

THE NATURE OF POLITICAL SPLITS: THE ROSE REVOLUTION

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I n t r o d u c t i o n

All revolutions—including those described by political scientists as Color Revolutions—share certain regularities and development cycles; all of them resolve contradictions in systems that have fallen behind the times; and all of them create new contradictions as the revolutionary wave moves onward. The Rose Revolution in Georgia was spearheaded against Eduard Shevardnadze's regime, which political scientists described as a "crossbreed of democratic bureaucracy and oligarchy." The system built by the "father of Georgian democracy" turned out to be the worst example of a Soviet successor state: it was ineffective, lacked self-sufficiency, and failed to meet the basic needs of post-Soviet society.

Today the Rose Revolution, which ushered in an era of Color Revolutions across the post-Soviet expanse, has become a target of scholarly studies. It can be scrutinized from different angles; I have posed myself the task of identifying the crucial features that created the genotype of power obvious at a certain development stage. I have undertaken to outline the psychological field in which the Georgian power culture was born.

Did the revolution reflect the cultural-political needs of Georgian society? Whose interests did it promote? What is preventing and what is assisting the achievement of a national consensus?

The Rose Revolution carried out under the slogan "Georgia without Shevardnadze" was obviously staged to remove the architect of the

defective system best described as a "failed state" from power. It was "the birds of Eduard's nest," the young reformers who for some time served the democratization façade, who finally brought down the system.

They struggled against the "dual world outlook" and the "policy of double standards," while social contradictions became more deeply entrenched, ethnopolitical conflicts continued to smolder, and partocracy usurped power based on property. Their efforts rallied all those displeased with the regime in a united "national movement" driven by a slogan that served the image of the younger part of the political elite.

The rising generation of politicians skillfully tapped popular discontent with the Shevardnadze regime and the unfolding systemic crisis to escalate them into a revolution. Not only did the government's weakness help to keep the revolution peaceful. The democratic reforms and the relatively free media had already created a suitable climate and enabled the opposition to make use of the Rustavi-2 TV channel and the press to discredit the regime. The democratic opposition leaders were trained in Belgrade, where the potential of velvet revolutions was first put to the test. The globalization ideologists used the foundations and NGOs they set up to channel money for financing the revolution, bribing officials, and bringing the government to its knees.¹

¹ See: B. Akaeva, "Gor'kiy opyt Kyrgyzstana, i neizbezhnost sobstvennogo puti demokraticeskikh reform," *Politicheskiy klass*, No. 1, 2006.

The first stage of Georgia's post-Soviet existence (1992-2003) revealed the deep-cutting contradictions of its domestic development and the wide gap that separated the political class from the nation. To gain the power of which they had been deprived, the young reformers were forced to push the old Communist Party elite from the political scene. Transferred to politics, the "generation gap" problem developed into a political issue, and the time had come to remove the debris of the old communist system. The young reformers who claimed the role of builders of a new society first had to destroy the old one.

By the will of those who "guided" the Rose Revolution, it developed into a geopolitical force that echoed across the post-Soviet expanse.

Early in 2004, its leader Mikhail Saakashvili indulged himself in holding forth about an inevitable "geopolitical revolution" that would change the post-Soviet political map beyond recognition. The Georgian revolutionaries plunged into "exporting the revolution." In fact, the first post-revolutionary stage (November 2003-February 2005) was a period of revolutionary expansion and aggression against those who had already been tagged as "enemies of the revolution." In the spring of 2004, "the citadel of feudal separatism" (meaning Ajaria) fell. There was a certain logic in the fact that the actions of the revolutionary triumvirate, Saakashvili, Zhvania, Burjanadze, who used to be the closest followers of the "father of Georgian democracy," were based on an immoderate eulogizing of power.

The metamorphosis dressed as a peaceful Color Revolution led some to conclude that there had merely been a behind-the-scene agreement on the transfer of power.

The revolutionaries who announced the beginning of a new era of "democratic revolutions" claimed the role of founders of a new post-Soviet ideology. They declared that recent history should make a fresh start; their revolutionary thinking called for fast and radical measures. In February 2004, the revolutionaries amended the Constitution of Georgia to provide the new "version" of authoritarianism with a solid legal basis. The president and the executive branch acquired

more power at the expense of the legislators. The same happened in the juridical sphere. This protected central power against revivals of "feudal separatism." The triumvirate, meanwhile, revealed its first signs of disagreement when distributing the key posts and making new appointments. The state was based on the National Movement, which had developed into a state party. The revolutionaries were obviously moving along the road that Shevardnadze and his Union of Georgian Citizens had already covered. It led to clan politics, although the Rose Revolution had pledged to avoid this in an effort to uproot corruption. So far, corruption has survived to become the "Achilles' heel" of the new government. In order to keep up the pace, the revolutionaries reformed the police, army, and the judiciary; they built and fortified the power vertical and reformed local self-administration by placing it under strict control. What remained of the Soviet system in science and education was consistently destroyed. The ideological sphere was centralized; and the media fell under tight control.

In the summer of 2004, the logic of the revolutionary strategy of destruction led to a "cavalry raid" on Tskhinvali, which was presented as a humanitarian mission designed to spread the Rose Revolution to the conflict zones in order to "defrost" them. Inebriated by their "Ajarian triumph," when they deposed the "feudal oligarch," the revolutionaries hoped to "export democracy" to the "defrosted" conflict zones. They obviously preferred to ignore the contradictions that had been piling up over the last 15 years and, therefore, failed. Revolutionary thinking everywhere tends to standardize political situations and simplify the problems. The revolutionary wave ebbed for a while.

The new Georgian rulers made an attempt to dig down to the roots of their failures. In the first post-revolutionary period (between November 2003 and February 2005), the Republicans and the supporters of K. Davitashvili and Z. Dzidziguri, who later set up a Conservative Party, left the National Movement under the pretext that the elections in Ajaria had been manipulated. There was a lot of disagreement over the summer events in South Ossetia. Social and economic policies,

which showed no breakthrough, came under severe criticism.

To a certain extent, the above caused the first obvious signs of disagreement inside the revolutionary triumvirate. Later, in February 2005, Premier Zurab Zhvania died under suspicious circumstances. The triumvirate lost its political heavy-weight, who had vast administrative and political experience behind him. His people were removed from their posts and vanished into the “carousel of power.” The leaders used the reliable mechanism of rotation not to allow any of the groups to remain on top for long. Mikhail Saakashvili, the architect of the power pyramid, learned the rudiments of balancing interests from the “father of Georgian democracy.”

This ushered in the second period of the Rose Revolution; its ebb was first detected in March 2005 together with the first signs of authoritarianism.

According to revolutionary logic, the Georgian Directory was replaced with a duumvirate, although Nino Burjanadze, the Georgian Iron Lady, was rapidly losing her political weight. Her parliamentary team was battered; while in the past Ms. Burjanadze, the speaker, found it hard to remain an independent political figure, she could no longer contain the executive branch once the parliament lost some of its authority. Today she is doing her best to look more “pro-presidential” than the president himself in order remain indispensable in the eyes of the higher echelons of power. By moving his appointee Z. Adeishvili to the post of Prosecutor-General, the president showed he was seeking control over the judicial system as well. Other important posts went to the president’s close allies: P. Kublashvili, who became Chairman of the Supreme Court, and K. Kemularia, who was

appointed Minister of Justice to be replaced some time later with G. Kavtaradze, member of the premier’s team. Premier Z. Nogaideli is a strictly nominal figure devoid of any political functions. He is kept to voice the president’s political initiatives. The presidential team is weakening: there is no agreement on the crucial issues—conflict settlement and relations with Russia. For some time the president managed to maintain the balance between the “doves” (State Minister G. Khaindrava dismissed in July 2006 and Special Representative of the President for the Settlement of Conflict in Abkhazia I. Alasania, later appointed Georgian representative to the U.N.) and the “hawks” (Defense Minister I. Okruashvili, who had to resign in November 2006).

The ruling National Movement Party is very close to a split, which might deprive the president of the absolute parliamentary majority: the Democratic Front faction is stepping up its activities in the hope of building up a stronger opposition. The EU, on the other hand, insists that the election barrier should be lowered from 7 to 5 percent to give the opposition a chance, and that local elections should be transparent and democratic. A large part of the Georgian opposition demands direct elections of the mayors and gamgebeli (heads of the administration).

The opposition, supported to an increasing extent by politicians and the nation, wants less centralized power and a parliamentary republic. Today Georgia has reached a crossroads, from which it could take either the authoritarian or the democratic road. The choice depends to a great extent on the social and economic situation and conflict settlement. So far the prospects are bleak, which might prompt the president to make inordinate decisions.

The Political Split in the Post-Revolutionary Period

The post-revolutionary processes revealed certain regularities of the state and political class development. The revolutionary vanguard, which comprises part of the public and the political elite, is springing leaks.

This is happening, on the one hand, due to the objective revolutionary regularities and inconsistent reforms of the state and social sphere, which are adding more contradictions to those already existing. On the other hand, there are subjective reasons. The ruling class is still in flux; its ideological and organizational restructuring has not yet been completed. The reforms are being carried out under revolutionary slogans, but the new state is being built on principles of neoliberal globalization, which is clashing with the foundations of the traditional conservative culture.

Georgian post-Soviet political history is showing certain regularities, type of political thinking, and political power structure rooted in hoary antiquity. Alexander Neklessa has correctly pointed out: “Any national organism rests, in the final analysis, on a certain semantic field and philosophical justification of its existence.”²

The culture-centric approach to the essence of Georgian power reveals the features responsible for the specifics of the Rose Revolution. The sources of the Georgian power culture and its genotype should be sought in Asia Minor.

We all know today that the time has come to look for the geo-cultural roots of the power-property that has taken shape in Georgia.

Significantly, there is interest in the Caucasian archetypes and the methodology of their identification. In fact, much in the political life of the Caucasian nations will remain unstudied if we fail to identify the specific features of the local nations’ perception of politics. At the turn of the 20th century, those students of Caucasian culture who looked at it as a civilizational phenomenon leaving its deep imprint on world history were aware of this.³

Georgian power is dual by nature with a core formed by the dualism of its elements. At first there was the idea of predestination of the cultural-national mission of the “creator-heroes” who, having stolen fire from the gods, built life on earth. The demiurge heroes—beginning with ethnarch Kartlos, the legendary ancestor of the Iberian tribe Amiran; first Iberian czar Pharnaos; founder of Tbilisi, the new capital of Iberia, Vakhtang Gorgasal—laid the foundations of Georgian statehood. Orthodox Christianity adopted in the 4th century under Czar Mirian easily imbibed the idea of the Georgian ethnos as the chosen one, which, according to Nikolai Marr, prominent student of Georgian culture, was a “wishing tree” with numerous “ethnic branches” fed by one Asianic root. The single (unitary) Georgian tree of the power culture (the composition of which is highly complicated) has been feeding itself throughout its centuries-long history on Western and Eastern civilizational influences until it finally developed into a unique organism of “life phenomena” that helped preserve and develop Georgia’s national self-identity and statehood.⁴

Georgia is a piedmont and mountainous country divided into western and eastern parts, the gorges of which are dominated by separate clans. For this reason, from time immemorial, there have been two states—Colchis and Iberia—on its territory. They had common roots but different cultural and ethnic features and developed under different civilizational influences. Orthodox Christianity as an organism of cultural development synthesized the contradictoriness between the unity and the diversity of the civilizational cultural elements. The Bagrationi Dynasty of Georgian czars was the vehicle of unification; they belonged to the earlier constellation of “hero-builders.” Duality of power, however, was a primordial feature. The Georgian czars remained the symbols of unity and hero-builders throughout the Golden Age (the 12th-13th centuries). Particularism repeatedly crept in when the central-

² A. Neklessa, “Mir na poroge novoy geokul’turnoy katastrofy,” *Politicheskiy klass*, No. 6, 2005, available at [<http://www.politklass.ru/cgi-bin/issue.pl?id=160>], 1 June, 2005.

³ See: Iu. Sulaberidze, “N. Marr kak istorik gruzinskoy kul’tury,” *Nauchnaia mysl Kavkaza*, No. 2, 1999, pp. 90-94.

⁴ Academician Marr’s archive is kept at the St. Petersburg Branch of the RAS, Record group 800. It contains preparatory documents on the history of Caucasian culture and the cultural heritage of the Caucasian peoples, Files 31, 410, 461, 467, and others. Some the documents have been published. Here I quote from the lectures N. Marr delivered in 1918-1922 at the Lazarev Institute (Institute of Oriental Studies).

ized power of the patron-father weakened: such periods produced “twin patrons,” while these “tandems” of heirs inevitably trailed after the patron-fathers like plumes.

The “patron-vassal” dichotomy is the archetype of Georgian power and the root of Georgian statehood. The patron of a social entity embodied the power vertical and the state-forming center, which attracted all clan interests; his personal status formed the foundation of power. In ethnic mythology, the clan head—*mamasakhlisi*—was responsible for society’s unity and the continuation of its traditions. The patron-czar (*mepe*), or patron-leader, inherited the features of the “father-ancestor,” the “hero-restorer,” of Georgian cultural and political history. Orthodox Christianity sanctified royal power and made it sacred. The theocracy of power erected a hierarchy of its vassals duty bound to serve their patrons. Neo-Platonism planted in Georgian cultural-political history a certain type of contact in the network of power relations based on strong personal ties, sworn brotherhood, and sacrifice for the sake of friendship and mutual assistance.

The country’s cultural-political history unfolded as the Fall and restoration of the Ideal. The power vertical based on loyalty to the patron was a result of cyclical developments in time and space from the piedmont to the mountains. The axiological system rested on the ideas of duty, honor, and sacrifice for the sake of duty and honor. People were free only within the limits of the “patron-vassal” tandem, that is, they were free to seek another, true patron who would be much closer to the Ideal. St. George was a symbol of statehood and the state’s patron; the land (*kvekana*) was a reflection and emanation of the metaculture. St. George was the patron saint of a country of landtiller-warriors and vine-growers. This was an embodiment of the spirit of the nation and its choral symphony, in which each and everyone had an individual role to play, but, nevertheless, remained subordinate to the clan.⁵

The idea of the state as the patron’s patrimonial possession survived for a long time as an institution and as part of sociopolitical consciousness. As distinct from Western Europe that had lived through religious wars, the Reformation, and the Counterreformation, which, in final analysis, proved responsible for the Leviathan state and civil society, the “patron-vassal” dichotomy of Georgian feudal society proved much more tenacious. In fact, the never-weakening pressure from the East doomed Georgian society to stagnation and conservation of its original forms of power.

The archaic type of power structure was on the whole very close to the Asianic society, which was divided into four castes. The second caste was called Kshatriya (landtiller-warriors), who, while being vassals of the priest-kings, had vassals of their own and played the role of “patrons-2” in relation to them. Personal ties strengthened the genetic tissue of power. The “patron-vassal” dichotomy reflected the system’s dualism as well as the fact that the power-forming components could not be separated. Implicitly it presupposed a fair (true) and unfair (false) patron; loyal (*kma*-friend, ally) and disloyal (internal and external enemy) vassal. An image of the supreme patron (*helisupalni*), who acquired his power from God, was also present as a myth.

Neo-Platonism spoke of this in the “single primary” conception. In an attempt to reach perfection and retrieve the Golden Age, the “hero-restorers” reestablished the cyclical cultural-political world.⁶

Whenever the dichotomy was threatened with diffusion under alien cultural and civilizational influence, the durability of the trunk of the “tree of Georgian power” was subjected to doubt. As part of the area where communication trends from the West and East meet, Georgian power demonstrated flexibility when confronted with novelties. It was deeply rooted in the ethnic and the national while its

⁵ See: G. Nizharadze, “Gruzinskaia kul’tura: osnovnye cherty i sravnenie so sredizemnomorskoy kul’turoy, *Caucas-US Context*, No. 31, 2001, pp. 96-103.

⁶ See: Sh. Nutsuridze, *History of Georgian Philosophy*, Vol. 5, Tbilisi, 1988, p. 305 (in Georgian).

branches spread to the West (Greek, Byzantine, and Asianic cultures) and to the East, to Persia. The multi-vector and multi-channel nature of the Georgian power culture ensured its continued existence; it wilted when the cultural influence from internal and external centers were depleted. The idea of Oriental renaissance and enlightened Byzantine autocracy helped to overcome feudal disunity in the territories divided into kingdoms and princedoms, and contributed in the 12th-13th centuries to the emergence of a strong centralized Georgian state.

The fall of the Byzantine Empire and decline of the Persian culture deprived the Georgian power culture of its primary driving force. In the 15th century, the Georgian state fell apart, while genetically conditioned principles of feudal particularism led to unwelcome duality, twin patrons, moral degeneration, and loss of axiological landmarks. In the 16th century, it had become clear that the country needed new external patrons from the West or the North (East). The Eurasian roots of the Georgian cultural-civilizational organism suggested a bias toward the Russian Eurasian civilization, which in the early 17th century showed a trend toward geopolitical expansion into the Baltic region and toward Black and Caspian shores. A. Tsagareli and M. Polievktov, two students of Georgian cultural-political history, have written that in the absence of Byzantium, Christian Orthodox Russia could objectively claim the role of Georgia's patron.⁷

Power was autocratic, but limited: in the "single-primary" concept it showed the "patron-vassal" interconnection of the hierarchical system, and the influence of folk traditions and customs as well as of religion that obliged the patron to become protector of the entire Georgian ethnos.

Decomposition of the spiritual basis of unity and bifurcation of the "single-primary" system brought to life the phenomenon of twin leaders and caused disintegration of the unitary state. Even under these conditions, public conscience was still devoted to the idea of cultural-national entity supported by Orthodox Christianity, culture, historical memory, and the primogeniture of the ruling dynasty.

While Georgia remained part of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, its cultural-historical memory still retained the image of its former great statehood and the Golden Age, as well as a gallery of symbols of the hero-builders of Georgian statehood. Public conscience implicitly retained the image of the "state as the patron's patrimonial possession," which was also seen as the defender of ethnic and national interests. It was an ideal cherished in everyday life, which inevitably led to contradictions to be settled in the restored Golden Age of the Georgian power culture.

The Rose Revolution belongs to the context of Georgian cultural-political history. At the same time, it is a direct result of the crisis of the Soviet power system and the trends of the latter half of the 1980s and early 1990s created by the Soviet Union's disintegration. Perestroika of the latter half of the 1980s was a revolution from above carried out by some members of the Communist Party elite in the hopes of marrying socialist and bourgeois values. A return to genuine Marxism cut short by the onslaught of liberal democratic values destroyed the old axiological system. Communist ideology lost its foundation and bared all the superimposed layers and undeveloped forms of public conscience that had remained suppressed or "canned" for a long time. Those members of the CPSU bureaucracy who earned the title of "fathers of perestroika" had long been craving the material fruits of democracy. The first generation of "revolutionary partocrats" rode the wave of democratization of public life and subjected the system they wanted to reform to selective criticism.

By way of studying the nature of the uncompleted "revolution from above" and the advent to power of "sons of mini-fathers" (or replacement of the "patrons-ancestors" with "patrons-2"), I shall offer certain comments and suppositions that might clarify the subject.

⁷ See: M. Polievktov, *Ocherki po istorii russkogo kavkazovedeniya XVI-XVIII vekov*, Central State Historical Archives of Georgia, Record Group 1505, File 52.

I think that the transition to democracy has its own specifics in the post-Soviet, Eurasian expanse that help to identify the mechanism of attraction-repulsion between the genotype of power and the structural innovations of civilizational nature being insistently planted in post-Soviet soil.⁸

Today a very complicated and contradictory process of the crumbling of the Soviet cultural-political heritage (the deeper layers of the centuries-old culture are also being deformed in the process) and the appearance of new layers of state and public conscience is unfolding before our eyes. In this respect, the Rose Revolution was the most aggressive attempt to destroy the past, even though its mythologems proclaim a “return to the Golden Age” and the genuinely Georgian national-cultural idea.

The “revolutionary sons” are prepared to “turn history upside down and write it anew.” They want to become the Protestants of the Age of Information. This is another wave of Westernization that uses the techniques tested in the Soviet successor states. At the stage of late modernity bogged down in its spiritual crisis, the globalization fathers who aspire to control the strategically important energy sources are busy exporting democratic clichés through the “sons of the mini-fathers” of perestroika whom they tagged as “the driving forces of revolutionary changes.” What role can half-baked revolutionaries play in borrowing the ready-made techniques of a consumer society? Are they ready to destroy the past and build the future? Is the spiritual basis on which the new structure of Georgian statehood will rest firm enough in the context of strictly controlled globalization? Are there enough internal resources—political, economic, cultural, and symbolic capital—on which they are expected to rely?

There is the opinion among academics that “revolutionary passion and consumerism are kindred phenomena: the former destroys society by means of the activities of those resolved to destroy, while the latter does this by means of passivity and indifference to everything unrelated to things material. Both are equally unscrupulous.” It is often pointed out that Westernization presupposes a collective flight from tradition and borrowing the worst examples of the donor power culture.

As distinct from the Enlightenment, the Rose Revolution had no tilled spiritual soil: it was predated neither by religious wars nor the Reformation. It was most probably nurtured by exported models of a world order that underwent a profound crisis right before its decline and a transfer of deep-seated contradictions from the center to the periphery, to Eurasia. This has nothing to do with Huntington’s clash of civilizations—it is a crisis of industrial civilization seeking salvation. It would be naïve and not very productive to look for spiritual undertones of revived spiritual traditions amid “manageable chaos.” In the absence of an integral reform ideology, its driving forces have no choice but to preserve the right to use the cultural surrogates offered by the consumer society to jump onto the bandwagon at the eleventh hour.

A civilian political culture takes a long time to develop, so the “patron-fathers” are still on top because of their charisma. Legitimacy of their power, on the other hand, is very shaky—it rests on utopia and the hope and promise of a breakthrough to the Golden Billion and of finding an external sponsor who will help to restore the Golden Age. The revolutionary approach to the process of assimilation of civilizational values hand-picked for a faster and more impressive effect destroys the continuity of the cultural blocks and ignores the evolutionary nature of the Georgian power culture. The consumer approach reveals the inner potential of the legitimacy of power, which has been very much weakened under the pressure of a globalization project designed to swallow the local area. The normative-moral system borrowed without discrimination is undermining the national organism; it is eroding the ties that keep the “patron-vassal” dichotomy together and damaging its emanation in the “leader-elite” system.

⁸ See: B. Kapustin, “Konets ‘tranzitologii’ (o teoriakh osmysleniya pervogo postkommunisticheskogo desiatiletia),” *Polis*, No. 4, 2001, p. 24.

Negative energy easily ignites the masses: they enthusiastically erect pedestals for their heroes and as enthusiastically dismiss them as “hero-builders.” Power has failed to create conditions in which businesses and civil institutions can be horizontally developed to help corporate citizenship to appear.

The clan principle cannot help to overcome the “power-property” dichotomy; it does not lead to their separation or identification of the personal autonomous elements. For this reason, business that “grows from below” remains under the constant pressure of “state racket.” A civil society is built and controlled from above. The nature of power the “mini-fathers” created is still the same: it is a “clan-limited democracy,” which analysts prefer to describe as hybrid. Georgian academics have already pointed out that token democratic values and institutions are unlikely to grow on Georgian soil.⁹

Today, democratization of Eurasian society is incomplete, smacking of the appearance of parallel leaders, clan parties, and power centers that cannot be described as alternatives. This is rooted in the local mentality and the specifics of the cultural and political development of Eurasian societies, of which Georgia is one.

“Clan power,” which seeks monopoly, where the democratic idea is concerned, as well as monopoly in the sphere of democratic resources and privileges, is recreating a closed space that provides fertile soil for all sorts of revolutionary alternatives. The process channeled into the “revolution-conservation” cycle is leading to another bout of chaos. For this reason we should accept the crises of self-identity, legitimacy, involvement, and distribution as a regular feature of Georgia’s post-Soviet cultural-political history.¹⁰

In the post-Soviet period, the Georgian state developed amid the debris of a great power with anti-communist and anti-Soviet sentiments dominating the minds. This added negative overtones to the sovereignization of the Soviet successor states. It turned out that Georgia was ill-prepared for independence because the processes of immanent national progress were severed for a long time; the country did not have the opportunity to live through all the evolutionary stages that would have transformed it from a “state-bureaucracy” into a “nation-state.” The syndrome of the “state as a patrimonial possession” dominated the minds of those in power as well as the minds of the public and the political class unable to achieve positive national self-awareness. The idea of the “lesser evil” predominated in the geopolitical context, which never created a positive image of how to acquire sovereignty. The level of state thinking was inadequate to the development needs of the Georgian nation and a civil society. The period of alienation from the large system undermined the earlier adaptation mechanisms of self-identification. The old structures were falling apart, while new ties based on clans and hierarchies appeared in a very complicated way.

No strategic priorities or survival programs are possible amid the resultant chaos. The efforts to build a democratic state are hardly systemic, therefore the “dual nature” of the power culture could fall apart at any time. The periphery could move away from the center, while in the absence of a multi-vector mechanism, the latter cannot insist on the legitimacy of the power-culture tradition.

A liberal interpretation of the modernization process prevails; it is dominated, in turn, by a very negative idea of freedom as freedom from the old patron. This cannot produce any fundamental ideas about Western cultural values: they are still perceived in a purely utilitarian way as a random selection. Tradition is sacrificed to post-modernism in the spirit of a “society-show,” in which it is reduced to a symbolic commodity needed for beautifying the façade of the rising experimental building of a

⁹ For “clan democracy,” see: K. Kikabidze, D. Losaberidze, *Institutionalism and Clientelism in Georgia*, Tbilisi, 2001 (in Georgian).

¹⁰ For the nature of the Georgian political elite, see: Iu. Sulaberidze, “Politicheskaia elita Gruzii,” *Politika*, No. 4, 2001/2002, pp. 173-180.

global revolution. The institutionalized formal process is treated as a priority to which the democratization of public life and state power is sacrificed. In the absence of a division of power and an independent judicial system, and in the presence of weakly articulated interests of individuals and groups, the resultant political system is obviously biased toward authoritarianism. This is quite understandable: the fundamental structures of the nation-state are still undeveloped, there is no contemporary bureaucracy; and the political class is disunited and prefers to ignore the Georgian power-culture structure. For this reason, it is expedient to study the specific forms through which the “patron-vassal duality” is demonstrated (their functions being performed by the political leaders and elites), the reasons behind the splits, and the possibility of restoring the unity needed to formulate a survival strategy. To achieve this we should overcome both the utopianism and the mythological nature of political thought that has been expressing itself so far in the conditional and imperative moods and the feeling of despondency that has gripped the public, which has lost its landmarks in the globalized political expanse.

The revolutionaries in power declare that they are devoted to national values, but they are unable, due to limited political and economic resources and the inadequate ideological and symbolic potential of a split society, to offer a program of self-identification as a global social milieu. This is leading to internal crises and splits in the political class and society as a whole.

The previous “father-patron” of post-Soviet Georgia was forced to take the nature of post-Soviet power into account, at a time when the ruling class was a symbiosis of old Communist Party functionaries responsible for the “revolution from above” based on the platform of the convergence of different systems and the “young reformers” who served the façade of the democratization process.

After 2003, the old Communist Party members were removed from “power-property.” The “new revolution from above” called the Rose Revolution redistributed power-property once more. The still surviving blend is another Achilles’ heel in the reformation process. The ruling class (otherwise described as the clan system) is being formed according to the old patterns. After removing the old clan from the political field, the Rose Revolution, which started as an anticorruption campaign, failed to set up a mechanism of social selection. The young reformers preferred an obviously limited method implemented through the National Movement with no integral ideology, an amorphous program, and lack of organizational structures. The Freedom Institute, another political incubator, is devoted to liberal-democratic values that are hardly suitable for the country’s conservative soil. The fact that NGOs are involved in politics speaks of the weakness of civil society and the Rose Revolution’s limited resources. Reform in any Eurasian society is inevitably complex and contradictory: there are still deeply rooted clans that consume only those elements that help them to survive and reproduce themselves.

The young people now in power are poor professionals: they could have acquired political skills, but they prefer cheap effects and PR campaigns. The revolutionaries are seeking instant effects—a mania that drives ailments deeper into the nation’s body. The revolutionaries do not want to talk to the opposition—even to the so-called “pocket” members. They are dizzy from their initial success; they are unwilling to go to “school of democracy,” even though the initial success was followed by crises and domestic and foreign policy blunders.

They are moving father away from the nation, which brought them to power in the first place. It looks as if those who suspected a pact between the revolutionaries and the old party functionaries from the very beginning were right, at least in part. Later, the revolutionaries preferred to ignore some of the conditions: they plunged into redistribution of property. This process, which is still going on, might exacerbate the already existing contradictions inside the ruling class and affect the middle and even the lower class. In this context, much is being done to narrow down the field of the political opponents’ activities from above. This trend first betrayed itself at the initial stage (between November

2003 and February 2005) and became obvious at the second stage (March 2005) when the revolutionary wave ebbed.

The New Right, the party of the Georgian business community, is moving further into the opposition; and the Republicans and the Conservatives, two former allies of the ruling National Movement, are growing more radical. The Labor Party, which openly opposes authoritarianism and policies that ignore the majority's social needs, is stepping up its activities.

In response, the government resorted to force and persecutions typical of undeveloped democracies. V. Gelashvili, one of the New Rightists, was beaten up and deprived of his deputy mandate.

It seems that the government and opposition alike decided to reveal the political undertones of all the events: compromising materials are freely used; what has been going on behind the scenes is offered for public observation. The case of Sh. Ramishvili, head of the opposition "202" TV channel, and the campaign the opposition unfolded against Minister of the Interior V. Merabishvili in connection with the murder of S. Girgvliani are two pertinent examples.

An organizational and ideological split in the Freedom Institute, which, in fact, determined the state's policies, was more evidence of the crisis. The "birds of George Soros' nest" want the niche vacated by Zurab Zhvania's death and disintegration of his team. The field of support is narrowing, while the government is betraying its bias toward authoritarianism with even greater clarity. It turned out that the younger elite has no reserve. There are no positive programs—the messages and PR campaigns serve as substitutes. The revolutionaries are unwilling to slow down the "driving force" and are doing their best to present a united front. The more they try to do this, the deeper the crevices in their ranks become: the formerly united group is falling apart into clans.

Like the "father of Georgian democracy" before him, the revolutionary president is building up a pyramid of power based on a balance of interests of the power-related structures around which the government groups are congregating. Minister of the Interior V. Merabishvili is a pillar of the state system; to a certain extent he binds together the interests of all the power groups operating in permanent tension. Minister of Defense I. Okruashvili served as a counterweight; as distinct from his colleague he nurtured presidential ambitions. Concerned with his popularity, the incumbent president sent the minister who rejected compromises and claimed the role of the gatherer of Georgian lands into retirement. The place of a potential rival of the "patron of the Georgian nation" remains vacant. Candidates might be sought among the members of the Freedom Institute that generates revolutionary ideas and raises cadres for post-revolutionary Georgia.

There are talks about a possible confrontation within the ruling parliamentary faction between the Arveladze-Kirkitadze group (called the "Bolshevik asset of the National Movement") and the intellectual core of G. Bokeria-G. Targamadze, which represents the Freedom Institute. Their functions are different: the Bolshevik asset is engaged in domestic policies, which use force, while the "intellectuals" are busy integrating Georgia into the Euro-Atlantic structures and exporting color revolutions. In fact, this was inherited from the old regime of Eduard Shevardnadze.

Time will show whether President Saakashvili can cope with the role of an arbiter between the two groups. There is the opinion that the Bokeria-Targamadze group will gain enough weight to formulate an independent position. In fact, G. Bokeria has gained control over the parliament and pushed the faction's former head M. Nadiradze aside. Speaker Nino Burjanadze is playing a much lesser role than before; she is often absent from Georgia visiting Eastern and Western countries to rally international support in the event of negative domestic developments. The West, on the other hand, is growing increasingly critical of the Georgian president's authoritarian trends; it is aware of possible radicalization in the republic with social problems and unsettled regional conflicts moving to the fore.

Georgia is entering a post-revolutionary crisis period in which the former revolutionary allies are going their separate ways. In a country where interests are vague while thinking is highly partic-

ularized, a new charismatic leader is possible; he might appear from among the revolutionary ranks. On the whole, post-Soviet experience has demonstrated that power is changed through co-evolution; we cannot exclude the possibility of a new person who has nothing in common with the “carousel of power.”

Unity is not maintained by the ideology of reforms—it survives on personal loyalty to the patron, or even to revolutionary ideals that are rapidly developing from a rose into a whip. The Rose Revolution is losing its dynamism; it is moving forward by momentum caught in a vicious circle of the same accursed questions that the previous government failed to cope with. Inadequate reserves and lack of professionals not only regularly dispose of bureaucrats of the middle and lower levels, but also create an atmosphere of uncertainty and grounds for even worse “ideological” corruption. Those who cannot reconcile themselves to the “biding for time” policies and who feel their inadequacy as deputies are leaving the National Movement parliamentary faction. This is what D. Zurabishvili and G. Tortladze did. More people will follow suit; Salome Zurabishvili, former foreign minister, removed from her post, has found herself among them. This will trigger far-reaching repercussions that will affect the National Movement, the re-grouping in the upper echelons of power, and the political process as a whole. Salome Zurabishvili has headed the Georgia’s Road political movement resolved to oppose the clan-patterned government and those who, she insists, betrayed the revolutionary ideals and are ignoring its principles. In the international context, her retirement delivered a blow to the revolutionary ideals and the hopes of seeing Georgia as the regional leader.

Unity as the National Movement’s key slogan might crack. State Minister G. Khaindrava, the odd man out in the cabinet, had to go after Salome Zurabishvili left, or was forced to leave, the revolutionaries’ team. Hawk I. Okruashvili was also removed. The people at the top have no conception of reforms. There is the opinion that reforms and revolutionary charges can hardly be combined, while a gradual advance toward authoritarianism and the efforts to achieve a balance of forces undertaken by the power-related ministers is a delayed action bomb under the entire edifice of power.

The crisis is especially obvious in the parliament, where a new Democratic Front faction made up of Conservatives and Republicans came together on a “constructive radicalism” basis. The very fact that radicalism is moving to the fore is highly indicative. The institutional basis of power is much weaker than under Shevardnadze and Abashidze; the structures erected by Zhvania were likewise destroyed. Today, the “collective Freedom Institute” has shouldered the task of creating a new institutional foundation (most probably of an authoritarian type). The Republicans, their former comrades-in-arms from the same institute, are determined to stick to “constructive radicalism” to develop liberal democracy. There is no real opposition in the parliament; those who may count as the opposition have been silenced by the pressure group described above and the silent parliamentary majority. The newly formed faction that unites the Conservatives and Republicans may serve as the foundation for a new opposition. Acting together with the New Right, they are trying to build a parliamentary minority, the opinions of which have so far been ignored. Under these conditions, boycotting the sittings of the Georgian legislature cannot be described as effective—no wonder it failed.

No one knows so far whether the group will survive: power that needs a political system dominated by the ruling party has too many tools of pressure. The Association of Young Lawyers, which produced several revolutionary politicians, I. Okruashvili and Prosecutor-General Z. Adeishvili among them, has already learned this. Recently, the Young Lawyers have been accused of excessive politicization and of turning into an appendage of the Republican Party headed by the family tandem of Usupashvili-Khidasheli. This speaks of certain trends: first, the Freedom Institute has monopolized the function of raising revolutionaries, which is probably done by the Bokeria-Targamadze group largely

responsible for the organizational and ideological spheres. It does not need rivals, especially in view of the Young Lawyers' attempts to broaden their possibility of making an ideological onslaught on power (so far criticism remains constructive). The government, in turn, relies on the tested tactics of splitting the ranks of the former "democratic ally" turned political rival. Second, in October 2006, the government won the local elections, which means that the opposition, which lacked a constructive position, was defeated. Those in power never tired of demonstrating the unity in their ranks and popular support; the rating of the ruling party, meanwhile, is declining: the nation is losing the illusions and hopes kindled by the Rose Revolution.

C o n c l u s i o n

It takes a long time to build a democratic state; the process is not simple and is full of stumbling blocks and pitfalls; the political and economic resources are limited, while the post-Soviet inertia has not been overcome. The reforms exacerbated the old contradictions and created new systemic difficulties probably because they lacked a clear ideology and systematic approach. Society is disintegrating: some 1.5-2 percent of the chosen ones acquired power-property, while over 54 percent live below the poverty level.

International organizations have confirmed that the trend is surviving. There are no longer illusions about prompt conflict settlement and integration into the EU. People are concerned with social issues: unemployment, personal security, and earnings.

Society has finally become aware that the young and inexperienced rulers have blundered with respect to Russia, which was dismissed as a "partner" in the recent National Security Conception, at a time when Russia could play the leading role in dealing with the economic and political (conflict settlement) issues. It looks as if the government should readjust its priorities in order to avoid new crises in Georgian-Russian relations. One such crisis happened in the spring of 2006 when a PR war developed into an economic war that closed the Russian market to Georgian products. In the fall, Moscow introduced new economic and political sanctions against Tbilisi—a sure sign of a deep crisis in the two countries' bilateral relations. They undermined the Georgian economy and delivered a heavy blow to the ambitions of the Georgian leaders, who are aspiring to create a developed Georgian state.

Is there the possibility of authoritarian rule in Georgia? There are certain possibilities in all countries that take the road of democracy after long periods of totalitarianism and authoritarian rule. The democratic political and symbolic resources are too limited; illegitimate regime changes might develop into a tradition; the political class is undeveloped; the interests of the masses are inadequately articulated, and the leaders are unable to suppress their personal ambitions for the sake of compromises, all of which indicates that the political culture of the political class and nation as a whole remains low. This provokes conflicts at all levels and pushes the people at the top to undertake democracy-limiting measures and make efforts to impose their own rules of the game on the opposition for the sake of self-preservation. The checks-and-balances system as applied by the revolutionaries is faulty. The legislators and judiciary alike were deprived of part of their powers, which were transferred to the executive branch. This trend clearly seen in the post-revolutionary period (at the second stage in particular) is the opposition's main target.

Independence of the courts is purely formal, and the media, TV channels, and the journalist community are working under pressure. This is obvious to everyone. Georgia should learn from Ukraine, another post-revolutionary republic. The events in this "fraternal revolutionary country" may to a certain extent provoke a split in the ruling elite and bring to the fore those deprived of the fruits of privatization of power-property the Georgian leaders are busy carrying out.

Georgia has entered a very important period of its development. It will be not easy to find a way out of the present quandary while the political struggle continues and new alliances are being formed to seize the vanguard positions. The situation in the conflict zones is going from bad to worse. These are parallel processes that might develop into another tangle of contradictions. A revolutionary approach to it will worsen the situation.