

Road Leading Georgia to the European Union Membership

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Abstract

This article describes the political activities and political situation of Georgia after the collapse of Soviet Union; the article analyses the following issues: Why Georgia is willing to join European Union; why this prominent organization attracts the attention of most developed countries. The article researches the mutual interests of EU and Georgia. It emphasizes the importance of political reforms and goals that the new government of Georgia carried out after the "Rose Revolution" and how EU supported the new reforms in the country;

The article displays European Union's political position and support of Georgia during 2008 August war; it analyses the reasons of different reactions and political viewpoints by the countries of EU related to the War.

The article, also, examines the main points and principles of "Maastricht Treaty", "Lisbon Treaty" "Copenhagen Criteria". Obviously, almost every European country is willing to become the part of Union. The special requirements are offered by EU to the candidate countries to be satisfied. Here are discussed main criteria of joining European Union, how Georgia satisfies these criteria and whether Georgia is near to the EU integration or the goal of joining EU is still quite far away.

Keywords: Europeaness, Copenhagen criteria, *acquis communautaire*

Introduction

After collapse of Soviet Union post soviet countries gained independence and started to carry out their own foreign and internal policies. They were inspired with the intention to approach Europe and share the values and principles of Europe. As for Georgia, after gaining independence one of the most important goals of foreign policy of Georgia was European directed. After the "Rose Revolution" the representatives on new government and President of Georgia, Mr. Mikheil Saakashvili started to carry out European policy successfully. This article clearly defines the War of August 2008 that Georgia experienced and somehow, after bloody august, resolved the conflict with Russia with the help of European Union. Without the French president, Nikolas Sarkozy, Georgia would be in a great trouble. Europe did play the role of mediator between Georgia and Russia. Nikolas Sarkozy and his foreign minister, Bernard Kouchner, took responsibility to encourage negotiation between these two countries. They proposed a six-point ceasefire plan signed by Georgia's Mikheil Saakashvili and Russia's Dmitry Medvedev. Europe played very important role in stopping Russia's aggression in Georgia.

Georgia, willing to integrate in EU still struggles to satisfy particular standards that EU sets for the candidate countries. In spite of the fact that, nowadays, Georgia is not able to have strong economy, strong democratic institutions and territorial stability it strives to deserve the place

in EU. Many reforms, struggling against corruption and carrying out appropriate policies in the fields of education, employment, politics and legislation is guarantee of better future of Georgia.

Factor of Russia in the foreign and internal policy of Georgia truly plays a significant role but if Europe and International Society will stand beside Georgia and assists this country to carry out democratic reforms successfully then the question of the integration of Georgia into European Union turns out to be real and actual.

Georgia on the Road Leading through the Membership of European Union

Georgia-European Union Relations before the war of 2008 could be considered in the framework of economic, humanitarian and trade relations. Diplomatic and friendly relations between Georgia and the member states of EU was strengthening and developing.

According to Dr. Nick Chitadze's Book "Geopolitics", The International Relations of Georgia starts from 20th century after the collapse of Soviet Union, when 15 new states started to pace towards democracy. The concept of Democracy for this country was very complex issue. As the Country experienced Civil War, War with Russia, unsolved territorial conflicts and the Economic situation that was reflected in the transmission period from Socialistic Economy to the Free Market Economy. At that time, the

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foreign policy of Georgia tended to become more Euro-orientated, the main goal of Georgian foreign policy was to become the member of European Union.

The Research will mainly be focused on the following questions: Why Georgia is willing to join European Union? Why this Union seems to be more and more attractive for the post Soviet Union countries? And why EU inspires many developed countries to integrate in EU and makes many prominent member states to feel proud of already being the member of EU?

If we look through the definition of EU we come to the point where there is the real meaning of EU. "Consider a mug of American coffee. It is found everywhere. It can be made by anyone. It is cheap—and refills are free. Being largely without flavor it can be diluted to taste. What it lacks in allure it makes up in size. It is the most democratic method ever devised for introducing caffeine into human beings. Now take a cup of Italian espresso. It requires expensive equipment. Price-to-volume ratio is outrageous, suggesting indifference to the consumer and ignorance of the market. The aesthetic satisfaction accessory to the beverage far outweighs its metabolic impact. It is not a drink; it is an artifact" (Judt, 2005)

The author compares Europe and USA with all their attractiveness, where more empathy is given to Europe. It is pointed out that Europe is the union that, merely, attracts almost all the countries and it is compared with the cup of Italian Espresso that requires expensive ingredients, it means that EU requires special standards and features for integration and admission of being member. It can not be made by everyone and it is not found everywhere, so, not everyone can join EU. It is not a drink, it is an artifact means that EU is not just a Union of European Member States, but it is more that a single organization, single union, it is the face of Europe, straggling to establish democracy, freedom, respect of law, economic stability and peace among the Europe.

After taking into consideration all the above mentioned facts, it is clear, why the goal of Georgia's foreign policy is to gain the status of being the EU member. Before discussing the Georgia as a candidate member of European Union let us look through the Chronology of Basic events in Georgia-EU Relations.

"Relations between the EU and Georgia started in 1992. The EU was one of the first to assist Georgia in the difficult early years of transition and all in all the assistance mounted 420 million Euro in 1992-2004. The European Commission (EC) opened the representation of its Delegation in Tbilisi in 1995. The cornerstone of EU-Georgia relations is the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA). The PCA provides for wide-ranging cooperation in the areas of political dialogue, trade, investment, economic, legislative and cultural cooperation. The inclusion of Georgia in the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP)

on 14 June 2004 marked a significant step forward in EU – Georgian relations. On 14 November 2006 the EU – Georgia ENP Action Plan was adopted. Its implementation builds ties in new areas of cooperation and encourages and supports Georgia's objective of further integration into European economic and social structures. In spring 2009, the EU launched the Eastern Partnership with the objective of supporting political and socio-economic reforms in Georgia, as well as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. Until the August 2008 war between Georgia and Russia the EU was the largest donor in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Although still able to support projects for the local population in Abkhazia, EC-funded projects inside South Ossetia have come to an end since August 2008" (Delegation of the European Union in Georgia)

Actually, In spite of the fact that Georgia is not the EU member, it still receives some social, political and financial support from EU. It means that not only Georgia has the strategic interest in EU but EU also possesses some interests towards Georgia. Of course these interests are related to the geo-strategic location of Georgia and energy issues.

As is known Europe consumes energy resources from Russia. But Russia considers these resources as the privilege by using them as a political means to feel superior state in Europe. In winters of 2006 and 2009 Russia stopped providing the whole Europe with the gas and proved his monopoly on energy resources. So, from that time on, Europe started to look for the reliable energy partner in the South Caucasus.

According to Dr. Chitadze's "Geopolitics" "Georgia's role to serve as the transit country that connects Europe and South Caucasus in the terms of trade and transportation was weakened by the invasions and territorial conflicts that the country experienced in early years. Moreover, after becoming the part of the Soviet Union Georgia simply lost its status as the transit country. Georgia's attempt to gain independence and freedom and launch in the world political area as the important Geo-political country failed and its role as, simply, political non-active country was continued. After the collapse of Soviet Union Georgia faced extremely tough political and economical crisis. Due to the social and territorial conflicts these problems were provoked even harder in Tbilisi, Abkhazia and Tskhinvali regions.

Two main projects: "Silk Road Project" and "Caspian energy Projects" played very important role to survive Georgia from these crises." (Chitadze, 2011)

Actually Georgia regained the statues of the transit country connecting South Caucasus with countries of Europe. Besides these advantages Georgia has great many features that may attract the interests of European Union. Let us point out some of the following geopolitical characteristics of Georgia that makes it prominent in the South Caucasus Region:

1. Georgia has the Central location in the Caucasus Region;
2. Georgia is the neighbor county of Turkey, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Russia;
3. Georgia is surrounded by the Black Sea that encourages Sea-Trade;

As for the interests of Georgia, it is looking for the political, financial and economic shelter in EU. Georgia seeks in EU to gain support and solve the following problems: to establish broad financial, economic and trade relations; to solve territorial conflicts; to develop democracy, rule of law and freedom; to provide the modern educational, social and political reforms, etc.

Obviously, we made clear some of the mutual interests of Georgia and EU. Georgia would get a great benefit in joining EU as the country is still under the process of developing and membership of EU would provide it with a great encouragement in order to make better changes in ongoing political, democratic and economic processes and gain the status of the prominent, worthy member country of EU. So, by joining in EU Georgia will get great many benefits from European Union but what will be the benefits of EU to admit Georgia in the Union? Will Georgia be the ordinary member country who just gets some profits from EU or will it make positive influence on EU and take important steps in the political, social and economic fields of the Union?

The answer to this question is clearly figured out in the interview with a Political Expert, Dr. Nika Chitadze. From his statements in the interview can be picked up the important points he made related to the topic concerning the benefits of EU by joining Georgia in its union. These benefits may be as follows:

1. Attracting the interests of Post Soviet Countries and prove that EU is enlarging;
2. Develop trade relations from Asia to Europe, where Georgia would serve as the transit country;
3. Develop "Silk Road" Project and "TRACECA" Project and increases European Investments in Georgia;
4. Improve civilian factors;"

For the first time let us consider the issue of enlargement. The fact that European Union is enlarging makes positive influence in its international prestige. From the beginning the number of the members of EU equaled just 6 member countries, but now this number increased up to 27 member countries. This fact again proves the assumption that in spite of the financial problems that, nowadays, the Southern member countries face, European Union still represents the successful International Organization. Accepting Georgia as the member of EU will be an approval that EU is enlarging and supporters of the values and principles of Europe are presented even from the Post Soviet Countries.

Second factor that EU may benefit could be the Geopolitical factor. European Union is enlarging in the South Caucasus Region. As we know in 2007, March 1, Romania and Bulgaria joined the European Union; it means that European Union launch in the area of Black Sea region. So, if the European Union reaches the South Caucasus Region then Georgia will have opportunities to direct its foreign policy goals to Europe.

Third, if the goal of Georgia is achieved and Georgia joins EU then EU will have guarantee that there will be settled the stability in Georgia. This stability will encourage the development of trade issues, it means that the "Silk Road Project" will be re-developed and "TRACECA" Project will be strengthened. As we know, the aim of EU is to accomplish and realize "NABUKO" and "TRACECA" Projects. In these Projects Georgia plays an important and active role, it again serves as the transit country. So, the stability of Georgia will have the positive influence on the politics of European Union. It will increase foreign investments from Europe as well.

Fourth factor represents the civilian factor that means that, after joining EU the democratic values will be increased in Georgia that encourages stable and secure environment for European Union in Georgia. Economy of Georgia will be developed and increased. There might decrease the number of illegal migration. Due to the terrible economic conditions a lot of Georgian citizens migrate in Europe where they are involved in crime and illegal activities. The reduction of migration will decrease and solve the issues related to drug use, trafficking and so on.

One of the positive points in EU-Georgian relations is the fact that the present government of Georgia clearly displayed its European oriented aim of Foreign Policy; its struggle towards the establishment of European values and principles. After the "Rose Revolution" in 2003, in November, Georgia and European Union started new relationships. In 2004 President Mikheil Saakashvili came into power in Georgia. He has promoted an ambitious program of political and economical reforms. Georgia started to fight against corruption, the business and investment climate was improved, tax revenue was increased, armed forces were modernized and etc. Georgia successfully strengthened its relations with EU, USA and NATO as well. So, Georgia, step by step, approached the road leading through the membership of European Union.

In discussing the relations EU-Georgia Relations more emphasis is given to the 2008 August War; Russia-Georgian War that simply shocked the European Society and Politicians. At that time numerous articles were published criticizing the political reaction of Europe towards Russia. Some critics positively evaluated the role of EU while others showed negative attitude towards the reaction of Europe. Some politicians suggested EU to take radical, hard measures in respect of Russia and while others were satis-

fied with the political response of EU.

During the August war, the international community was gravely concerned with the unraveling situation. "The West considered Russia's military action as unacceptable, and criticized Russia for using disproportionate force during the conflict; further it condemned Russia's decision to recognize the independence of Georgia's secessionist regions and called for a peaceful solution of the conflicts. However, the EU avoided sanctions or negative conditionality towards Moscow. As admitted by EU's special envoy to the South Caucasus Peter Semneby, the European Union recognizes Georgia's territorial integrity within the internationally recognized borders. That is the basic parameter within which further measures have to be taken, yet, it is clear that we have all failed. One of our main immediate objectives was to prevent the tensions that existed in Georgia and in the conflict regions from running out of control and from developing into a war. In this sense, we did fail" (Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty, 2008)

Actually, without Nikolas Sarkozy, the French president, Georgia would be in a great trouble. Europe did play the role of mediator between Georgia and Russia. Nikolas Sarkozy and his foreign minister, Bernard Kouchner, took responsibility to encourage negotiation between these two countries. They proposed a six-point ceasefire plan signed by Georgia's Mikheil Saakashvili and Russia's Dmitry Medvedev. Europe played very important role in stopping Russia's aggression in Georgia. But some politicians do not recognize Europe's braveness to stop Russia; they expected more radical actions from Europe, more than just the role of mediator.

As the president of the Robert Schuman Foundation assumed "Without the European Union's intervention and rapid reaction on the part of the French president the Russians would already have made Tbilisi theirs". (Barysch)

Unfortunately, Russians ignored the requirement to pull their troops out of Georgia but still military tension in Georgia was stopped and the threat of war was overcome. But the most surprising thing that could not be left without attention was the political response of France, Germany and Italy that has been completely opposite to that of Britain, Sweden and the east Europeans. The French and Germans, eager to preserve their links to Moscow have tried to be neutral, while Italians have blamed the entire war on Mr Saakashvili. The British, Swedes and most east Europeans have loudly condemned Russia's aggression. So, unfortunately EU's common foreign policy is not strong enough to have mutual understanding and assistance. Europe did not share the same political viewpoints at the moments of expressing their own analysis of the Georgian-Russian War.

Why did not Europe stand united in their political actions towards Russia? We finally, come to the point that, in spite of the great help that France made for Georgia, still, the key to understanding the EU's attitude to Georgia is

the factor of Russia. Without taking Russia into account it is impossible to explain why the EU's policy towards Georgia and the entire South Caucasus has been so slow and cautious. Today when Europe receives significant amount of energy resources such as natural gas and oil as well as raw materials from Russia, the European leaders have been reluctant to spoil their relationship with Russia for such a small country as Georgia. This was the case even when Russia was directly breaching international law, for instance, violating Georgia's air space or indirectly supporting the separatist regimes in the secessionist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Being increasingly dependent on Russian energy resources, many European countries have chosen to ignore Mr. Putin's autocratic excesses and to turn a blind eye to the damage Russia inflicts on Georgia.

In his interview Mr. Nika Chitadze gives quite good response of this question: "The clearest example of the lack of consensus in European Union is the political reaction of European Union in the War of 2008 and the meeting of European Council in September 1, 2008, when several opinions and initiatives were represented concerning Russia. Poland proposed to impose sanctions against Russian federation while Italy proposed to impose some formal procedures against Russia. So, this fact also displays the different political viewpoints of European Union. But nowadays, we can say that this problem is overcome and after 3 years the countries that had very friendly and warm relations with Russia supported the resolution that blamed Russia in invasion. Of course the main factor was energy resources. As we know Germany is depended on Russia's energy resources for 30 percent, Italy-for 20 percent, France consumes for Russia 12 milliard cubic meter energy resources. Although, Poland, Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia are depended on Russia's energy resources for 90 percent but they expressed different political position. Besides political reasons, there are some private interests to mention, like the close, friendly and business relations of Mr. Putin and Mr. Berlusconi." (Chitadze, European Union and Georgia, 2012)

European Union constantly proves in his action that EU cares for Georgia. One of these examples is the monitoring missions of EU in Georgia. The European Union Monitoring Mission (EUMM) in Georgia is an autonomous mission led by the EU under the EU Common security and defense policy (CSDP).

Following the 2008 South Ossetia war in August 2008, the EU declared on the 15th of September 2008 to deploy a monitoring mission to Georgia. The main objectives of the mission are to fulfill the European commitment in re-establishing stability and normalization in Georgia, South Ossetia and Abkhazia; to observe the compliance of human rights and the fulfillment of the six-point-program established under the French brokered peace agreement between Georgia and Russia on 12 August 2008. In July

2009, the mandate of the mission was extended for another year until 14 September 2010 and in August 2010 it was extended once more until 14 September 2012.

Obviously, almost every European country is willing to become the part of Union. They do much for achieving the aims of their foreign policy. EU on its own side offers special requirements to the candidate countries to be satisfied. What are the criteria of joining European Union? Before considering Georgia as the part of European Union let us define some of the criteria that the country should satisfy to join EU. They are: geographic criteria, political criteria, economic criteria, institutional adaptation and legislation system.

1. Geographic Criteria: - Maastricht Treaty 1992 (paragraph-49) says that: "Every European country that respects the principles and values of Europe can apply for the membership" This paragraph means that the country that wants to join EU should be European but there is not mentioned in any paragraph that Non-European countries have no rights to apply for the membership. Though, the case of Morocco that was rejected from membership due to not being the European State, is a clear example that the one of the main criteria of applying for membership of EU is Europeaness; Before European Union discuss the membership of any country first of all this country should gain the status of European Country. For instance: Baltic States before joining EU gained the status of European Countries. They were not considered in EU as the Post Soviet Countries. The same is with cypress and Georgia as well. Georgia has already maintained the status of European Country. The important poin is the speech of the former Prime Minister of Georgia, Mr. Zurab Zhvania : I am Georgian, therefore, I am European" (Kakha Gogolashvili)

2. Political Criteria: Before membership of EU every country undergoes several observations and checking regarding their political criteria. The political criterion that defines the readiness of the country to join EU is known as "Copenhagen Criteria". In 1993, in Copenhagen, European Council developed special criteria for EU membership. In the Copenhagen Summit decision there is written: "The candidate country applying for the membership of EU should have stable institutions that guarantee democracy, rule of law, human rights defense and respect of minorities. Moreover, the country should achieve its political, monetary and economical aims. Let us consider some of the criteria that European Union paid most important attention to. They are the following: Democratic Elections, the role of National Parliament, function of Executive Branch and Supreme Courte and Anti-Terrorist measures.

3. Economic Criteria: The economic criteria of "Copenhagen" demands free, liberal Market Economy, law in force, macroeconomic and fiscal stability, human recourses, physical capital, development of small and big businesses, trade system with Europe, independence of central

bank, law level of inflation and stability of national currency.

In the regulation of economy and trade policy of EU, the most recent "Lisbon Treaty", that came into force on December 1, 2009, played important role. Before the treaty the agreements and competences in external Trade Policy were shared with National Parliament but after "Lisbon Treaty" All the trade competences and agreements concerning with the trade issues will be ratified by the parliament of EU. Actually, the trade negotiations are done by the Parliament of European Union. So, "Lisbon Treaty" significantly increased the role of Parliament of EU.

4. Institutional Adaptation: Due to the fact that the big states like Poland joined European Union the balance of the vote system has been changed. The big states had 10 voices before, Spain had 8 votes. 62 votes out of 87 decided the certain case. The expansion of European Union caused misbalance in the votes. It meant that the small states would have monopoly on taking decisions that concerned the big states. So, in 2001, "Treaty of Nice" was adapted that balanced the votes of EU states after expansion. According to the new system big states have 29-29 votes, Spain and Poland have 27-27 votes, and small states have few votes comparing to big states according to their number of population. Now 232 votes out of 321 make decision. Every expansion is depended on institutional changes of EU that's why European Union prefers to join several states together rather that join them individually.

5. Legislation System: Every state that applies for membership should share almost 80-100 000 pages of EU legislation called: "acquis communautaire" to its own legislation.

As for Georgia, it is still passing the long road that leads to the membership of European Union. What should Georgia do next? What are the requirements and criteria that EU demands from the candidate countries in order to become the member of this big, successful and prominent European family?

In the above written criteria there is not mentioned the territorial integrity of the member states. One of the most important criteria of the candidate country is not to have territorial conflicts. With regards to Georgia, one of the main concerns includes territorial integrity of the country. Though, in the history of EU there was a precedent when in 2009, Cyprus, with territorial conflicts, joined European Union. Currently, territorial conflict is still unresolved in this country but in spite of this fact, Cyprus satisfies some standards of EU, such as: Human Right Defense, Rule of Law, Development of Market Economy, etc.

In case of Georgia, in order to join European Union the country struggles to realize its own objectives such as: Establishment of Democratic Institutions, Development of perfect Election Systems and Independence of Media and Legislative Systems. Georgia should not be satisfied with

above mentioned achievements and continue to pass democratic reforms, reforms concerning social-economical issues. If Georgia does not yield to struggle for achieving and come closer to the standards of EU than the membership of Georgia in EU would be in the list of discussion and consideration. Of course, approaching the standards of EU would take years, but this really worth for the country to find its own place in the global world.

While discussing the membership of Georgia in EU here again emerges the question of Russia. Russia will try its best not to allow Georgia to join EU. But International Democratic Society and Europe should be more active, should attempt to have diplomatic influence on Russia, disclose its own interests in South Caucasus Region, make Russia respect democracy of Georgia and independence of Georgia in its external and internal policy and the most important thing is again the unity of EU. There are several countries of EU that have friendly relations with Russia and this fact somehow delays integration of Georgia in EU.

In closing, let us look through the road leading to EU that Georgia is passing with patience, hope and encouragement; examine the standards and requirements of EU that Georgia has or has not reached yet. And according to these achievements how far is the integration of Georgia into that prominent Union.

For the first time let's consider economic criteria - GDP of Georgia for one person equals to 3300 dollars while in Europe this number goes up to 20 000 USD. It means that the rapid economic development for the country is more essential.

Second- strengthening of democratic institutions play crucial role in the development of the country. But still, there are some political parties and certain politicians who stop and delay the further process of development of the country. It is extremely important to increase the level of political culture in Georgia. As the president of Georgia, Mikheil Saakashvili stated the mental revolution took place in Georgia and brought into the power great many young political leaders who got education in Europe. This fact makes quite good influence on the country's future success and prominence. It will, inevitably, encourage the process of getting closer and closer to EU. Close relations with EU should exceed Geographical, Economical and Political relations and should go far beyond the development of political ideas, political viewpoints and political culture.

If Georgia fulfills all the above mentioned weaknesses it does not mean that it will achieve its goal of integration but there are still a lot to do; to do not just for joining EU and satisfying its standards but for the country itself; for the Georgian society to live better and prospered in their own countries. In spite of the close relations with EU, NATO and Europe Georgia is quite far from sharing the prominence of the membership of EU. But, undoubtedly, the former government of Georgia dedicates its entire po-

litical means to bring Georgia up to the high level of living standards; guarantee rule of law, democracy, freedom and security to its own society.

Conclusion

This article has outlined and analyzed the outcomes of the Georgian- European relations consisting conflicts with Russia, South Osetia. Attention was paid on implementation of the recently announced reforms of Georgian president, Mikheil Saakashvili. The West bears significant responsibility to induce Georgia into pursuing a democratic path. Currently, the military conflict is over. International Society and Europe assists Georgian government to promote the rule of law, create an independent judiciary, defense human rights, establish democratic election, freedom and democracy, strengthen decentralization and guarantee property rights.

Of course, the war with Russia dramatically changed political situation in Georgia. Defacto authorities of South Ossetia willing to integrate with North Ossetia are aiming to become the part of Russia. Moreover, they carry out the policy directed by Russians. The thing Georgia should do in this case is to concentrate on economic, social and political development, be the candidate country to join European Union Structures, it should become more and more attractive for Abkhaz or South Ossetians; convince them that their right and democratic values will be respected and their freedom and independence will be guaranteed within Georgia.

If Georgia fulfills and realizes this goal then it will be easier and real for Georgia to pass the road leading through the European Union successfully and find its place in European Structures, finally join the big, prominent family of Europe and become the member, part of European Union.

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