

## TRANSFORMATION OF THE POLITICAL SYSTEM IN GEORGIA TODAY

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The newly independent states which arose in the post-Soviet expanse at the beginning of the 1990s immediately began transplanting to local soil the democratic constitutions and political systems officially approved in the West, particularly those with a semi-presidential and presidential rule.

But the practice of the transition period showed that mere declaration of Western-style constitutions in no way means the actual formation of a corresponding political system. Introducing the principle of division of power into the Basic Law does not guarantee it will function democratically in the way theoreticians understand it and as it is currently executed in countries with a developed democracy.

What actually happened in most of the transition states was that all power went to the executive bodies, and the legislative and judicial branches became their perfunctory appendages. Finding themselves back at the helm, the former nomenklatura leaders of the communist parties of the past Union republics acted like first secretaries of the Central Committee, since they were endowed with corresponding powers. So in many post-Soviet countries, the principle of division of power turned out to be stillborn. Only the corresponding articles of the republican constitutions remind us of its formal existence.

In this respect, it appears Gabriel Almond was right in his theory that it is impossible to transplant democratic political systems and liberal values to countries with a non-Western civilization, where the political culture has not evolved to the proper level. The constitutional declaration of democracy in these countries is purely token in nature as yet.

As for Georgia, we are seeing how the country is trying to adapt and fit its political system to reality in its constitutional law-making, whereby this is proving to be a rather complicated process. It has already passed through four stages, and each one was related to certain political changes. The first stage began on 9 April, 1991 with the adoption of the Act on Georgia's State Independence and ended on 21 February, 1992 with the announcement that the Constitution of 21 February, 1921 was to be restored. The second stage lasted from 11 October, 1992, that is, from the day of the parliamentary election to 1995. The third started from adoption of the Constitution of 24 August, 1995, and the fourth from the introduction of amendments to the Basic Law in February 2004.

According to the current Constitution, our country is a presidential republic in which state power is divided among the legislative, judicial, and executive branches. Each of them is independent and is guided in its activity by the provisions of the Basic Law and corresponding legal regulations.

As we already noted, constitutional reform was carried out in February 2004 after the revolutionary events of 2003 and the country became a semi-presidential republic. The purpose of reviewing the Constitution was to improve governance, strengthen civil society and democracy, and protect the political and social rights of its citizens regardless of their national, racial, and religious affiliation. Corresponding changes could be brought about by the need to restore territorial integrity, as well as by other realities. What is more, the constitutional changes which followed the revolution were aimed at legitimizing power and facilitating the debut of the new political elite on the juridical field.

In the words of D.Sc. (Law) Paata Tsnobiladze, constitutional reform in 2004 was an expression of post-revolutionary sentiments and, what is more, a necessity. In this case, the matter concerns realizing society's hopes for innovative changes and a better future, as well as the striving of the new government for institutional perfection and stability. However, there is no reason to believe that optimal constitutional reform has been carried out from the viewpoint of institutional perfection. Nevertheless, it is also a great injustice to believe that the former system which discredited itself should be retained.

In our country, discussions have been going on for more than ten years now about the form of state governance. The advocates of a parliamentary republic believe that this is the most democratic form of power, since it has justified itself in several European states, and in crisis situations has advantages over the presidential and mixed models. The advocates of the presidential and semi-presidential models, on the other hand, maintain that in order to deal with the chaotic processes and other collisions of the transition period, a state must have the ability to react quickly to a situation and make timely political decisions capable of ensuring flexible governance of the state.

From our point of view, the failures of the transition period in the political, economic, military, and cultural spheres were caused not so much by the shortcomings of the form of governance, as by the presence in power of a corrupted, neo-nomenklatura political elite with a low level of professional education. Therefore, such elements as political culture, political elite, political leader, party, and political ideologies must be analyzed in order to make a character study of the system. During transformation of the system, a significant role is played by the type of political culture in the country, which is an expression of society's political conduct. It contains elements of the culture of governance, whereas the level of political and legal consciousness of society, the country's political elite, and its individual citizens defines the quality of democracy, the way the political institutions function, and the uniqueness of the political regime as a whole. What is more, study of the transplantation process and subsequent modernization of the system is impossible if we do not analyze the special features and development trends of individual segments of this type of political culture.

The special features of Georgia's political culture, like those of other post-Soviet republics, are largely defined by the elements of patriarchic culture inherited from the totalitarian system. The Soviet political system was based on one ideology (Marxist-Leninist) and on the dictatorship of one party (communist), and functioned under conditions of total disregard for basic human rights. Civilian, political, and voting rights were of a declarative nature. The formation of a mobilizational psychology with complete disregard for the interests of the individual was considered the most important thing. Charles F. Andrain correctly defined the Soviet political system, which relied on administrative methods of governance, as mobilizational. The language of socialization between the upper and lower echelons of this system presumed unconditional obedience. "Executive governance" skills defined the development of the political process, which, in turn, formed a type of political culture based on power and subordination. The main role in the system was played by the totalitarian, ideologized entity. The political elite was presented as a united front of impersonal leaders. They were recruited from inside a closed system.

Elements of the totalitarian culture, including the nomenklatura political elite, play a crucial role in the transition period too. For the ruling elite, the principle of division of power was unacceptable, so it tried in every way to transfer it to the executive bodies. Traditions of the administrative-command system and totalitarian ideology were manifested most clearly during the rule of Eduard Shevardnadze's neo-nomenklatura elite. Incidentally, today too, elements of authoritarian culture play a decisive role in Georgia's political life. Power and the political regime are again associated with the president. The reasons for this lie not only in the constitutional changes of February 2004 and in the personal qualities of the head of state. A significant role here is also played by elements of the patriarchic culture which penetrate public consciousness and presume specific forms of power and subordination. Until the members of our society recognize that their civil activity and the creation of a government control mechanism are necessary conditions for developing democracy, the rulers will always place their will higher than the laws and practice authoritative methods of governance. Changing this situation requires time, during which, in addition to an economic upswing, liberal values should be ascertained.

In Georgia's political culture, a significant role is played by the historical feeling of trust in a charismatic leader. This is actualized from time to time. The ongoing search for a leader-savior in a small and poor country is acquiring special significance. First, retaining "relative independence" also presumes the presence of a strong leader (along with the support of large states); second, the anticipation of rapid changes in socioeconomic life is associated with the image of a leader-firefighter. In Georgia, dying for the sake of the czar-savior was historically considered a great virtue, and the Soviet regime only reinforced faith in the leader. In this respect, Stalin's era played a significant part. The patriarchic culture and search for a charismatic leader generated by it were successively embod-

ied in the images of Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Eduard Shevardnadze, and Mikhail Saakashvili. Ideas of national independence were associated with Zviad Gamsakhurdia, of stabilization with Eduard Shevardnadze, and of improved social conditions with Mikhail Saakashvili. Each of them met the expectations of certain social strata.

Any charismatic leader, regardless of the hopes pinned on him, strengthens elements of the “eastern patriarchic” culture in the Georgian consciousness and promotes endorsement of an authoritarian regime. But in the republic, along with the patriarchic culture of subordination, elements of a culture of active co-participation exist. And the share of these elements significantly grew after the well-known events of 1978, 1989, and 2003.

Along with national ideals, civilian and social rights stimulated political activity, which is undoubtedly a positive trend. Strengthening elements of civilian consciousness raises the level of political culture and expands the possibilities of creative assimilation of European liberal values. It should be noted that in countries with a developed democracy, the high level of culture and education directly correlates to the level of political culture. In Georgia, this correlation is not observed: the level of political culture—the main prerequisite for confirmation of democratic institutions—does not correlate to the high level of culture and education, religious, and national tolerance. We see the reason for this in the material and social polarization of the population. What is more, if there is no civil society in the country, a patrimonial political culture again begins to play the determining role.

The development of a political culture is a long process related both to the situation in the economy and to the presence of democratic institutions. Elements of a patriarchic-thieves’ culture play a negative role in the development of this process. It is not by accident that the expression “criminalization of politics and politicization of crime”<sup>1</sup> has become popular in our country. The thieves’ mentality largely reinforces elements of the patriarchic culture and ultimately has a very negative impact on the political process. An affinity for the thieves’ world has percolated into the works of well-known Georgian writers, and both in parliament and in the executive power branch criminal authorities are often resorted to during “showdowns.” To be fair, it should be noted that Georgia’s post-revolutionary authorities have achieved significant success in the fight against the criminal world. What is more, legal scholars, Professors G. Lobjanidze and G. Glonti, published a monograph about mafia bosses, in which they analyze this institution.<sup>2</sup>

Along with the special features of national-historical development, the country’s geopolitical stance also has a significant influence on the East-West orientation. “A certain symbiosis of citizens’ political participation,” writes Professor Gogiashvili, “given the West-East orientation with the predominance of one of them (for example, with the dominating role of the Central Asian, Eastern cultural expanse—Russia, Kazakhstan, with an admixture of Western—the Baltic countries) is forming the political culture in the post-Soviet countries. If we analyze Georgia’s position today from this viewpoint, there is reason to believe that in our country precisely Western political orientations and values are finding fertile soil in which to grow.”<sup>3</sup>

Well-known domestic thinkers, Ilya Chavchavadze, Archil Jorjadze, Niko Nikoladze, and Noe Zhordania, believed that Europe is ours—our flesh and blood (Noe Zhordania), but they also believed that Europeanization of Georgia was only possible on national ground, based on national consciousness and the Georgian culture. Since the national culture cannot develop in isolation, close political, economic, and spiritual contacts are needed with other nations. Mutual enrichment is only possible when the national culture is ready for the creative perception and assimilation of other people’s ideas. Otherwise we are dealing with imitation.

<sup>1</sup> A. Tukvadze, *Politicheskaia elita*, Tbilisi, 1998, p. 205.

<sup>2</sup> See: G. Lobjanidze, G. Glonti, *Vory v zakone v Gruzii*, Tbilisi, 2004, pp. 177-178.

<sup>3</sup> *Diskussionnyi klub “Gruzinskoe gosudarstvo”*. *Collected Works*, Tbilisi, 2003, p. 30.

The West's, primarily the United States', economic, political, and strategic interests in Georgia are aroused not only by the geopolitical status of our country, an important role is also played by the pro-Western orientation of its culture, and the high level of education and tolerance of its people, including for different faiths. The prospect of integrating into NATO and the European Union is a historic opportunity, and if we do not take advantage of it, we will remain but a "relatively independent" state. The steps taken in this direction (joining the European Council, implementing the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline project) are significantly accelerating transformation of our political system. Integration with the West is also being activated by globalization, which, however, along with the positive factors harbors the danger of leveling out the primordial traditions of the national culture. "If an incorrect policy is carried out, we could lose our unique Georgian culture," noted President Mikhail Saakashvili in one of his speeches.

The country's ruling elite is entirely oriented toward the Western culture. This is responsible for the attempts to mechanically transplant liberal-democratic values for which Georgia has still not created a socioeconomic base. And what is more, its state institutions are only just beginning to form. To this should be added the historical striving toward Europeanization, but imitation on the way to Europeanization, wrote Noe Zhordania, is having a narrowing and sedating effect on the national consciousness.<sup>4</sup> Niko Nikoladze also noted that "there is no precedent in the world of a nation or society elevating itself with the help of others without exerting its own efforts."<sup>5</sup>

The views of the mentioned thinkers are particularly pertinent today. These people were brilliant representatives of the national culture, and at one time obtained a fundamental European education. They understood very well that when there is no middle class and civil society in a country oriented toward democratic values, there can be no grounds for talking either about the creative assimilation of liberal values or democratization. An analysis of Georgia's spiritual culture convinces us of the truth of the views of our famous ancestors. Today, elements of the Western culture are being circulated which are oriented toward imitation and in this process, along with the national mentality, a negative role is played by the government's extreme pro-Western orientation.

Under conditions of political pluralism, parties which differ in ideological orientation are appearing in the country, and the majority and proportional election system is being established. "But there are no clear differences in the political spectrum between the rightist and leftist forces," writes Professor Gogiashvili. "Despite the fact that some influential political parties are considered rightist, their political activity, based on pragmatic interests, is more in keeping with the leftist orientation."<sup>6</sup> We must agree with the fact that the names, practical activity, and declared ideological orientations of most political parties clearly contradict each other.

Another big concern is aroused by the dynamics of the relations between the opposition and pro-government structures: the concept of constructive opposition is essentially alien to the country's current political spectrum. Here the oppressive heritage of the totalitarian ideology is manifested, which excluded political pluralism and coexistence with other parties. A negative role was also played by the state coup, civil war, criminalization of politics, and as a result of all of this, confirmation in political life of the forced-change-in-power syndrome which is periodically manifested in extremist ideology. The ideology of radical opposition has a solid foundation in the social reality of our state, since a large part of the population does not have a job and lives below the poverty line. Under such conditions, people look to a charismatic leader or the contra elite for support. So the populist rhetoric of the radical opposition is highly valued.

<sup>4</sup> See: N. Zhordania, *Deiateli 60-kh i segodniashniaia zhizn. Sochineniia*, Vol. 2, Tbilisi, 1920, p. 196.

<sup>5</sup> N. Nikoladze, "Nashi nedostatki," in: *Gruzinskaiia literatura*, Vol. 14, Tbilisi, 1967, pp. 99-101.

<sup>6</sup> O. Gogiashvili, *Politicheskie ideologii*, Tbilisi, 2004, p. 201.

In the political lexicon of the transition period, the concept of the “false opposition” has appeared. A classical example is the election campaign being carried out under token opposition between the center and the region by such parties as Union of Citizens of Georgia and Revival, which successfully divided the votes of the protest electorate. But the results of this kind of conspiracy were regrettable—a large region found itself outside the state’s juridical field.

Radical opposition among political parties reaches a critical point at election time, when the absence of rules of the game acquires special significance. In developed countries, where the interests of individual social strata are taken into account, the rules of the political game have already formed. They remain within the framework of the constitution and do not interfere with the functioning of the political system. In our country, during the rule of Zviad Gamsakhurdia, radical representatives of the nomenklatura elite very successfully arranged a clash between certain national forces and the national minorities and, after the military coup and overthrow of Zviad Gamsakhurdia, occupied key posts in the upper echelons of power by falsifying the election. This resulted in the separatists stepping up their activity and loss of the country’s territorial integrity. Similar trends are also observed today. The programs of some political parties (now there are approximately 150 of them) contain such provisions that if one of them wins the election, the state’s independence will be seriously jeopardized.

During modernization of the political system, a decisive role is played by confirmation of liberal democracy. At first glance, all the prerequisites for this have been created: a Constitution which recognizes the main democratic values; a high level of education and culture of the population; national and religious tolerance; and a pro-Western orientation. But the social basis of a liberal and conservative ideology—the middle class—has still not been formed. What is more, the difficult economic situation, the disastrous rise in unemployment and poverty, and the lost territory are intensifying the radical opposition of the political structures and the ideology of a forced change in power and are leading to a search for a new charismatic leader. There is no impoverished country in the world with a developed democracy, not to mention the relative nature of our independence. So all the talk about democratization remains at the level of constitutional declarations and is only mentioned in the head of state’s speeches.

Transformation of the political system is giving rise to new elites and political leaders. Even such concepts have arisen as “the ethnocratic, neo-nomenklatura, and business elites united around a charismatic leader.” The system for recruiting members of the elites has totally changed. Qualitatively new sociopolitical and ideological orientations lie at the foundation of society’s restructuring.

All three presidents of independent Georgia differed from each other in their political orientations, personal character traits, education, diplomatic and other skills, and they came to power as the result of elections held under extreme conditions.

Zviad Gamsakhurdia was a charismatic leader, the secret of whose charisma (along with his personal qualities) lay in his fanatical devotion to the idea of national independence. His rise to power was promoted by the political situation that developed and the biopsychic traits of the new leader: high intellect, moral convictions, and enormous emotional tension. This style was also retained during his presidential rule when against the background of radical contradiction with the opposition he appealed to the masses. But he was not successful in his main mission as a political leader—the mission of integrator, without the realization of which there can be no civil consent. The reasons for this were acute non-acceptance of the communist ideology, the personal character traits of the head of state and his followers, as well as the domestic and foreign political situation that developed in those years. As president, he and his political comrades-in-arms did not acquire the skills of professional diplomats, that is, the ability to maneuver and make compromises. What is more, they overestimated the country’s economic possibilities, and their activity coincided with a disadvantageous international situation. In order to efficiently govern the state machinery, one of the merits of the past—participation in a national-liberation movement—was clearly not enough. But the political elite of the new government could not assimilate the basic wisdom necessary for rulers overnight.

After the Soviet system collapsed and the guild system for recruiting these specialists was eliminated, a new mechanism did not develop in the country for selecting the political elite. The constant appeals for revolutionary merits, patriotism, or for an overseas education in no way attract highly professional personnel into the government structures. The government of Zviad Gamsakhurdia declared a dissident past, nationalism, and patriotism as the determining criteria in recruiting the elite. People from the national movement took the places of the former nomenklatura. Most of them did not have any idea about how to govern the country and were full of illusions about the possibilities for realizing the country's natural resources. And as a result, a whole slew of mediocre scholarly, cultural, and literary figures arose in social and political life.

The country's first president was oriented not toward a unifying state idea, but placed the emphasis on counteracting the communist elite. Ideologically unacceptable values began to form in the country. The former nomenklatura, moderate forces from the national movement, and some of the intelligentsia formed a united front against Zviad Gamsakhurdia. Along with the immature national consciousness, inconsistency in carrying out national policy, and denial of the principle of inheriting power, a determining role in his overthrow was played by outside factors. Russia could not reconcile itself with this kind of political leader in the Caucasus. To this was added international isolation. With the support of outside forces, the country's oppositional and criminal structures overturned the lawful government, which resulted in a civil war and violation of the state's territorial integrity.

The romantic idea of national independence went down in value, which in the minds of most of the population began to be associated with the difficult socioeconomic situation. Pragmatic demands for stability and improvement of the economic situation appeared, and hopes for a better life were associated with the image of another charismatic leader—Eduard Shevardnadze.

In the political practice of this leader, a decisive role was played by his nomenklatura past, which presumed the use of administrative-command methods of governance. He again embodied a ceremonial leader appointed by Moscow who headed the elite of the executive power. In the years of his rule, the neo-nomenklatura elite was at the helm, mainly represented by former Komsomol and party employees, that is, the communist heritage was retained. Eduard Shevardnadze successfully used his Soviet experience—he discredited the national movement and its leaders, got rid of the criminal authorities, but could not get rid of the Shevardnadze-Ioseliani diarchy. The country experienced its greatest losses precisely during this period: the neo-nomenklatura political elite integrated with the criminals, the state's territorial integrity was destroyed, and, what is more, it found itself in the grips of an economic crisis.

The 1995 Constitution, presidential and parliamentary elections, Georgia's joining the U.N., and active support from the U.S. created favorable conditions for the neo-nomenklatura elite to carry out democratic reforms. But soon it transpired that the country did not have any political will, or the ability to carry out the reforms. The leaders of the ruling party, Union of Citizens of Georgia, could only function in the administrative-command mode. Independent creative thinking and an adequate response to the unexpected events and processes of the transition period were alien to them.

Eduard Shevardnadze was the embodiment of an authoritative political leader, which along with constitutional rights found its expression in strengthening the executive power.<sup>7</sup> And the neo-nomenklatura elite took advantage of its privileged position: it disposed of the budget and carried out privatization at will, and squandered and exported the nation's wealth. The country was immersed in total corruption. Opposition arose between political power and the people, while the principles of democracy and constitutional law were totally ignored. A distorted form of "Georgian democracy" formed, which was expressed, on the one hand, in unlimited freedom of speech, and on the other, in complete falsifica-

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<sup>7</sup> Elected in 1995, the parliament adopted 307 laws, 9 of which were codes based on the president's legislative initiative (see: O. Melkadze, *Sovremennye problemy gruzinskogo konstitutsionalizma*, Tbilisi, 2001, p. 27).

tion of elections and corruption. The country found itself in a protracted socioeconomic and cultural crisis, while the promises to restore territorial integrity and return refugees home were depreciated.

All of this helped to strengthen the opposition movement of politicians just recently devoted to Eduard Shevardnadze. Zurab Zhvania, Mikhail Saakashvili, Nino Burjanadze, Giorgi Baramidze, Mikhail Machavariani, Irakli Okruashvili, and others made a name for themselves in the executive and legislative power branches, while in society the role of the nongovernmental organizations supporting them rose. The Soros Foundation became particularly active, which invested a great deal of money in forming an open society and democracy in our country. The time came when the ruling elite, power bodies, and, first and foremost, the security structures could no longer efficiently execute the government's decisions, and standards of competency and interaction among the government structures were violated. What is more, the leading role in the opposition began to be played by politicians who had reliable financial support from abroad, and who just recently were active supporters of the existing regime. Some of the politically apathetic population went onto the side of the opposition, but its main support proved to be the socially unprotected part of the electorate, including representatives of the national minorities.

International institutions and foreign countries, primarily the U.S., assisted the opposition's financial and political reinforcement. With foreign and domestic support, it is taking advantage of the freedom of speech in the country and, through the mass media, is discrediting the official government at accelerated rates.

The political adversaries of the regime who rallied before the parliamentary election of 2003 around Mikhail Saakashvili, Nino Burjanadze, and Zurab Zhvania mobilized enormous financial and political resources in order to seize power based on falsification of the election, which had already become common practice. The strategic plan of action was thought out in advance, and during the mass demonstrations it was merely adjusted. In so doing, intensive consultations were carried out both with the country's political parties, and with foreign partners. During the November revolutionary events, Mikhail Saakashvili's role proved priceless. He became the organizer and inspirer of the revolution, the emotionality and sincerity of his speeches gave rise to a feeling of empathy and belief in a better future. Decisive factors in Eduard Shevardnadze's retirement were not financial and political support from certain forces, but Mikhail Saakashvili's enormous energy, his charismatic qualities. The people saw in him their representative and intrepid leader.

Under conditions of immense domestic and foreign support, the country's new leadership set about implementing widespread reforms and arresting corrupted officials. Admittedly, some of them were soon released—after paying impressive sums of money to the budget. Many representatives of the criminal world also found themselves behind bars. The government also achieved a certain amount of success in restoring jurisdiction over part of the country's uncontrolled territory. For example, against the background of the peace demonstration in Ajaria, its authoritarian leader Aslan Abashidze was removed from his post (incidentally, also with international support). Structural reforms also successfully began in the security departments. The formation of a patrol police force and its manning with honest and professional personnel proved an efficacious way to deal with the impunity syndrome. The people began to trust the keepers of order. The country's budget grew three-fold, and financing of departments increased, including the Ministry of Defense.

But there were also political errors, careless actions, and hasty decisions. In this respect, a sweeping program of revolutionary reform seems unrealistic. Fundamental restructuring should be carried out gradually, taking into account the mechanism of social security. After all firing thousands of people and appointing new personnel in their place, in so doing basing this on their party affiliation, has nothing in common with the concepts of Western democracy. Extremely significant blunders were also made when recruiting the political elite. The policy of Mikhail Saakashvili in this sphere is reminiscent of the actions of Zviad Gamsakhurdia. In both cases, we are seeing disregard for the principle of inheritance of power: Zviad Gamsakhurdia obtained a communist apparatus of officials and corresponding



political institutions, and Mikhail Saakashvili found, in addition to the neo-nomenklatura elite, a generation of new professionals (a relatively rich political market), and political institutions undergoing reform at his disposal. In our opinion, at the initial stage of its activity, this government was unable to take advantage of the opportunity it was presented. Perhaps this was an echo of the post-revolutionary situation. When selecting personnel, it takes into account revolutionary merits, diplomas from foreign universities, age, giving preference to young people. In this respect, many well-known figures of science, culture, education, and so on have found themselves outside the framework of public life. As a result, dilettantism and incompetence are being manifested in many spheres. Not one party, including the ruling one, is capable of filling all spheres of social and political life with its own staff. The current situation is reminiscent of the activity of the communists and Komsomol members of the 1920s, but in no way meets the requirements of today's level of professionalism.

Enough time has passed to be able to come to terms with the country's economic reform. The revenue coming in from mass privatization is clearly not enough to revive industry and agriculture, although strategically important state facilities were also in line for privatization. In medium and big business, "proximity to the authorities" is gaining the upper hand again. And this undoubtedly shows that business success still depends on the benevolence of the political elite. What is more, during this period, new jobs have not been created, nor new enterprises, and most important, the purchasing power of the national currency has dropped.

On the whole, the following can be said about the current political regime: the constitutional changes of February 2004 promoted the formation of a certain "Georgian model" of semi-presidential rule, in which the president's powers have significantly grown. To this should be added Mikhail Saakashvili's adherence to an authoritarian style of leadership. The one-party parliament and obedient judicial power are functioning in a non-democratic key. The privileges of the elite and executive power (wages and other attributes of civil service according to European standards) are widening the gap between the impoverished people and their rulers even more, the regime is deprived of its social fulcrum, and the upper political echelon which rose to govern the state on a wave of mass discontent and populist promises is gradually forgetting where it came from.

European Council experts have begun focusing their attention on our country's political regime. Their conclusions are zooming in on the insufficiency of democracy in Georgia. And domestic political scientists, not to mention the opposition, also believe that a super-presidential rule has formed in Georgia with an authoritative leader as the head of state. But some authors believe that this is expedient since extricating the country from its crisis and "learning the art of democracy" are only possible by concentrating power in the hands of a charismatic leader, who if necessary will have no qualms about resorting to dictatorial methods. This is what former Polish president Lech Wałęsa thinks, for example.

On the whole, the current transition period is characterized by contradictions. On the one hand, it is retaining the political stereotypes and traditions typical of the former system, and on the other, there are obvious trends toward forming and developing a new political system. Their interaction is giving rise to extreme situations and uncontrollable political processes. In this situation, a leader needs to have a rapid response, intuition, and staunchness in making decisions, which to a certain extent presumes an authoritative style of governance. But it should not go beyond the bounds of decorum and be formed in the style of a political regime.

From our point of view, going beyond the boundaries of the juridical field is dangerous at any level of society's social development. And Georgia's Constitution envisages supremacy of the law and building a law-based state as the priority assignments.