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“A Promised land”: Elite Discourse on “Europeanness” in Georgia

Introduction

The formulation of national identity and its impact over the national and foreign policies is the topic of active discussions between the political science theorists. How the national identity emerges and develops and what forces generate it, and what are its effects on foreign policy are the questions this research paper looks at. The paper will examine the discourse of “Europeanness” among the government elites since the independence of Georgia. It will use framework of the Constructivist theory of identity formation and focus on the role of elites in this process and furthermore will try to answer how identity is manifested in foreign policy priorities.

To explain identity formation of Georgia is important given the fact that it has an impact on the ongoing political processes in the country. As Wendt claimed identity is an important factor defining interests of the state and interests on their own generate the national security policy of the country (Katzenstein 1996, 537). One of the most important aspects is formation of a foreign policy of a state. European identity has prompted Georgia's foreign policy priorities such as joining European Union and NATO. Furthermore, “an identity-based approach also has the potential to offer a deeper and more complete understanding of the complex web of problems characterizing Russo-Georgian relations... neither the Russian nor the Soviet empires are seen by Georgians as “European” (Kakachya 2012, 7), considering this, Georgia refuses to be part of any type of pan-Eurasian project and views itself as the part of European community. Georgia similarly to the Baltic States declared itself to have returned to the European family. A narrative was created that the seven decades of the Soviet rule was insulating the country from the European civilization. The leadership argued that it was necessary to restore the historical justice and bring the country back to the civilization it belonged. European identity is manifested in the claim that “by its essence, Georgia is part of Europe, it should be recognized as such and be part of main institutions of the West such as NATO and the European Union” (Nodia 2009, 94).

The article will look at the political elite of Eduard Shevardnadze and Mikheil Saakashvili government's and try to study to what level they have shaped country's identity. The paper will apply the methods of discourse analysis of

important public addresses, inauguration speeches and strategic security and foreign policy documents. Paper will look at their rhetoric, use of historical sentiments, symbols and narratives that are laying a foundation for construction of Georgia's European identity.

Research Methodology

The paper will rely on the discourse analysis in understanding how Europe is portrayed by the Georgian Elite. By looking at the inauguration speeches, important public addresses (including addresses to the parliament) and strategic documents such as foreign policy strategy and national security concepts under Eduard Shevardnadze's and Mikheil Saakashvili's governments, it will try to identify the context and meaning of the depiction of Europe. In other word, the paper tries to understand how does Georgia's political elite reinforces the idea of Europe and how does it represent Georgian identity and its main characteristics.

First, the essay discusses Constructivist explanation of the role of elites in identity development during the critical junctures. It correspondingly looks at how identity is manipulated or altered by political elites during the critical junctures. Afterwards, the paper discusses the politics of governing elites during Shevardnadze and Saakashvili tenures and attempts to demonstrate that their rhetoric, use of historical sentiments and symbols established a narrative, which laid foundation for the construction of Georgia's European identity.

Discourse analyses presents the best possible methods for studying elite outlook as "[t]he theory and practice of critical discourse analysis focus on the structures of text and talk" (Van Dijk 1993, 259). It allows to understand in what reference Europe is portrayed and what are the motives behind the formulation of the narrative. Discourse analysis allows a researcher to identify who is speaking, in what setting and what actions/historical occurrences are they referring. Through understanding that discourse is an institutionalized way of talking that regulates and reinforces action and thus is utilized to exert power and influence (Wodak 2009,

35). "Critical theorists have argued that the study of the discursive construction of identities and relations can offer a valuable alternative to traditional approaches to the analysis of power and control in organizations" (Nelson and Hardy 2002, 29).

I, throughout analyzing the texts and speeches have taken into account structure, stature, setting, participants, purposes, key, topic, channel and message form as defined by Hymes (quoted in Coulthard, 2014, 44). Furthermore, the paper looks why the discourse on Europeanness trumped all the other competing discourses, it guises at the "scope" or a "reach" of a discourse and whether the group (in this case elite) managed to get their message across and mobilize people around it (Norman Fairclough in Woidak and Clinton ed., 2005, 56).

More specifically, the paper analysis Eduard Shevardnadze's and Saakashvili's inauguration speeches and their important public speeches and interviews to the national and international media. The paper also scrutinizes strategic documents such as "National Security Concept" of 2005 and 2011 and "Foreign Policy Strategy" of 2011. It will look at the EU Survey conducted by the Caucasus Research Resources Center and commissioned by the European Commission. The EU Survey demonstrates public sentiments towards the EU and

represents a relevant tool for understanding to what extent public opinion reflects the elite discourse. Finding data of 1990's was connected to more difficulties than the records of Saakashvili's presidency due to the fact that the digitalization of the documents and news magazines from Shevardnadze's period has rarely been a case.

The discourse analysis, textual and speech analysis demonstrate that Europe is often presented in light of representing "natural home" of Georgia, and that Georgia is primordially European nation. "Return to Europe" is the most often repeated sentiment and "restoring the historical justice" is the spirit that justifies Georgian aspiration to the European structures. The historical events, such as Georgian kings missions, Georgian participation in Crusades, Myth about Argonauts and the identity of Georgia as bridge between the civilizations is often repeated by the leaders.

Critical Junctures and Redirection of Political Path

Milan Kundera when talking about the meaning of Europe to Hungarians and Czechs points out that "'Europe' does not represent a phenomenon of geography but a spiritual notion synonymous to the 'West'". Similarly Georgian elite identifies Europe with the West and the word is often used as synonymous. As early as 1920's Noe Jordania, the head of the Government of Democratic Republic of Georgia (1918-1921), declared at the constituent assembly: "Our [Georgian] life at present and in future... is closely linked to the West and nothing can cut off this links" (Jones 2013, 251). Although, one year later, Red Army occupied Georgia and the country stayed isolated from the European community until its independence.

Historically, Georgia has been subject of the Arab, Mongol, Seljuk, Persian, Ottoman and Russian spheres of influence for significant amount of time in each case. In recent times, the country has been insulated from the European political and historical structures for more than 70 years, under the Soviet Union. However, today Georgia's European identity is often viewed as inseparable part of the nation, while 37 percent of Georgians don't know that Georgia is member of European Council and only small number of Georgians have adequate information on what the European Union stands for and what programs it undertakes in Georgia (EU Survey, 2011). Despite the fact, 88 percent of Georgians support Georgia's membership of the European Union.

The establishment of the discourse of Georgia's Europeanness took start at the eve of the fall of the Soviet Union and Georgia's declaration of independence, when the country was pledged in the identity crisis. At the declaration of independence country had to redefine its identity from the Soviet imperial narrative to a national one. The redefinition of identity coincided with chaos and conflicts. The critical juncture of identity formation gave momentum to the elite to step in and play central role. Throughout the paper I will argue that Georgia that had hardly any ties with Europe was presented as a European nation.

The role of the elites in the identity formation is well presented by the Constructivism. In Constructivist theory the concepts of identity formation has a central role. Constructivism argues that identity formation takes place during the critical junctures when the political landscape of a state is fundamentally changed. As this essay outlines, in case of Georgia, the critical juncture is connected to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the country up-to-date remains in the process of

redefinition its identity. For constructivists national identity and interests are subject to modification and represent the product of certain historical developments (Onuf 2002, 4).

State identities are likely to be challenged during critical junctures that are defined as “perceived crisis situations resulted by total policy failures, also prompted by external events” (Olsen 2006, 253). To follow Martin Lipset and Stein Rokkan’s definition these critical junctures are turning points in the society that lead to the ultimate redirection of its political path. They occur during the political reorientation period of a society that is followed by development of a new path in social and political life (Collier and Collier 1991, 39). Critical junctures give the possibility to the governing elite and policy-makers to bring forward new ideas and reorganize traditional ones. “Critical junctures are periods when a particular option is selected from a range of alternatives, thereby channeling future movement in a specific direction” (Mahoney and Schensul 2006, 460).

The starring importance of elites in identity formation is discussed in Karen Cerulo’s article Identity Construction: New Issues and New Dimensions (1997) where she maintains that elites create myths and icons of the enemies and friends of the state. Another important work in the field belongs to Stein Rokkan (Rokkan and Flora. 1999), where he mentions that the governing elites are utmost actors in the formation of collective identity. Elite is the driving force behind nation’s political, economic and cultural unification and “[i]f citizens make a strong psychological identification with the nation and internalize national symbols, political leaders are better able to mobilize public sentiment toward a political goal in times of crisis by using communication strategies that emphasize positive themes of national identity” (Hutcheson, et al. 2004, 29). Similarly, as Reinhold Niebuhr notes, to make themselves distinct from other, some nations create “social myths” to justify their existence. These myths generate “collective conscience” through positively assessing national history and present themselves as superior over the other nations. These myths are popularized by political and cultural institutes, such as schools, churches and mass-media (Niebuhr 1967, Deutsch 1953, quoted in Hutcheson, et al. 2004). Elites search for new ideas, and rely on them in the course of systematic political and mental transitions (Marcussen, et al. 1999, 627).

Constructivism provides the most relevant explanation of identity construction in case of Georgia. Since independence Georgian governments have used historical perceptions and symbols to claim Georgia has been historically European nation. Elites were putting emphasis on Georgia’s links to Europe. They were stressing on the historical occurrences that would present Georgia as European by its essence. Elite emphasized the archeological findings, Georgian kings’ missions to Europe and upheld the idea that Europe started in Georgia. They underline Georgian links to Baltic states, that were subject of the similar historical experience and successfully managed to rejoin the European family. In Georgian elites’ opinion historical injustice prevented Georgia to build ties with the Europe and it was necessary to restore historical justice.

„I am Georgian – Therefore I am European“

The famous statement “I am Georgian and therefore I am European” at the parliamentary session of the Council of Europe by the chairman of the Georgian

Parliament, Zurab Zhvania, at the entry of Georgia to the Council of Europe well projects Georgia's assertion of being "European". Zhvania's speech reflects the narrative that became to dominate Georgian political life since the independence and was translated into a foreign policy priority of the country (Kakachya 2013, 47). In 90's "Georgia found itself plunged into a modern version of Hobbes's state of nature, with no effective state institutions, paramilitary clans-cum-mafias fighting for power, gun-toting brigands collecting their own "taxes" on the roads, and merchants wishing only for more orderly and predictable racketeers" (Nodia 1995, 105). Collective identity and institutional crisis was manifest in the multi-dimensional and variegated political spectrum and grotesque groups that emerged during 90's.

"Despite the fact that Georgia shares a compact geographic area, similar past, common cultural practices, and a long, interlinked history with other Caucasian nations, it faces a dilemma how to identify itself within the region... Georgia potentially could associate itself with a post-Soviet, Caucasian, or even Middle Eastern identity if it wanted to. It also could utilize multiple regional identities which cannot be limited just to one regional vector" (Kakachya 2012, 7). However, the integration with Europe and the West has become the *modus vivendi* of Georgia's political elite.

Since the independence the idea of the "West" gained influence on the attempt of Georgia to become European. The desire of elites to bring European identity forward is related to their aspiration to distinct the Georgian identity from the Post-Soviet one. Taking into account that political elites of Georgia consider Russia as a successor of the Soviet empire, any kind of integration within the post-Soviet space is perceived as the threat to national identity (Kakachya 2013). "In the late Soviet period, it was no longer the rejection of Islam that defined Georgians as Christians, but the rejection of communism that defined them as Europeans" (Jones 2013, 252). Today its rejection of Russia is what defines Georgia as European. Furthermore, after the 2008 August War, Georgia framed Russian aggression as an attack on "European values of human rights, democracy and sovereignty, drawing parallels with the Soviet invasion of Poland in 139, the crushing of the Hungarian revolt in 1956 and the occupation of Prague in 1968" (Jones 2013, 240).

Alexander Rondeli, one of the leading International Relations scholars in Georgia, considers that "it will be oversimplification to say that Georgia now considers Russia as the devil incarnate, an enemy". He quotes Stephen Jones, saying that 'until the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, liberal Russia was for Georgians, despite its autocratic tradition, a channel to the west and Georgia's incorporation into the Russian Empire in the first decade of the 19th century reinforced the Georgian sense of Europeaness'. After 1917 Bolshevik Russia, no longer looking West, was not regarded by independent Georgia (1918-21) as a part of modern Europe... The Soviet attempt to isolate Georgia from Europe made the latter a pristine and symbolic antithesis to communism's Oriental backwardness" (Rondeli 2001, 206).

Russia represents the "other" and distancing Tbilisi from Moscow creates the feeling of belonging to Europe. The idea of detaching a country from the distinct "other", for reorganizing political vector, is not a Georgian phenomenon. In 1998 Norman Davies was writing that the idea of the "West" and "Europe" is

used for political reasons by those who want to reinforce their identity and distance themselves from neighbours (Davies 1998, 22). Similarly sociologist Gerard Delanty argued that the idea of Europe became a political football through which groups try to define themselves as different from others (Delanty 1995, 135). He further brings up the point that Slovenians are proud that Vienna is closer to them than Belgrade and Baltic States are trying to integrate into European structures to distance

themselves from Moscow. Eric Hobsbawm similarly notes that for Croatia and Slovenia Europeanism is utilized to erase the label of a “Yugoslavian State” (Hobsbawm 1991).

Eduard Shevardnadze’s Government

The foundation of the European discourse finds its roots under Shevardnadze’s presidency. In 1997, at the address to the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington Shevardnadze declared that “whatever topic an European politician might be discussing, he can’t avoid the post-Cold War realities – new world order and the place of Eastern European and new independent states in it” (საქართველოს რესპუბლიკა, Sakartvelos Respublika, #167, 1997). The sentiment was manifested in the opinion polls. By 1998, some 68 percent of Georgians viewed themselves as being European, while 19 percent considered themselves as being part of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The large portion of the population supported cooperation with the US and Germany (85 and 87 percent respectively), while Russia and Turkey were not seen as desired partners for Georgian people (19 and 32 percent). This poll show that Georgia popular opinion matched the rhetoric and policy priorities of the government (Jones 2006, 93).

Despite the fact that Georgia had little in common with Europe since the 19th century, in his 1997 state union address, Eduard Shevardnadze claimed that joining Europe was the centuries-long dream of the ancestors – “today with great pride we follow in their footsteps into the different countries of Europe. Our ‘Don Quixotes’ aspiration, belief and faith, faith in the future, has been vindicated” (Jones 2006, 91). Under the Shevardnadze government

Georgia became member of the Council of Europe in 1999 and signed Partnership and Cooperation agreement with the European Union in 1996 and joined Organization for Security and Cooperation of Europe in 1992. Georgia had joined the North Atlantic Cooperation Council in 1992 and the Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme in 1994. Besides, Georgia in 1999 left the post-Soviet security Organization – Collective Security Treaty Organization (Tashkent Agreement), which it had initially joined in 1994. Before that in 1997 Georgia, together with Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Moldova and Uzbekistan established the new post-Soviet organization – GUUAM, which was supposed to be viewed as anti-Russian entity in the post-Soviet space.

“Using the historical narrative that it belongs to the West, Georgia continued its traditional quest for a European future” (Kakachya 2012, 3). Shevardnadze at the meetings with international partners often reiterated the importance of Georgia as a bridge between the East and West. In Washington he declared about the newly launched oil pipeline project was a “renewed – new Silk Road”. The concept of Georgia restoring the old glory of “Silk Road” and its

importance in this respect was often repeated in his speeches for the local and international audiences. The newly launched Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline project presented country as serving as a corridor on the Silk Road between Europe and Asia. Building the pipeline first time in the history, meant that the West was arriving in the Caucasus and the Caucasus was approaching the West (Nodia 1998, 40). The metaphor of Silk Road for Georgians is related to the international prestige, that revitalizes the perception of old civilization that poises Georgia as wealthy country and geographical pivot between the East and West (Jones 2013, 246).

The recurring theme of “returning to Europe” underlines the narrative of Georgia’s Europeaness. In 1992, at the official dinner, during the visit of German Foreign Minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher in Georgia Shevardnadze addressed him, declaring following: “Europe twice turned its back against Georgia and this cost my nation statehood. First time this happened at the eve of 18th century, when she requested help from European monarchs and was left empty-handed. Second time, during the 20’s of our century, when foreign power trampled down democratic republic. Both times, it was not only Georgia who paid the price. Today, when our statehood is emerging, we believe that this time Europe will not neglect us and the confirmation of the latter is that you are here in my homeland” (საქართველოს რესპუბლიკა, Sakartvelos Respublika, #60(39) 1992). Shevardnadze often used historical parallels and tried to underline the sentiment that Georgia always aspired towards Europe and that the aspiration was often rejected. Georgian elite up to now considers that Europe many times has neglected the country which is primordially European nation and part of the “Western” civilization. At the address to the French Senate, Shevardnadze noted: “there was a time when Georgia was not able to find its path to Europe, and there was a time when neither Europe, with the face of France, was able to build a path to Caucasus” (საქართველოს რესპუბლიკა, Sakartvelos Respublika #29, 1997). Shevardnadze was referring to Georgian King’s mission to Louis XIV that failed to attain the predetermined goal of military assistance. He further added that Europe was now “mature enough” to accepted countries under its shelter “who have been kidnapped from its hem by historical wuthering heights” (საქართველოს რესპუბლიკა, Sakartvelos Respublika #29, 1997).

In 2000, in his interview with The Financial Times, Eduard Shevardandze declared that Georgia would soon “loudly knock on the door of NATO”. In 2002, the country started Georgia Train and Equip Program (GTEP) with the United States. As Stephen Jones writes, Georgia’s 1995 Constitution as well as parliamentary legislation, incorporated European and human rights conventions, the division of powers, and Western economic legislative norms (Jones 2006, 92). The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia in 1999 claimed that the foreign policy priority of the country was the European Integration and the first step on this ladder was to harmonize Georgian legislation with the European one. In 1999, on the inauguration of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the EU, Shevardnadze seemed overly optimistic about the future prospects for Georgia, stating in the speech that “if processes underway in today’s world continue at the current pace, membership in all major Euro-Atlantic and European structures of Georgia and other newly independent states would be inevitable” (Rondeli 2001, 208). At the meeting with the High Representative in Foreign Affairs, Javier

Solana, Shevardnadze joked that he could not trick him to admit when Georgia would be admitted in the EU (Brisku 2013, 164). In 2000, Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued first ever document outlining the national security concept of the country. The document named: "Georgia and World: Vision and Strategy for Future" declared integration in European political, economic and security structures as "highest foreign policy priority" and at the same time "realization of historic aspiration of Georgian nation" (Georgia and The World, 2000, 12).

The return to Europe was claimed to represent a "restoration of historical justice" by the elite. The traditional and historical links, some lacking evidence, were reiterated to underline civilizational connection with Europe. In this spirit, Georgian government attempted to underscore the connection between Georgians and Basques (Spain). In 1998, Zurab Zhvania hosted Basque delegation to Georgia (Jones 2006, 91). Georgian scholars started new researches on Georgian-European ties. They pointed out similarities between "Georgian and European feudal mores that made Georgia different both from its Islamic neighbors and from Russia. Medieval traditions of private property and individualism made Georgia a "natural" part of the Western world, these writers argued" (Nodia 1995, 107). However the modern political developments of Georgia has very few in common with European "impersonal legalism" and "civicness" (Nodia 1995, 108).

Mikheil Saakashvili's Government

After Rose Revolution, Mikheil Saakashvili became "instantly the darling of the West, his Europeanising credentials boosted by his Dutch wife, and choice of a French diplomat (of Georgian origin) as his foreign minister" (Emerson and Noutcheva 2004). Saakashvili started his career with loud pro-western statements, his public addresses were similar to Shevardnadze's but more vocal, underlining historical ties between Georgia and the European and Western civilizations. To some extent, unlike his predecessors more rigorous cultivation of the Europeanness discourse under Saakashvili was caused by the personal experience of policy makers. "Most of the elite were socialized in the West and, in contrast to previous elites, believe that Georgia can be transformed into a Western state, because they perceive themselves to be part of West" (Lebanidze, Gvalia and Iashvili 2011, 56).

In his 2004 inauguration speech, Saakashvili pointed out that "we [Georgians] are not only early Europeans, we are ancient Europeans, and therefore Georgia holds special place in European civilization". Furthermore, in his 2008 inauguration speech, President noted that "Georgia's persistent harbor and its natural environment is Europe, to which we are connected with common culture, history and democratic values that are based on human rights protection, rule of law and principles of peaceful and just development of the community" (Inaugurational Speech of the President of Georgia 2004/2008).

In the beginning of his tenure, Saakashvili declared integration with the European and Euro-Atlantic structures as chief political objective of his government. The cabinet for the State Minister of Euro-Atlantic Integration has been formed. The essence that Georgia was part of Europe, has been *raison d'état* of Saakashvili's frequent visits to the west. Since 2004, European Union flag has been stationed on every public meeting together with the flag of Georgia (Nodia 2006, 36). At the same time, the European flag was posted on every government building in Georgia. Saakashvili, being fond of political symbols and gesticulations,

in 2004, during his inauguration speech had European flag raised together with Georgia five-cross one, with the background accompaniment of Beethoven's 9th Symphony (European Anthem). "This flag is a flag of Georgian state as well, because it represents our civilization, culture, historical essence, perspective and our future vision" – Saakashvili declared (De Waal 2011, 31).

The narrative of Georgia's "ancient Europeanness" was supported with the archeological discovery of 1.7 million years old skulls (Homo Georgicus) in Dmanisi, Georgia. As Steven Jones comments this caused national-wide excitement and the declaration of discovered head-bones (named Zvezda and Mzia) as "first Europeans" (Jones 2013, 6). Furthermore Saakashvili in his speech ahead of the NATO Bucharest Summit said that European civilization has its roots in Georgia, and that the "medicine" comes from Colchis (present day Georgia) Queen Medea's name. Moreover the myth of Argonaut's is often drawn as an example to show the connection between Georgian and European civilization. "This is not," declared Saakashvili to the United Nations, "a new path for Georgia, but rather a return to our European home and our European vocation—which is so deeply enshrined in our national identity and history" (Lebanidze, Gvalia and Iashvili 2011, 42).

In his public addresses Saakashvili often talked about the transformation of post-soviet state into a "European one". The geopolitical importance of the Rose Revolution was the fact that the South Caucasus was any longer discussed as a fringe of Europe but rather a place where "new Europe" was to be born (Lynch 2006, 83-84). If Shevardnadze's government played a double game with Europe and Russia, Saakashvili's government had sharper and more radical position towards both of them. "By the post-Revolution government, "Russia now was

depicted as the 'barbarians of the 21st century' and the preventer of Georgia's aspirations for 'returning to Europe' – while Gorbachev and Shevardnadze's USSR talked about a 'common European home'" (Briscu 2013, 193). The Foreign Policy Strategy of Georgia, maintained that "Europe is the natural environment from which Georgia was detached for centuries and in which Georgia state should continue its development" (Foreign Policy Strategy of Georgia 2009-2012). Furthermore, the National Security Concepts of 2005 and 2011, underlined that "Georgia, as the inseparable part of political, economic and cultural space of Europe, seeking integration in its political, economic and security system. Georgia pursues to return to its European tradition and to remain indissoluble from Europe" (National Security Concept 2011).

The European Union survey of 2011 revealed that 88 percent of Georgians support membership of the European Union (EU Survey, 2011). However the attitude of Georgian population towards the Europe resembles the rhetoric of the president Saakashvili, which was unrealistically optimistic. Thomas De Waal, speaking of the issue, brought the survey conducted by Caucasus Research Resource Center (CRRRC). This survey confirmed that the majority of Georgians have very limited understanding of what kind of organization the European Union was. Third of the respondents considered Georgia would be ready to join Europe in five years, 39 % thought that Georgia was not the member of the Council of Europe. Very few were able to define that the objectives of the Eastern Partnership

program of the EU (EaP) were “political and economic integration with the European Union”. The rest of surveyed claimed that the EaP designed to help “to restore Georgia’s territorial integrity or to lead to Georgia’s “integration to the European Union” (De Waal 2011, 31).

For the elite, becoming a part of the European and Euro-Atlantic structures would be the confirmation of Georgia’s European identity. The participation of Georgia in the ISAF mission in Afghanistan (more than 1500 Georgian soldiers were stationed in Afghanistan’s Helmand province), serves the objective of contributing to the common Euro-Atlantic security and strengthening the links between the West and Georgia (Lebanidze, Gvalia and Iashvili 2011). The Nabucco project that aimed to deliver gas to Europe through the alternative pipeline that excludes Russia, has been Georgia premise to play its role in Europe’s energy security. The ultimate demonstration of the rightfulness of the discourse the elite has been cultivating would be the approval from the European Union and European partners that Georgia truly belongs to the European family by its history, culture and by its attempt to modernize.

Conclusion

The paper attempted to demonstrate how Europe is depicted in the discourse of the Georgian political elite since independence. Through the analyses of significant public addresses of the heads of the state, strategic documents and foreign policy practices, it showed that the elite has been the driving engine behind Georgia’s European identity. Elite has cultivated the picture of Georgia as primordially European nation and thus laid the foundation for the construction of Georgia’s European identity. The governmental elites of Eduard Shevardnadze and Mikheil Saakashvili used historical event, symbols and myths to emphasize Georgia’s links with Europe. They created a discourse the effects of which are well revealed in the public opinion surveys. The elite’s understanding of Georgia’s European nature has been actively translated into the foreign policy priorities and used as a source to detach country from the label of “post-Soviet” and refuse to integrate in any alliance with Russia.

The critical juncture in redefinition of the national identity is not yet completed in Georgia. The continuous discussion how to identify itself in relation to the region and the EU still persist in the country. Recently lawmakers proposed to include the “European Aspiration” in the constitution of the country and the discussion how to approach the Europe dominates everyday news of the state.

Difference between Saakashvili and Shevardnadze government is evident given their distinct experiences. While Shevardnadze belong to Soviet nomenclature and his discourse of the Europeanness was more a tool to strategically balance country’s interests, Saakashvili and his team pursued Europe as natural place for Georgia, based on the values and civilizational identification. They viewed themselves as European given their educational background, they despised the Soviet Union and desired to bring country closer to European examples.

While there are many dimensions of the Europeanness narrative in Georgia, the bounds of the paper doesn’t allow to go into more details and thus, paper only focuses on the tenures of two presidents and specifically their addresses. The further questions that can be drawn from the research are how the “other” is incorporated in the national narrative, to what extent is Georgian identity is

defined against the “other” and how Georgia tries to underline the difference between herself and the distinct “other”. Moreover, the interesting question for qualitative study can be the groups that oppose the European vector of the foreign policy and what are the ratios behind their cognition.

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