machine has always used conspiracy theories to put public consciousness into the required frame of reference. People who lay claims to belonging to the elite, or even simply indi-

viduals who are more or less familiar with politics, fear interpreting political processes from the standpoint of conspiracy theories to avoid the harmful influence of deliberately adulterated thinking patterns, but it has to be said to be fair that during the dissolution of the Soviet empire, security services and their agents certainly did not twiddle their thumbs, so their relentless efforts largely determined how the events unfolded.

Gamsakhurdia used to publicly accuse his political opponents of being KGB agents, but did not care much about proving his accusations. His opponents deemed this a manifestation of demagogic projection whereby he externalized his own guilt. In general, Soviet society indeed so abounded with spies of different calibers that the upper tier of the organizational pyramid of the emerging liberation movement's efforts to prevent the ill-wishers from penetrating into their ranks were in vain. Presumably, the most natural indicator for identifying agents should have been assessments of the behavior of the individuals in question by the criterion of who would benefit from their particular actions (information leaks and thefts were of no concern because everything that happened was public anyway). But unexpectedly, a more reliable, if grotesque, indicator was found – whether or not a person had a record of imprisonment! Criminal mentality, which is so wide-spread in Georgian society, was reinterpreted in a specific way in the circles of the new political elite: *Trusting anyone who did not have the sublime aureole of former political prisoner is risky, and such persons should not aspire to leadership.* Although there were exceptions, they only proved this rule.⁴ *This standard dramatically reduced the already tiny strength of the vanguard of the liberation movement.*

The importance and significance that were attached to the agents were growing in proportion to the increasing realization that, thanks to mass anti-communist hysteria, the once formidable Communist Party – the main lever of political governance in Georgia for the Kremlin – had become a debilitated and useless tool. And this was natural too, because Gorbachev himself, with perestroika, was undermining the political hegemony of the Communist Party. But no party seeking to replace the communists would have been able to evade the all-pervasive demand for independence. So, the Kremlin could rely only

on its omnipresent *agents* and the *nomenclature* of the autonomous political entities in Georgia to regain a foothold; and the Kremlin adopted the strategy of discrediting the idea of national independence.

Ever after his dissident-times fiasco (and in some people's opinion, even before that), Gamsakhurdia was considered a KGB-hired dangerous adventurist among certain activists of the liberation movement. Gamsakhurdia's actions, his rhetoric and provocative decisions supported this view repeatedly. In addition, Gamsakhurdia's group was initially not particularly influential compared to others, but the Communist government kept emulating the tried and true practice of artificially creating a privileged stratum to cause a rift in the workers' movement, and openly favored Gamsakhurdia. Complaints which others pointed out to the authorities remained ignored, but as soon as Gamsakhurdia would say the same later on, his demands were met, which persuaded the masses of Gamsakhurdia's capability and efficiency. This expanded his influence quickly and dramatically, but caused a rift within the liberation movement. Most of its activists confronted the Soviet authorities and Gamsakhurdia at the same time. Still, public support for Gamsakhurdia was growing.

While Gamsakhurdia promoted the Kremlin's political interests (such as the staging of the provocative rally near Tskhinvali, harassment of repatriated Muslim Meskhetians, causing of the rift in the National Forum (the inter-party body of the liberation movement) and groundlessly accusing leaders of the liberation movement of being affiliated with the KGB), naturally, he did not encounter resistance from the authorities, but when he declared Georgia's independence following the nationwide referendum, the Kremlin perceived this as perfidy. Gamsakhurdia would be unable to vindicate that decision in the eyes of KGB people who terrorized him. From that day on, the problem of his personal safety became his major concern and he started to think about consolidating his power. He hastily changed the political system and introduced presidential rule. He could already sense that he would fall victim to Georgia's declaration of independence.

In the meantime, the old Soviet institutions were gradually replaced (at least at the top level) with new ones. Gamsakhurdia's "program" of building the Georgian state was voiced by his Prime

Minister Besarion Gugushvili and, despite the terminological abracadabra ("state capitalism"), admonished the openly autocratic government. Democracy was over, it would come later at best, but the Georgian intellectual elite (the political elite was formed precisely by recruiting representatives of the intellectual elite) associated the country's liberation with democratic reforms. And this happened despite the fact that no one had any clear-cut civil society project, and the only thing that existed was the *longing* to transform our society into one of the Western type. Later on, the public would see that this is no mean task to accomplish, but rapturous faith in social engineering was what Soviet citizens inherited from their communist past, and if the Soviet utopia disappointed them, it did not mean that their social psychology changed completely. At any rate, it is a fact that Gamsakhurdia's plan and the steps he took to carry it out angered the leading, most influential part of society. Gamsakhurdia's unpopularity among elite circles derived not so much from his dissident-times fiasco as precisely from his losing his bearings, which George Bush Sr. qualified as *swimming against the tide*. The absence of support from the elite greatly encouraged the initiators of Gamsakhurdia's ouster.

Without outside (Western) support, the days of the young Georgian state were numbered while *the deficit of statehood, in other words, the habitual millennia-old anarchic situation in Georgia, was growing stronger*.

Meanwhile, the Soviet Union fell apart. But this did not mean that the Kremlin decided to desist from controlling political process in former Soviet republics. At the same time, the contumacious Gamsakhurdia declared that the GKChP [State Emergencies Committee] coup attempt was staged by the government, which only deepened the rift between him and the Kremlin; and finally, he refused to join the CIS (he made a verbal statement on accession only after the "Christmas putsch", but it was too late), which was viewed as complete disregard for the rules of the game which were set and stipulated by Moscow. It seems that Gamsakhurdia had no hopes left of settling his relations with the Kremlin.

Moscow strove toward kindling the ethnic conflicts and establishing governable chaos by staging a coup aimed at securing the newly-

founded state a place within Russia's orbit. At the same time, the Kremlin preferred to maintain the posture of an apparently disinterested umpire and make its agents pull the chestnuts out of the fire for it, but strong popular support for Gamsakhurdia proved to be the stumbling block for the Kremlin. The limited resources of the leaders of armed groups, who were hired for the "democratic revolution" scheduled for Christmas, proved to be insufficient. Neither Kitovani's so-called guards proved adequate, nor did Ioseliani, just released from prison, and his Mkhedrioni manage to properly organize the Christmas coup. Despite the mock-militarist ostentation of these Georgian "king's men" (according to Ioseliani's classic sermon, "democracy ain't eating beans!"), their units were falling back all the time, which forced the secret protagonist of the Christmas fuss, Russia, to openly intervene in this business. On the morning of the coup (January 6), the center of Tbilisi was flooded with tracked hardware of the Transcaucasus Military District. The issue was sorted out in the blink of an eye, and the armored vehicles disappeared. Gamsakhurdia was ousted or, to be more precise, seized, and he spent the remaining months of his life in Russia, in the captivity of his KGB oppressors. The Kremlin made use of him, this time around as a counterbalance to Shevardnadze, and did away with him only after its main strategic plan was implemented.

In Ghia Nodia's opinion, the toppling of the Gamsakhurdia regime had two main causes: One was his obsessive personality, which verged on mental derangement, and the other was moving to the fore of the anarchist political culture in the opposition's behavior.⁵ Soon after Gamsakhurdia's ouster, it became clear that an inclination to anarchy of sorts was noticeable not only in the opposition's actions, and bitter historical experience taught politically unaffiliated ordinary Georgians too how to join bandit brotherhoods and do as they please; centuries of anarchy and violence (in the absence of the organizing influence of state) gave rise to this sort of self-annihilating survival culture.

The prince

The agent era continued. The country was shrouded in the veil of civil strife, and the redeemer in the person of Shevardnadze came from Moscow; at any rate, many people pinned their hopes on

Shevardnadze, who, however, did not meet expectations, at least in the initial, Kitovani- and Ioseliani-associated period of his rule.

Of course, he catered to every whim of Moscow, but Yeltsin's trust for Shevardnadze went only as far as the Russian wisdom *trust but verify* ordained. Assigning the "praetorian guards" from Moscow as guarantors of Shevardnadze's "security" was not enough; appetite comes with eating, and to further expand its influence, the Kremlin made Shevardnadze appoint its agents to ministerial or other important posts. Shevardnadze lacked power from the very outset. Initially, talk of any legitimacy of his government was out of the question. He had only personal contacts and the support of foreign politicians. After the fall 1992 parliamentary elections, when he formally combined the post of the chairman of parliament with the position of the top official of the executive (head of state), the real power still remained in the warlords' hands.

Armed gangs and criminals ran rampant in the country. The police was in organized alliance with criminal kingpins. Such a situation took shape in which even simply walking out into the street became dangerous (let alone movement of commercial cargo or any kind of economic activity). The economy was destroyed. Hyperinflation broke out when Russia threw Georgia out of the rouble zone and the provisional currency, the kupon, was introduced hastily. Its exchange rate fell by the hour.

The employable and industrious were fleeing the country; the energy sector collapsed, apartment blocks were without electricity, roads impassable, production facilities defunct or pillaged; the rural population went back to subsistence farming.

The chaos which enwrapped the country was also caused by the absence of state and looked like a brief flash-back to the post-industrial era of the historical experience of which the country failed to emerge from the Middle Ages. And it was brief because Shevardnadze soon led the country to the phase of "feudal lords' confederation".

By making heavy concessions to Russia⁶ and most importantly, thanks to great assistance from the West, Georgia of the period of stabilization under Shevardnadze settled down as a "weak state", or, as Shevardnadze himself used to call it, a "half-state".

The stabilization period was nonetheless a relief compared to chaos: the crime situation was more or less sorted out; the rampage of gangs was checked; the military was brought under control; economic indicators started to improve, and a national currency, the lari, was successfully introduced.

The first rudiments of civil society emerged in that period: non-governmental organizations were created, the media were developing, and independent trade unions were founded here and there. Direct contacts with international organizations gave rise to a new culture of relations. The introduction of personal computers and the Internet caused the gradual replacement of the Russian language with English. *The beneficial influence of globalization eventually played the decisive role in the breakthrough which took the form of the Rose Revolution.*

In the second phase of his presidency, Shevardnadze cozily ensconced himself in the center of the clientelist cobweb which he had weaved mostly from his relatives' interests and, *en rapport* with modern equivalents of medieval demesne lords – the new rich of the drugs, bank or energy mafias and Aslan Abashidze – ruled the corrupt domain which they called a state and in which every courtier was at work in coordination with Shevardnadze.

It's easier said than done, but sorting the country out even in this form could not be managed without a life-or-death confrontation with the agents' world. As soon as Shevardnadze, encouraged by the West, decided to get rid of the agents in his entourage, there was an assassination attempt against him! However, thanks to his luck and ex-Communist Vakhtang Rcheulishvili, who looked as pale as he did at that moment, he escaped from the burning car unharmed. Time would pass, and Rcheulishvili, disappointed with Shevardnadze, would rally people at a demonstration to shout for the world to hear: "Shevardnadze – to the dustbin of history!"

Rcheulishvili's foreknowing behavior did not really delight the public back then, but his prediction did come true. And the irony was that Rcheulishvili would be Shevardnadze's supporter, and next time, he not only would be unable to save Shevardnadze, but would find himself in the dustbin of history too.

The era of roses was to begin in Georgia.

But until then, Shevardnadze, the relentless careerist adorned with the nickname “White Fox”, would remain the main protagonist in the modern history of our country.

Political scientists are closely familiar with the metaphorical use of “fox” – it was introduced by the classic of Renaissance, Machiavelli, as one of the types of prince.

Yet another noteworthy paradigm of assessment of politicians belongs to American thinker Eugene Jennings. He divided politicians into three main categories: supermen, heroes, and princes.

Supermen are those politicians who challenge old values and the obsolete social order and create the new values;

The heroes *fight* to establish the sublime ideals introduced by supermen;

And the princes try to stay in power by fair means or foul. This is their supreme and only ideal.

Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, or Woodrow Wilson were examples of supermen.

Nelson Mandela and Mikhail Gorbachev would be entered on the list of heroes, although the latter could be described as a hero, in other words, the introducer of ideals, only from the Western standpoint, whereas from the Russian standpoint, the title of superman would better suit him because the political ideals toward which Gorbachev turned his rudder were completely unusual and novel for Russia; and Jennings bestowed the lofty title of superman for those who introduce new values.

One of the leaders of the national liberation movement, Merab Kostava, most certainly belonged to the category of heroes. And Gamsakhurdia, the author of “Georgia’s Spiritual Mission” would think himself a man who introduced new ideas, i.e a superman, but his “missionary values” were a laughing stock for the social elite. In some people’s opinion, as a politician, he would better fit into the definition of a hero of the national liberation movement (some would say, an antihero), and it is no surprise that his life ended tragically; tragedies become heroes, and heroes’ ends are tragic.

Shevardnadze was another matter altogether. He was a classic prince.

The term “prince”, it seems, was borrowed by Jennings from Machiavelli. Machiavelli says nothing about “heroes” or “supermen,” these are more of a product of the modern-day political experience. Machiavelli knows only princes and divides them into two subgroups, the “foxes” and “lions”. The nickname of “lion” applies to those politicians who manage to remain in power by use of force and perfidy,⁷ whereas the foxes stay at the helm through cunning, deal-wheeling and permanent maneuvering.

Be that as it might, the so-called White Fox (that is to say, a prince), held the reins of power in Georgia for 30 years; dizzy with the ploys of the fox, our society deluded itself for the same 30 years (from the Soviet-era “struggle against negative phenomena”), constantly awaited “heroism” from the prince (reforms, i.e. the establishment of new values), and once even tried to coerce the prince into an act of heroism (the “young reformers” attempt to win Shevardnadze over). This should be viewed as a fundamental mistake by our society. The prince cannot become a hero, for no man can do more than he can.

When the vanguard of the Rose Revolution broke into the parliament session hall, even our Heavenly Father would not have been able to keep Shevardnadze in his post, but he kept reading his address, as if nothing had happened, and his personal security detail had to use their muscles to pull him out the hall. As a Georgian saying goes, a fox was dying, but still headed for henhouse. The already former commander-in-chief of the Georgian Armed Forces did not have a single soldier under his command by then, yet he declared a state of emergency, which under other circumstances might have resulted in a national tragedy, but fortunately, that time around, it went down as a comical episode in history. The prince still fought to the end and even managed to keep his quarters at the Krtsanisi Government Residence.

By Jennings’ definition, the country is an arena for the prince, just a means, and by no means an end. Of course, this was equally true about both the Soviet Union and Georgia. “My most precious ‘object’ is called Georgia,” – the publishers made these words by Shevardnadze

the title of a book of his thoughts and aphorisms (Tbilisi, 2000, *Sakartvelo* Publishing House). The prince put the word “object” in quotation marks, as if they were marks from his own claws.

It should not come as a surprise if, under Shevardnadze and his predecessor, Russia’s agent policy proved to be the most fruitful precisely in Georgia compared to other countries along Russia’s borders. In addition to all other benefits, *Shevardnadze’s personality profile precluded the implementation of a more successful policy*. Wherever decisive, daring action was necessary, the fox was cautious, as is its nature. The period of stabilization during his presidency and decisive steps against Ioseliani and Kitovani (as well as getting rid of then Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachev’s godson in both literal and figurative senses, Varden Nadibaidze) started only after these much-respected corpses started to pose a threat to his physical existence. Having survived assassination attempts by sheer luck, Shevardnadze changed beyond recognition and started to make daring personnel decisions, but then went on to implement a policy of intrigue, wheeling and dealing, and bidding his time.

The public alternated between hopeful and suspicious views of Shevardnadze. He had always demonstrated selfishness, which is characteristic for princes, but at the same time he was known worldwide, which was what people factored in when they assessed him; people reckoned with the fact that Shevardnadze was to be reckoned with.⁸ Besides, compared to the eccentric Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze’s international political experience and his personal contribution toward the international recognition of Georgia’s independence, the country’s accession to international organizations and the launch of international projects made his kind of nomenclature feudalism more or less tolerable, especially as the recent experience of surviving a nightmare made even his minimal stabilization look like a godsend for a while.

This notwithstanding, the situation was gradually changing – the situation, but not Shevardnadze, he was the same. He had not done anything new or unusual in the 2 November 2003 parliamentary elections. He had lied and rigged the elections. But this brought the people to the end of their patience. Zurab Zhvania sensed – the gut feeling of an intelligent politician – where he could find the largest

“social capital”. He spoke everyone’s mind when he said that people felt *insulted* and angry. The fox had once again sunk the nation’s millennia-old dream under lies, but to his great surprise, it did not work. The fox, who had many times double-crossed his own people, this time found himself pulled down from the political Olympus by that very same people.

Birth of state from the spirit of truth

Among Shevardnadze’s achievements, one arouses a particularly intense feeling of gratitude. In the days of the Rose Revolution, he ensured the people’s unanimity and therefore, a clear formulation of the public demand. His rule had become so anti-society and mafia-like that the entire Georgian public rose up as one against the existing “law and order”, which accounted for the success of the revolution.

The people’s will is a binding message for the government. The Rose Revolution’s message was simple – “The Truth!” This message was sent to the government long time ago; “Tell the truth! We all ought to be saying the truth!” – the most popular hit song in the aftermath of the 9 April tragedy dealt with the nation’s political ideal.⁹ The Georgian people sorely missed law and order, i.e. the state, but a just, orderly state, not a Potemkin village. Accordingly, its leader was to be a truthful politician, not a fibster who had completely rigged the elections.

Shevardnadze simply did not believe in any political techniques unless they were based on lies. Deceitful rhetoric and false statements were a usual Soviet practice, and the rapid spread of anti-Communist sentiments during Gamsakhurdia’s presidency also stemmed from the public weariness of the Communist elite’s lies and longing for decent (fair) politics. Communists briefly remained in power in the Gamsakhurdia period, whereas under Shevardnadze, the Communist Party’s influence already vanished, but the Communist tag had always been used as a disguise for a chameleon which in effect was nothing but a ruling nomenclature; to the nomenclature, communism as a political idea was but a tool of promoting its plutocratic interests; as soon as communism went bankrupt, the chameleon changed its color and, aping Eduard was baptized as Giorgi, and Orthodox icons were hung in the offices where

Communist Party General Secretaries' portraits used to hang. The Shevardnadze-era elite has never had any respect for communist or any other ideals; the communist-era style of state government, i.e. the one that was based on falsehood and corruption, was in their flesh and blood even without any supporting doctrine. Of course, *corruption was bound to flourish under Shevardnadze, and it did.*

Because of his hypocritical and venal policy, the people no longer viewed Shevardnadze as their leader. By contrast, *Mikheil Saakashvili's popularity arose precisely from his image of a politician who speaks the truth. Demonstratively waving the photographs of the corrupt ministers' mansions at a government meeting proved to be more efficient than brandishing a sword.*

The Rose Revolution was a turning point in Georgian history. The most important thing that it brought was changes at the leadership level. The Shevardnadze-era elite was fundamentally incapable of building a normal state. Shevardnadze was the mastermind behind the feudal demesne (clannish and corrupt) governance system in modern Georgia (he called his favorite "object" a "half-state", after all, and this was one of the rare cases when he did not lie), although his half-state was still a state; in contrast to the feudal demesne system, whose adepts were all in their estate, the nomenclature parasites of Shevardnadze's half-state were sucking blood (money) from the state. Shevardnadze's weak state, which, however, was still a state, had many ready-made institutions, of which the new elite took advantage. The country's political and legal systems (the Constitution, laws, institution of the president, parliament, the National Bank, the Prosecutor-General's Office and the police, etc.) were not at all specifically designed for corrupt governance. The state required not so much to be built up as to be put into operation. But this would require a complete replacement of all top officials, which happened after the Rose Revolution. This was the main goal, otherwise, constitutional changes and another revamping of the political system seemed the most thankless task, although the new rulers (back then, it was still a triumvirate), started precisely with these things.

Overall, building statehood in Georgia is an artificial process, in other words, it begins from the top. One of the reasons for this is that

the Soviet state institutions have effectively been dismantled, and the new Georgia, as we saw, was born from chaos (that aside, the Soviet system itself was somewhat artificial and created from the top downwards according to the doctrine that was conceived in an office). This is why the will and inclinations of the elite (both political and civil society elite, but first and foremost, of the political one) are decisive factors in building the state. And the main thing here is overcoming the *Gemeinschaft* culture which is so deep-rooted in the Georgian reality. Otherwise we will go back to the era of lack of order.

At some ancient point in Georgian history, the state eroded and started to go down the slope of involution. In modern times, statehood is revived through the process which is opposite to the downhill movement – in less time and in presence of the specifics of the post-industrial era. In addition, if in the past the Georgian state was created by the social and economic development of the Georgian communities, now first state institutions are created before the development of social or economic patterns. This is why the elite, not the people, play the decisive role. For historical reasons, the Georgian people cannot place with the government a detailed order for any specific political project that would be tailored to adopt the Western or any other set of values because socially and economically, the vast majority of the population are undecided gullible dupes, whereas public demands are molded by the political interests of already established groups. Therefore, not only the political system, but also the modification of society in large part hinges on the tastes and orientation of the political and intellectual elite. In other words, in the paradoxical situation that has taken shape, the ruling elite is in charge of not only satisfying public demands, but also formulating them, at least to some extent. Fulfilling this task leaves much room for social engineering, but the limit which should not be transgressed is set by the people and clear-cut – it is so trivial but, despite that, the Georgian people lacked and missed it so much: *Law and order, maintained by politicians, Leviathan, speaking the language of justice, or, ultimately, a rule-of-law state.* Meeting this demand would unquestionably mean earning “surefire” social capital which every government should treasure if it wants to successfully carry out any political project.

Threats

This is precisely where the threat to the Rose Revolution government emanates from. The new elite will squander the aforementioned social capital, the people's trust, for no good purpose if corruption takes root among its ranks too. The people did not enter either integration into NATO or restoration of territorial integrity at the top of their list of demands. By demanding Shevardnadze's resignation, the people rejected falseness, corruption and perverse political ethics. However, signs of *elite corruption* have been noticeable from the very outset in the new government too. For the purpose of creating conditions for uprooting corruption, a necessary, but insufficient measure was taken: high salaries are paid to the upper level of establishment – members of parliament and ministers – but what is a little odd about this is that it improved the situation more at the lower levels.¹⁰ The centuries-old culture of *Gemeinschaft* exposes the new Western-educated politicians with the ambition to modernize society to strong temptation. The hackneyed issues of state racket and lobbying of personal business interests is a wide highway toward the creation of a new nomenclature; on the other hand, thanks to the efforts of the civil society and political opposition, as well as partly out of their own free will, the ruling team sidelined a couple of their corrupt members. The relentless government reshuffles make the ministers' overindulgence at least a little less possible. In addition, the authorities have openly declared war on the criminal kingpins; the education reform too, is a strong anti-corruption message in addition to its other benefits...

Perhaps for now, the only thing which would be fair to say is that in the Saakashvili period, state has mounted numerous offensives against corruption and is exercising its monopolistic right to violence with increasing success. It seems that the Saakashvili government has no serious rival for power.

But there can be different types of power.

What matters is that the law and order which will be established in the country are democratic. First, the Georgian people demand (support) democracy (the Rose Revolution is perhaps not a completely watertight argument in support of this, but nor is it entirely tenuous);

second, global influences and the foreign factor push Georgia toward Western-style law and order; in addition, paradoxically though this might sound, Russia too is prodding us toward the country's democratic evolution. Russia poses threats to the country's national security, making military and political integration into the West the only real guarantee of Georgia's security. *Georgia as a country has only a democratic future, or else it has no future at all. It is precisely the erosion of democracy that is the gravest threat faced by the country.*

Georgian democracy has too many flaws as yet, be it imperfections of the political structure (insufficient separation of powers and lack of checks and balances) or weakness of the judiciary, deficient electoral laws or underdeveloped civil society and support for an anti-democratic institution – the Georgian Orthodox Church¹¹.

The issues of territorial integrity, inadequate integration of ethnic minorities into the Georgian society, and in general, social consolidation could also be added to the list of threats and flaws in the development of the Georgian state, but these should suffice...

Notes:

¹ “Tses-rigi” used to mean both “law and order” and “legislation” in the Georgian language.

² See Charles King, Potemkin Democracy, *The National Interest* 3. 2001

³ The Social Democrats, leaders of the political movement of the early 20th century, had a contrary view. In their opinion, social problems were to be resolved first, and then the free working people would resolve the independence problem on their own.

⁴ For example, **Nodar Natadze**, later the chairman of the Popular Front, was an exception. He had made a name for himself as a fearless dissident. **Zurab Chavchavadze** was another exception; he had never been a political prisoner, but he established himself among the liberation movement with the help of Tamar Chkheidze, who worked with Chavchavadze as a team and delegated the authoritative powers of a political prisoner to him. **Zviad Gamsakhurdia** himself was also an exception: he had chosen to turn down in the past the glorious but hard-to-earn title of prisoner of conscience by making confessional statements to investigators and apologizing publicly, but thanks to a lack of information or some other factors, the public at large set down his months in forced exile at a shepherds' hut in Kizlyar as his “spell in prison”.

⁵ See Ghia Nodia, “Putting the State Back Together in Post-Soviet Georgia”, *Beyond State Crisis?* (Woodrow Wilson Center Press, Washington, D.C. 2002).

⁶ The concessions took indeed a heavy toll: Shevardnadze ceded Abkhazia and South Ossetia and deployed Russian troops as peacekeepers there; agreed to joint monitoring of the borders, etc.

⁷ **Jaba Ioseliani** might have laid claims to being a “lion”, but he still fell into the White Fox’s trap. As for the “Acharan Lion” **Aslan Abashidze**, he was so nicknamed because of his Turkish name (Arslan means “lion” in Turkish), otherwise he was a fox like Shevardnadze. The pseudo-lion of the “second political center” of Georgia, whom President Yeltsin gave the rank of general when Abashidze was already in the post of the head of an autonomous entity within a sovereign state live on TV(?!), ruled his share of Georgia in harmony with the White Fox. That these foxes’ tails were knotted together was best exposed during the Rose Revolution.

⁸ Honorable Doctor of Boston, Harvard, Atlanta, Los Angeles, Providence and Trieste Universities, winner of the Kant, Onassis, Nixon, Harvard, Wunsch and Israel Democracy Institute awards and destroyer of Berlin Wall.

⁹ Soviet troops violently broke up a protest in front of the Supreme Council building on 9 April 1989.

¹⁰ At any rate, both Zurabishvili, Salome and David, whose departure from the ranks of the ruling party and joining the opposition caused a stir, reproached the government effectively for the same thing: David Zurabishvili cited as the main reason for his “renegade” action the process of the transformation of the ruling team into a new clan; and according to Salome Zourabichvili, “demons should leave Georgia”; by demons she meant those corrupt officials who view their posts as tools for personal enrichment.

¹¹ The church is the most influential civil organization in the modern-day Georgia, a country with a high potential for religious fanaticism. The trajectory of the country’s future evolution depends in large part on how relations with the Church will be regulated.

The Georgian and Russian Churches are similar, and not only because of their co-religionism. Besides the dogmatic and theological issues, the influence of the Russian Church on the Georgian Church also spreads into areas of political values and civilization identity. However, the Russian Church is antagonistic toward Western social ideals, which is why strong anti-Western, and consequently, anti-democratic sentiments are growing in Georgian society.