

## THE MEDIA ABOUT GEORGIAN NATIONALISM TODAY: BETWEEN THE POLITICAL NATION AND TRADITIONALISM

Maxim KIRCHANOV

*D.Sc. (Hist.), Assistant Professor,  
Chair of Regional Studies and Economics of Foreign Countries,  
Department of International Relations FGBOU VPO  
Voronezh State University  
(Voronezh, the Russian Federation)*

### ABSTRACT

**T**he author analyzes the political and traditional trends in the ideology of contemporary Georgian nationalism. He concludes that it relies on a developed political tradition and is functioning as a primarily civil movement. The Georgian Orthodox Church is developing traditional forms of

Georgian identity; the traditional trends in Georgian nationalism became even more obvious in May 2013 when sexual minorities stepped up their activities. Political debates about Georgia's role in the region and its relations with Russia have divided Georgian nationalists.

**KEYWORDS:** *Georgia, nationalism, identity, civil nationalism, traditionalism, the Georgian Orthodox Church.*

## *Introduction*

In the post-Soviet states, nationalism carries more weight than all other ideologies, Georgia being no exception. Nationalism helped the Georgians to preserve their national identity under Soviet power; it came to the fore when Georgia regained its independence and became even more prominent in the republic's political life during and after the August 2008 events.

Nationalism has a special role to play in the development of the intellectual expanse, while the nationalist discourse dominates much of the Georgian media. The ideology of contemporary Georgian nationalism consists of several dimensions and is, therefore, a fairly complicated phenomenon. More than that, it is developing amid diverse political (civilian) trends, gradual radicalization, and even an upheaval of ethnic nationalism.

So far, Russian historiography and political science have offered practically no academic analysis of the relations between Georgia and Russia, which went from bad to worse until they finally disrupted in 2008; today they are better described as a series of complications in their bilateral relations. The same fully applies to the political process underway in Georgia. Today, the Georgian nationalist discourse in the Georgian media is developing around several subjects of fundamental importance for the Georgian intellectual community and the political class. I have concentrated on the problems of political ideology of contemporary Georgian nationalism, primarily on topics relating to civil, ethnic, modern, and traditional concepts in the political ideology of contemporary Georgian nationalism as presented by the Georgian media.

## **Georgian Nationalism: Between Civil Awareness and Ethnicity**

Today, in Georgia, the political expanse<sup>1</sup> is developing amid tension created by the coexistence between moderate and more radical parties, which, to some extent, have accepted and are developing a program of Georgian nationalism. Some Georgian intellectuals find it hard to comply with the latest political transformations caused by the defeat of the United National Movement,<sup>2</sup> even though many of its slogans and parts of its program are still in circulation<sup>3</sup>; in 2012-2013, the Movement itself retreated from some of its positions.<sup>4</sup> This explains why the party, which in the past practically unilaterally formulated the country's national and political agenda, is struggling to find new allies and create a new political image of an opposition party.

Many of the Georgian intellectuals obviously prefer the narrative of Georgia as, if not a European, then at least a country with Western cultural standards,<sup>5</sup> a political community, and a nation of

---

<sup>1</sup> For more on the specifics of the Georgian political expanse, see: G. Vekua, "Praviashchaia partia Gruzii nachinaet novuiu zhizn," available at [<http://georgiamonitor.org/detail.php?ID=440>], 5 June, 2013; idem, "Strategia politicheskogo vyzhivania natsionalov na sovremennom etape," available at [<http://georgiamonitor.org/detail.php?ID=465>], 5 June, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> See: "Oshibki Natsionalnogo dvizhenia," available at [<http://apsny.ge/articles/1365616267.php>], 5 June, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> See: "The Retreating National Movement has Placed New Accents," available at [<http://www.civil.ge/geo/article.php?id=26791>], 5 June, 2013 (in Georgian).

<sup>4</sup> See: "Saakashvili's National Movement Struggles for Political Survival," available at [<http://pirweli.com.ge/?menuid=12&id=32048>], 7 June, 2013 (in Georgian).

<sup>5</sup> See: S. Kilasonia, "Regional Identity and Experiments," available at [<http://24saati.ge/index.php/category/culture/2013-06-04/38490>], 6 June, 2013 (in Georgian).

citizens. They stress that the “Western variant—democracy, a market economy, and a society that thinks and acts according to liberal values—is the road, confirmed by history as the best, toward a strong country and prosperity for all.”<sup>6</sup> The public frequently identifies Georgia’s European integration difficulties with Russia’s policy<sup>7</sup> which, according to the nationally oriented part of the expert community, deliberately blocks Georgia’s European and pro-Western initiatives. This explains why the concept of “independence” has a special role to play in contemporary Georgian nationalism<sup>8</sup> in the form of the idea of continuity of political movements that fight for independence actualized by nationalist-oriented authors.

On the other hand, pro-European/pro-Western rhetoric did nothing to save the moderate the Saakashvili-led Georgian nationalists from political defeat; this is explained by the deformations in the development of Georgian nationalism. Vasil Rukhadze, for example, has pointed out: “In Georgia people mostly join a political party not because of their political convictions; they are guided by mercantilist considerations. While the party remains in power its members prosper; when it loses power the members lose much of their former prosperity. This starts an outflow which goes on and on until the party disappears altogether.”<sup>9</sup> Some Georgian intellectuals have recognized this as one of the weaknesses of civil nationalism (represented, in particular, by such European institutions as parties) vs. traditional and informal relations.

The defeat of the United National Movement does not mean that a compromise among Georgian nationalist groups and trends is impossible, even if the part of the political field controlled by the nationalists is fairly fragmented. The moderate nationalists of the Georgian Dream have drawn closer to the no less nationally-oriented social democrats.<sup>10</sup> On the whole, they are guided by ideas very similar to the values supported by the United National Movement. The Georgian Dream and the other actors of the political (nationalist) discourse in Georgia point out that the country should follow the road leading to integration in the Euro-Atlantic structures,<sup>11</sup> draw closer to the United States, and remain firm in relation to Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region as Georgian territories.<sup>12</sup>

In this context the Georgian national dream has actualized the narrative about Georgia as an ideal (imaginary) political fatherland, the “land of the Georgian nation” not limited “to the present generation.”<sup>13</sup> These subjects have become fairly common on the ideological agenda of contemporary Georgian nationalism. Today, nationally-oriented politicians and experts distinguish between political priorities: consistent nationalists have concentrated on the country’s territorial integrity, while

<sup>6</sup> “Normalizatsiia otnosheniy s Rossiei”—kakoy tsenoy?,” available at [<http://www.apsny.ge/analytics/1362335155.php>], 5 June, 2013.

<sup>7</sup> See: B. Kanchaveli, “Georgia is Heading toward Isolation,” available at [<http://24saati.ge/index.php/category/opinion/blog/2013-05-26/38237>], 7 June, 2013 (in Georgian).

<sup>8</sup> See: D. Shvelidze, “Independence and We,” available at [<http://24saati.ge/index.php/category/opinion/2013-05-26/38242>], 4 June, 2013 (in Georgian).

<sup>9</sup> V. Rukhadze, “S natsiimi chasto sluchaetsya amnesia posle dolgoy i tiazheloy okkupatsii,” available at [<http://apsny.ge/interview/1366141152.php>], 5 June, 2013.

<sup>10</sup> See: “The Georgian Dream and Democratic Georgia Parties are Uniting into a European-style Social-Democratic Party,” available at [<http://pirweli.com.ge/?menuid=8&id=34703>], 3 June, 2013 (in Georgian).

<sup>11</sup> For more on Georgia’s course toward Euro-Atlantic integration, see: A. Gamzardia, “Vneshnepoliticheskie orientiry Gruzii s tochki zreniia obshchestvennykh ustanovok,” available at [<http://georgiamonitor.org/detail.php?ID=414>], 3 June, 2013; “Evropa i NATO—dalekaia perspektiva,” available at [<http://georgiamonitor.org/detail.php?ID=467>], 3 June, 2013.

<sup>12</sup> “Personal Questions to Ivanishvili about Political Plans for the Country and International Relations,” available at [<http://www.civil.ge/geo/article.php?id=24679>], 4 June, 2013 (in Georgian).

<sup>13</sup> A. Chachia, “The Land Belongs to the Georgian Nation, while the Nation is not Limited to the Present Generation,” available at [[http://saqinform.ge/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=14757:2013-06-05-09-19-17&catid=109:arno&Itemid=538#axzz2V8KdFC2y](http://saqinform.ge/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=14757:2013-06-05-09-19-17&catid=109:arno&Itemid=538#axzz2V8KdFC2y)], 5 June, 2013 (in Georgian).

more liberal politicians (Nino Burjanadze being one of them<sup>14</sup>) are more concerned about Georgia's integration into the Euro-Atlantic structures.

Georgian nationalism may become even more consolidated under the impact of Russia's policy in relation to Georgia and the separatist regimes of Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region. In particular, in the spring of 2013, Russia's attempts to separate areas adjacent to the Tskhinvali Region from Georgia forced the United States and NATO to side with Tbilisi.<sup>15</sup> These attempts helped the United National Movement and the Georgian Dream find a common language. They condemned Russian policy; Ivanishvili said, in particular, that this and similar attempts would undermine Russia's interests and its image in the world,<sup>16</sup> while other Georgian politicians deemed it necessary to point out that these provocative and obviously reckless actions testified to the fact that Russia was desperate.<sup>17</sup>

On the other hand, this not only stimulates, but also legitimizes Georgia's desire to join NATO. The North Atlantic Alliance, in turn, is pointing out to the Georgian elites that human rights and the rights of ethnic minorities should be observed. Tbilisi is very open about its readiness to change, but its Western partners prefer neutral or friendly declarations<sup>18</sup> and carefully avoid mentioning possible dates when Georgia might join NATO. In turn, Russia's actions mentioned above are important informational pretexts; practically all the national media<sup>19</sup> used them for national and political mobilization and for strengthening the nationalist trends in the country.

By the summer of 2013, it became clear that those who feared the pro-Russian bias of the prime minister were wrong: relations with Russia (which refused to retreat from its recognition of the independence of the two separatist regions) remained strained.

Today, Georgian nationalism has reached the point of bifurcation: defeat of the United Movement and the much stronger position of the nationalists of the Georgian Dream have made a new strategy for Georgian nationalism absolutely indispensable. The Georgian leaders insist that domestic policy should be revised to avoid possible international isolation.<sup>20</sup> Practically all the Georgian nationalists agree that Georgia should follow its Euro-Atlantic strategy.<sup>21</sup> It should place its stakes on democratic institutions, economic reforms, and integration into the EU and NATO. The theoreticians of Georgian nationalism are convinced that economically and politically sustainable Georgia may become an important regional actor that is very attractive to the Tskhinvali Region and Abkhazia.

<sup>14</sup> See: "Realities of Today: Georgia Might Join NATO," available at [<http://pirweli.com.ge/?menuid=8&id=34725>], 5 June, 2013 (in Georgian).

<sup>15</sup> See: "We Call on Russia to Observe Its International Obligations," available at [<http://pirweli.com.ge/?menuid=8&id=34723>], 5 June, 2013; "Anders Rasmussen Met Irakly Alasania," available at [<http://pirweli.com.ge/?menuid=8&id=34691>], 5 June, 2013; "Georgia is Moving toward NATO, while Ivanishvili is not a Kremlin Envoy," available at [<http://pirweli.com.ge/?menuid=12&id=34328>], 5 June, 2013; "The U.S. Department of State Condemned the Building of Barriers along the Administrative Border with South Ossetia," available at [<http://www.civil.ge/geo/article.php?id=26972>], 5 June, 2013 (all in Georgian).

<sup>16</sup> See: "Ivanishvili Offers His Comments about the Situation on the Administrative Border with South Ossetia," available at [<http://www.civil.ge/geo/article.php?id=26970>], 7 June, 2013 (in Georgian).

<sup>17</sup> See: "Garibashvili: 'We Have Discussed the Problems Most Important for the Country,'" available at [[http://saqinform.ge/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=14777:2013-06-06-13-06-46&catid=98:politics&Itemid=457#axzz2VN26vyRS](http://saqinform.ge/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=14777:2013-06-06-13-06-46&catid=98:politics&Itemid=457#axzz2VN26vyRS)], 7 June, 2013 (in Georgian).

<sup>18</sup> See: "Rasmussen Expects that Georgia Will be Ruled by the Law and Respect for Minority Rights," available at [<http://pirweli.com.ge/?menuid=8&id=34660>], 8 June, 2013 (in Georgian).

<sup>19</sup> See: "NGOs Protest Against Changes and Occupation," available at [<http://1tv.ge/news-view/50850>], 5 June, 2013 (in Georgian).

<sup>20</sup> See: "Saakashvili: 'Russia Tests Georgian Govt's Firmness,'" available at [<http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=26137&search=>], 1 June, 2013.

<sup>21</sup> See: "Yakoboshvili—State Minister of Conflict Settlement," available at [<http://www.civil.ge/geo/article.php?id=17435>], 7 June, 2013 (in Georgian).

## Georgian Identity: Religious Dimension

Georgian nationalism, which is developing as a predominantly secular political movement, the theoreticians of which prefer the Western concept of a nation-state, is not free from religious influence because of the special role the Georgian Church plays in the country's social life. The media never fail to point out the special and unique role the Church has been playing and continues to play in the preservation and development of Georgia's national identity, language, and literature.<sup>22</sup>

The leaders of the Georgian Orthodox Church, who regularly turn to the problems of theocracy and its prospects in Georgian politics,<sup>23</sup> have assumed an active position on the political scene. Not satisfied with supporting the most traditional and conservative trends, they disagree with the secular powers by pointing out that they should not interfere in the life of the Church.<sup>24</sup> There is an obvious trend if not to replace the state institutions with the Church, at least to cast doubts on the right of secular power to be the only theoreticians of the Georgian national idea and its only vehicle. In the 2010s, this forced secular power to pay more attention to the Church and to their joint social programs<sup>25</sup> in an effort to make their initiative legal not only in the political and secular spheres but also in the religious sphere.

Not infrequently the Church itself insists not only on its purely religious functions, but also on its role in the public sphere,<sup>26</sup> which involves the clergy in politics and confronts it with political, social, and economic problems. The Georgian version of the liberation theology looks like a very distant future against this background. Ilia II, Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia and spiritual leader of the Georgian Orthodox Church,<sup>27</sup> regularly assumes the role of the main newsmaker for the supporters of the religious, mainly traditionalist, trend in contemporary Georgian nationalism. He emphasizes the traditional values and principles that form the foundation of Georgian identity and points to the special role of the Georgian Church in the development of the Georgian nation. The Patriarch doubts the role of secular institutions, particularly political parties,<sup>28</sup> which he accuses of pursuing their own narrow interests, and insists that Orthodox values are an inalienable part of the Georgian national ideology; he is opposed, therefore, to radical Westernization of Georgian society (for example, the Church is dead set against abortions).<sup>29</sup>

Very much like Polish and Croatian Catholic nationalists, the Georgian nationalists are negatively disposed toward sexual minorities and their public acts, even though the hierarchs of the Georgian Church preferred to keep away from the acts of violence that took place during the gay parade in May

<sup>22</sup> See: "Thirty-Five of the Hardest and Most Important Years," available at [<http://www.kvirispalitra.ge/martlmadidebluri/14978-35-tseli-gza-urthulesi-da-umnišvnelovanesi.html>], 5 June, 2013 (in Georgian).

<sup>23</sup> See: "The Patriarch on Certain State and Theocratic Forms of Government," available at [<http://geotimes.ge/index.php?m=home&newsid=44038&lang=geo>], 6 June, 2013 (in Georgian).

<sup>24</sup> See: "Bishop Seraphim: The State Should Not Rudely Interfere in the Internal Affairs of the Church," available at [<http://geotimes.ge/index.php?m=home&newsid=44083&lang=geo>], 9 June, 2013 (in Georgian).

<sup>25</sup> See: "The Human Rights Association Addresses the Prime Minister and the Patriarch," available at [<http://geotimes.ge/index.php?m=home&newsid=44009&lang=geo>], 5 June, 2013 (in Georgian).

<sup>26</sup> See: "What Life is About," available at [<http://www.kvirispalitra.ge/martlmadidebluri/17143-ra-aris-sicockhle.html>], 7 June, 2013 (in Georgian).

<sup>27</sup> See: "Message of His Holiness," available at [<http://www.kvirispalitra.ge/martlmadidebluri/16996-utsmindesis-saaghgdgomo-epistole.html>], 5 June, 2013 (in Georgian).

<sup>28</sup> See: "Patriarch Ilia II: 'Driven by Competition Political Parties Have Forgotten Georgia,'" available at [[http://saqinform.ge/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=14281:2013-04-26-09-48-33&catid=110:religia1&Itemid=514#axzz2VN26vyRS](http://saqinform.ge/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=14281:2013-04-26-09-48-33&catid=110:religia1&Itemid=514#axzz2VN26vyRS)], 8 June, 2013 (in Georgian).

<sup>29</sup> See: "Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!" available at [<http://www.kvirispalitra.ge/martlmadidebluri/16998-qrteste-aghgdga-tcešmaritad-aghgdga.html>], 5 June, 2013 (in Georgian).

2013.<sup>30</sup> Society, developing within the traditional system of coordinates, did not accept the attempts to start a discussion about homosexuals and their place in society.<sup>31</sup> The May bout of activity of sexual minorities forced the representatives of all traditional confessions to condemn it and ask the homosexual community to refrain from demonstrations of their sexual orientation.<sup>32</sup> This means that traditionalism is very strong in Georgian society. The comments the Church issued on the clashes in Tbilisi were supported by the nationalist traditionalists and contradicted the opinions of the moderate members of the Georgian Dream: the Church doubted that Ivanishvili was right when he said that “sexual minorities have the same rights as all other people. Society is learning to accept them, even if gradually.”<sup>33</sup>

This sort of liberalism irritated the nationalist-traditionalists; the Church, on the other hand, was more consistent than all other forces<sup>34</sup>: it regularly condemned sexual minorities and spoke of them as drug addicts.<sup>35</sup> Ilia II, who had been very negative about the planned gay parade in Tbilisi,<sup>36</sup> was equally negative when talking about the events which followed. He pointed out that while the demands of sexual minorities were unacceptable in Georgia, violence was equally undesirable and lamentable.<sup>37</sup> On the whole, the Georgian nationalist-traditionalists stood firm in their position: in a country with a predominantly Christian population, homosexual demonstrations cannot be allowed or tolerated.<sup>38</sup>

The hierarchs were of a similar opinion: homosexual identity is historically and genetically alien to the Georgian nation. The street disorder and disbandment of the gay parade in Tbilisi were essentially approved as a manifestation of “a battle against sins.”<sup>39</sup>

The Georgian nationalists did not retreat under Washington’s pressure,<sup>40</sup> even though the Georgian political community prefers to take American opinions into account. The unyielding position of the nationalist-traditionalists on the issue and the fact that they ignore international criticism shows that the nationalists carry a lot of weight on the domestic political scene and disproves what certain

<sup>30</sup> See: “The Church Stays Away from the Violence,” available at [<http://www.kvirispalitra.ge/kviridan-kviramde/17172-eklesia-dzaladobas-emijneba.html>], 7 June, 2013 (in Georgian).

<sup>31</sup> See: “Is Homophobia Nothing More than One of the Phobias?” available at [<http://24saati.ge/index.php/category/society/2013-06-02/38447>], 8 June, 2013 (in Georgian).

<sup>32</sup> See: “All Churches and Religious Associations in Georgian Territory Ask the Sexual Minorities to Refrain from Demonstrations of Their Identity in Public Places,” available at [[http://saqinform.ge/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=14520:2013-05-17-07-24-47&catid=110:religia1&Itemid=514#axzz2VN26vyRS](http://saqinform.ge/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=14520:2013-05-17-07-24-47&catid=110:religia1&Itemid=514#axzz2VN26vyRS)], 9 June, 2013 (in Georgian).

<sup>33</sup> “The Prime Minister Comments on What is Being Planned to Restrain Homophobia,” available at [<http://www.civil.ge/geo/article.php?id=26881>], 4 June, 2013 (in Georgian).

<sup>34</sup> See: “Thank God Who Protects Us from All Troubles!” available at [[http://saqinform.ge/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=14547:2013-05-20-09-56-51&catid=100:sazogadoeba&Itemid=396#axzz2VN26vyRS](http://saqinform.ge/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=14547:2013-05-20-09-56-51&catid=100:sazogadoeba&Itemid=396#axzz2VN26vyRS)], 4 June, 2013 (in Georgian).

<sup>35</sup> See: “The Church Looks at Sexual Minorities as a Grave Sin and Believes that Homosexuals Need Help and Support,” available at [[http://saqinform.ge/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=14521:2013-05-17-07-28-30&catid=100:sazogadoeba&Itemid=396#axzz2VN26vyRS](http://saqinform.ge/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=14521:2013-05-17-07-28-30&catid=100:sazogadoeba&Itemid=396#axzz2VN26vyRS)], 5 June, 2013 (in Georgian).

<sup>36</sup> See: “The Patriarch Suggests that the Meeting in Support of Sexual Minorities Should be Annulled,” available at [<http://www.civil.ge/geo/article.php?id=26889>], 5 June, 2013; “Homophobia of the Protesters Developed into Violence,” available at [<http://www.civil.ge/geo/article.php?id=26907>], 5 June, 2013 (both in Georgian).

<sup>37</sup> See: “Members of the Clergy were Regrettably Very Rude,” available at [<http://www.kvirispalitra.ge/kviridan-kviramde/17281-qsamtsukharoa-rom-samghvdeloeba-uzrdelad-iqceodaq.html>], 5 June, 2013 (in Georgian).

<sup>38</sup> See: “The Patriarchate: ‘In a Country in which the Majority of the Population are Christians, Muslims, and the Followers of Other Traditional Confessions, Support of Homosexuals Arouses Protest,’” available at [[http://saqinform.ge/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=14599:2013-05-23-10-57-36&catid=100:sazogadoeba&Itemid=396#axzz2VN26vyRS](http://saqinform.ge/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=14599:2013-05-23-10-57-36&catid=100:sazogadoeba&Itemid=396#axzz2VN26vyRS)], 5 June, 2013 (in Georgian).

<sup>39</sup> “Father Tariel: ‘If the Church Leaders are Arrested...,’” available at [<http://geotimes.ge/index.php?m=home&newsid=43794&lang=geo>], 6 June, 2013 (in Georgian).

<sup>40</sup> See: “Bridget Brink: The U.S. Condemns Violence in Relation to the Gay Minority,” available at [[http://saqinform.ge/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=14620:-----q&catid=100:sazogadoeba&Itemid=396#axzz2VN26vyRS](http://saqinform.ge/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=14620:-----q&catid=100:sazogadoeba&Itemid=396#axzz2VN26vyRS)], 8 June, 2013 (in Georgian).

Russian critics of Georgia say about its de facto dependence on the United States. On the other hand, by consistently insisting on the traditional Georgian identity, the Church points out that homosexuality is an “anomaly and an illness” and also a “grave sin.”<sup>41</sup>

On the whole, the Georgian expert community interpreted the clashes as an outcrop of confrontation between those who support the pro-Western course for Georgia and the nationalists inclined to stress Georgian traditions. The media satisfy the avid public interest in the life and deeds of the Georgian Orthodox clergy and the Church as a whole in the 20th century.<sup>42</sup> This means that Georgia and Georgian nationalism belong to the countries (together with Poland and Croatia) and the political (nationalist) movements in which the national is realized through secular, political, and civil institutions, as well as through religious institutions and the Church.

Not infrequently, the continued existence of Georgian statehood is associated with the continued existence of the Georgian Church.<sup>43</sup> This means that the clerical movements in contemporary Georgian nationalism have not yet exhausted their potential: Georgian nationalism is developing mainly as a secular movement, probably by the inertia inherited from the Soviet past. In this respect, political (civil) nationalism is very close to the cultural trends in the contemporary Georgian national movement. On the other hand, the religious dimension of Georgian nationalism has its political overtones: the Georgian Church is struggling to preserve the Abkhazian Church as its part.<sup>44</sup> Georgian authors blame the Abkhazian radicals and the Moscow Patriarchate for the emergence and development of church separatism.<sup>45</sup> The Georgian media insist that the attempts to set up a separate Orthodox Church in Abkhazia were initiated outside the country and are encouraged by Russia’s political elites who, according to the nationally-oriented Georgian experts, are trying to dismember Georgia by separating Abkhazia and the Tskhinvali Region from it.

### *Conclusions and Possible Research Trends*

There are certain factors responsible for the development of contemporary Georgian nationalism or, rather, for its degree of development and orientation as represented by the Georgian media.

Nationalism is developing amid considerable fragmentation, which will develop and become even more pronounced. Throughout the 20th century, Georgian nationalism functioned in moderate and radical forms; I have written about this in my earlier articles. On the other hand, even though different sources show that this dichotomy still survives, newer and wider horizons are opening up. An analysis of contemporary Georgian nationalism as represented in the Georgian media (mostly in Georgian) allowed me to readjust the earlier typology of Georgian nationalism.

It seems that it is more correct to identify not only the moderate and radical trends, but also the political (civil, that is, modern) and traditional (essentially anti-modern) trends in the ideology of the

<sup>41</sup> “The Leaders of the 17 May Movement are Highly Displeased with the Patriarch’s Statement,” available at [<http://www.civil.ge/geo/article.php?id=26923>], 7 June, 2013 (in Georgian).

<sup>42</sup> See: “Exclusive Interview with the Patriarch: ‘I am Personally Responsible for Father Shio,’” available at [<http://www.kvirispalitra.ge/martlmadidebluri/16524-eqskluziuri-interviu-patriarqthan-qme-didad-davalebuli-var-mama-siosganq.html>], 7 June, 2013 (in Georgian).

<sup>43</sup> See: “Our Patriarch Is Probably Unique,” available at [<http://www.kvirispalitra.ge/martlmadidebluri/15181-qisethi-patriarqi-rogoric-čvenia-aravis-ar-hyavsq.html>], 5 June 2013 (in Russian).

<sup>44</sup> See: N. Tskitishvili, “Religious Separatism or Idiocy?” available at [[http://expertclub.ge/portal/cnid\\_\\_10973/alias\\_\\_Expertclub/lang\\_\\_ka-GE/tabid\\_\\_2546/default.aspx](http://expertclub.ge/portal/cnid__10973/alias__Expertclub/lang__ka-GE/tabid__2546/default.aspx)], 7 June, 2013 (in Georgian).

<sup>45</sup> See: “Historical Documents Testify...,” available at [[http://expertclub.ge/portal/cnid\\_\\_10983/alias\\_\\_Expertclub/lang\\_\\_ka-GE/tabid\\_\\_2546/default.aspx](http://expertclub.ge/portal/cnid__10983/alias__Expertclub/lang__ka-GE/tabid__2546/default.aspx)], 5 June, 2013 (in Georgian).

contemporary Georgian nationalism. We should not identify the latter with ethno-nationalism. Both the civil and the traditional trends in Georgian nationalism rely on the earlier program of Georgian nationalism that concentrated on creating a modern Georgian nation with its own identity, language, developed literary traditions, and political dimension represented by an independent state. The former three attributes of Georgian nationalism are rooted in the distant past, while the political dimension appeared in the 1990s-2000s. The negative political dynamics of our time determined the development nature of the Georgian nationalist movement doomed to survive in a fairly fragmented political expanse.

In this situation Georgian nationalism and its radicalization are naturally connected with the growing ethnic trends. Contemporary Georgian civil nationalism is a very contradictory and highly diverse phenomenon; its theoreticians like to use liberal rhetoric and know how to do this; this became obvious after the Rose Revolution, in the period of liberal reforms and the Euro-Atlantic foreign policy. The more traditional trends of Georgian nationalism occupy the opposite pole; they are actualized with the help of the Georgian Orthodox Church. Traditionalism is not an antipode of Georgian nationalism: both trends have common political predecessors. This means that the Georgian nationalist discourse is not so much fragmented but, to a greater extent, being reformatted once more by Georgian nationalists not inclined to discuss the subjects analyzed in this article.

Most Georgian nationalists are either positive about the country's pro-Western course and the development of the civil and political institutions, or at least accept it. However, they cannot approve or even accept the recent liberalization in relation to the gay community that came to the fore in May 2013: the nationalists closed ranks and responded with harsh comments. Polarization and fragmentation of Georgian nationalism are caused by Georgia's role in the Caucasus and its relations with Russia. This means that the Russian and the Caucasian as part of the ideology of Georgian nationalism should be analyzed in detail.

---