THE FIRST INTEGRATION ATTEMPT OF THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIK OF GEORGIA WITH THE WESTERN EUROPE AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (IN THE 20s OF THE 20 CENTURY)

1920 YILLARINDA GÜRCİTSAN DEMOKRATİK CUMHURİYETİ TARAFINDAN BATI AVRUPA VE AMERİKA’YLA ENTEGRESYON İÇİN ATILAN İLK ADIMLAR

ПЕРВЫЕ ПОПЫТКИ ИНТЕГРАЦИИ ДЕМОКРАТИЧЕСКОЙ РЕСПУБЛИКИ ГРУЗИЯ С ЗАПАДНОЙ ЕВРОПОЙ И АМЕРИКОЙ В 20-ЫЕ ГОДЫ ХХ ВЕКА

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ABSTRACT
The first attempts of integration of the Democratic Republic of Georgia with Europe and the United States of America are studied in the paper. Integration was foreseen by the Georgian government as a guarantee for security and economic development of the country, which was demonstrated through the joint actions and closer partnership among the countries. The analyses of the new information resources and modern research methodology enabled us to positively evaluate the strategy and tactics of Noe Zhordania’s government considering the historical circumstances of that time. The European countries and the United States of America considered a problem of Georgia in the context of the international policy. There was a secret battle among the great powers over mandate system and distribution of influence. Therefore, the strategies and political decisions used to unexpectedly change. The international situation after the First World War and the controversial political platforms of the Georgian diplomats raised number of questions about the instability of political course of the Democratic Government of Georgia not positively effecting the decisions of the Paris Conference or the League of Nations. Eventually, Georgia lost a trust being a secure and an important geopolitical partner in a strategic region to fight against the Bolshevik Russia. On the other hand, an inclination of the European countries to trade and economically cooperate with Russia hindered the political attempts of Georgia to obtain mandate over the country with the purpose of protecting it from the anticipated annexation by the Bolshevik Russia.

Keywords: integration, democratic Georgia, first attempts, annexation, international policy, League of Nations, Western Europe, USA.

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ÖZ
Makalede Gürcistan Demokratik Cumhuriyeti’nin Batı Avrupa ve Amerika’yla entegrasyonunun ilk adımlarından söz edilmiştir. Gürcistan tarafından yapılan hamlenin amacı Bolşevik Rusya’nın saldırılarından kendini kurtarmak için Batıdan en uygun uluslararası teminatların alınması, ülkenin stratejik jeopolitik konumunu bulunduğu üzere bütün dünyanın dikkatini çekmesi idi. Bu dönemde entegrasyon meselesi ülkelerin yaklaştığı iklimi, bu iklimde hareketlerin birleştirilmişinde kendini belirledi. Amerika ve Avrupa devletleri bölgedeki Rusya’nın çıkarları ile güçlerin dengesini hesabı katarak oluşan durumu uluslararası siyaset açısından değerlendirirken Kafkasya ülkelerindeki istikrarın ve sınırlar konusunda anlaşılmazlıklarını göz önünde bulundurmuştur.

Paris Konferansı’nda manda sistemi gereğince ülkeler arasında dünyadaki etki alanlarını paylaşmak açısından perde arkası mücadeleler oldu. Kararlarla birlikte stratejiler de aniden değişirildi. O zamanın uluslararası durum göz önüne alındığında, Avrupa sosyalistlerin şifahi desteği ve Gürcü diplomatların aralarında var olan uyumsuzluk, Paris Konferansı’nda yer alan ve Avrupa ile Amerika’nın ardında gelen hükümet temsilcileri ile “Milletler Cemiyeti” Kararları üzerine olumsuz bir etki yaratmıştı. Bu durum Gürcistan Hükümetinin siyasi gidişatının, ilhak konusundaki istikrarı ile ilgili birçok sorunun ortaya çıkmasına ve Bolşevik Rusya ile karşı swipe ortak bir hükümet imajının kaybedilmesine sebep olmuştur.

Yeni kaynaklar ve modern araştırma metodolojisi, ayrıca o dönemin tarihi koşullarının dikkate alınması Noe Jordania hükümetinin stratejisi ile taktiklerin olumlu bir şekilde değerlendirilmesine imkân sağlamıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: entegrasyon, Gürcistan Demokratik Cumhuriyeti, ilk adımlar, ilhak, uluslararası siyaset, Milletler Cemiyeti, Batı Avrupa, Amerika.
оказывали не только положительный резонанс на присутствующих на Парижской конференции представителей правительств ведущих стран Европы и Америки и решения „Лиги Нации”, но и влекли возникновение множества вопросов в отношении нестабильности политического курса правительства Грузии и потерю имиджа стабильного партнера в совместной борьбе против большевистской России. Сложное противостояние мировых государств в то время, а с другой стороны торгово-экономические приоритеты европейских стран в сравнении с большевистской Россией, остановили политическую активность выполнения роли гаранта для приостановления ожидаемой большевистской аннексии с целью защиты государственности Грузии.

Ключевые слова: интеграция, демократическая Грузия, первые шаги, аннексия, международная политика, Европа, Америка, Лига Наций

1. Introduction

In the 20s of the 20 century, a need to newly use the geopolitical location became vivid to the Democratic Georgia. The country turned out to face the new challenges. Selection of the right way of development for the country and setting a clear political-economic relations with the countries must have been done on the bases of the national needs, interests and dignity as well as a necessity of close integration with the Western Europe and the United States of America. Integration was foreseen by the Georgian government as a guarantee for security and economic development of the country, which was demonstrated through the joint actions and closer partnership among the countries. The European countries and the United States of America considered a problem of Georgia in the context of the international policy. There was a secret battle among the great powers over mandate system and distribution of influence. Therefore, the strategies and political decisions used to unexpectedly change.

2. Methods

The analyses of the new information resources and modern research methodology enabled us to positively evaluate the strategy and tactics of Noe Zhordania’s government considering the historical circumstances of that time. Alongside with the scientific and historic material, the research is based on the archival material such as archived newspapers, journals and stenographic records. Historical context has been considered from different sources related to the studied period. Critical and comparative-historic, case analysis have also been applied in the research.

3. Discussion

On the 14th March of 1919, the delegation of Georgian government presented to the Versailles Peace Conference the memorandum with well-grounded request related to recognition of independence of Georgia as this was the place where decisions on “the new national boundaries“ after the World War I were made.

This conference was the place where discussions on the charter of the League of Nations, the first international intergovernmental organization, started. The charter was signed on the 28th June 1919. The League of Nations, having 27
The First Integration Attempt Of The Democratic Republik Of Georgia With The…

countries as its members, became a guarantee of international recognition of Georgia and possibility of its inclusion in the organization as a member. Georgia managed to attract world attention due to its geopolitical location and to obtain optimal international guarantee from Europe for security and save the country from the aggression of the Bolshevik Russia. The memorandum, which was presented to the League of Nations at the first session in Geneva in September 1920 by Evgeni Gegechkori, the head of the Georgian Delegation and the minister of foreign affairs, was focused on the above mentioned issues.

On the other hand, intensification of an interest towards the foreign policy and international relations by the United States of America became vivid immediately after the First World War in the “Fourteen Points” by the president Woodrow Wilson where the sixth point referred Caucasus. The issue was supposed to be discussed as a part of problem of Turkey. For Caucasus the separation from Russia was already an achievement. The first American consular in Georgia, Felix Willoughby Smith, was supporting an idea of extension of federation of Transcaucasia during the Russian Revolution (Ramishvili, 2000:41) . The releases of Smith of that time, the personal correspondence with the American high rank politicians and also brave suggestions made towards the Administration of Wilson to support the Commissariat of Transcaucasia with food and 60 million USD well evidence that the region was also within the global interest of the powerful country of the world - the Unite States of America (Mentetashvili, 1990:48).

In parallel, E. Gegechkori, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia conducted working meetings with G. Leygues, the minister of Foreign Affairs of France. At the alter stage he also conducted meetings with the chair of government and the president of France. On the 29th September 1920, he was invited by the House of Commons of Great Britain, where he also had negotiations with the representatives of the House of Lords - Lord Robert Cecil and Lord Bray. The memorandum presented to the Members of Parliament by Gegechkori and his impressive speeches were positively covered by the European press that were publicized by Government of Georgia as soon as independence was declared (Saqartvelos erovnuli arqivi, F.1864:C1:113).

After declaration of Independence of Georgia, on the 14th December 1918, the American mission arrived in Batumi in order to investigate the situation, which was headed by Judson, the rector of Chicago University, Doctor of the International Law. The archived material of meeting between D. Topuridze (the Government representative) and E. Gegechkori, the Minister of Foreign Affairs reveals interest of the United States of America, in particular, whether Georgian government was socialist, also its priorities both on internal and foreign policy platforms, number of armed forces, capacity of resisting a danger from the Bolsheviks coming from the North of the country, etc. (Maglakelidze, 1953: 7: 26-30). A doubt that Georgia had the pro-Russian orientation was strengthened among the American mission on the one hand by the Bolsheviks’ revolutionary red flag erected on the palace of the Georgian government and on the other hand by the letters and memorandums sent to the leaders of the Second International on behalf of the Georgian government...
Manana MICHITASHVILI

(Saqartvelos erovnuli arqivi, F.1831:C2:52;283). Other proofs for the American missions were speeches of the Georgian delegations in Paris, more specifically, Chkhenkeli’s speech at Lutzen Conference, and Tsereteli’s address at Amsterdam Congress in 1919 (Saqartvelos erovnuli arqivi, F.2115:C1: 28; 36).

It seems that Judson objectively assessed the reality and underlined that Georgia should have requested support directly from America that would have been granted to it. In this period the United States of America was not considered as a Mandatory Country: ‘If there is protection than only from some European countries” is recorded in the secret directives of the Georgian government (Mentetashvili, 1992: 162). Thus, this clearly shows that for the Democratic Republic of Georgia the integration with the civilized European family was the priority in the years of 1918-1920. Before summer of 1919 and the withdrawal of the English troops, the American assistance was foreseen only as a financial and diplomatic support. The shorthand record of the second meeting conducted on the 22nd March 1919 between Georgian and American sides represented by E. Gegechkori, N. Ramishvili, as a Georgian side and A. Smith and B. Moor, respectively the American side, brings better light on the interest of the United States of America in Georgia: “My government sincerely wishes independence of Georgia. Georgia is a small country and it is difficult to exist without support from outside. You should indicate the form you would like to get assistance from us. It is important for Transcaucasia to be allocated one common mandate since having the united economical interests” (Mentetashvili, 1992: 137). In this respects, the position of the Georgian side was not unanimous. Noe Zhordania supported an idea to mandate Georgia to Wilson in case of his victory which was strongly supported by Z. Avalishvili. A. Chkhenkeli strictly opposed to this idea in his letter to I. Tsereteli and criticized him on the issue of mandates (Saqartvelos erovnuli arqivi, F. 1831:C2: 283; 52;136). Smith, being uncompromised towards the Bolsheviks, got interested in Ethnic structure of Transcaucasia and its border protection issues (like border fight between Georgia and Armenia, tension between Azerbaijan and Armenia). He personally knew some Georgian politicians having pro-European orientation as well as the high risks coming from the Russian Empire facing collapse. Therefore, Smith became more preserved and later he even stopped supporting Georgia’s independence.

Despite of the hard work of Georgian delegation with the European countries and the active debates on the issue of Georgia at the special fifth commission in November and December 1920 conducted in Geneva, Georgia was not accepted as the member of League of Nations. However, scale discussion over the issue of Georgia speeded up its legal recognition by the European countries. In the years of 1918-1921, recognition of Georgia as an independent country by 25 out of 40 world countries should be considered as one of the greatest achievement of the Georgian government. This was preceded by the hard work of diplomatic and consulate representations of Georgia in difficult circumstances when even the famous leaders in Europe had vague knowledge about Georgia and considered it as the integral part of Russia.
The First Integration Attempt Of The Democratic Republik Of Georgia With The…

From the perspective of achieving geopolitical objectives, losing a control over the area would more complicate attempts to attract the interest of countries of Europe towards Georgia. “Double standards” of politics of England towards Georgia became clear in 1920 at London Conference. The relations of Georgia and England was multidimensional because of unfinished processes over rearrangement of the world after the World War I and “Issue of Russia”. Though, the first diplomatic contact between the representatives of the governments of Georgia and Great Brian officially took place in September 1918 in the capital of Norway – Kristiania (old name of Oslo). On the 30th of December 1919, with the note of the deputy minister of Foreign Affairs of Great Britain – Lue Mallett, the best perspectives of cooperation between Georgia and England were outlined (saqarvelos demokratiuli respublikis arqivis mikrofirebi, F.1863: C1:769;840; F1864; C1:47). The root reason of the radical change in relations between Georgia and England should be seen in approaches towards the “Issue of Russia” while drawing new boundaries of the world countries after the World War I rather than in weakness of Menshevik Government of Georgia, as stipulated in the Soviet Historiography. There was no united politics in England that time. “The Military Party” headed by Churchill, the Military Secretary, demanded radical actions and application of self-intervention in Russia. The prime minister, Lloyd George, known for his conciliatory politics, supported a cooperation with Soviet Russia. This was the period when England and the Bolshevik Russia started closer relations.

The position of England was well noted by Georgian side which started active diplomatic work with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of France – Aristide Briand. In agreement with him, it was decided to start negotiations, without England, with Beker Kham Bey, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, who represented Turkey at the conference in London. Chkhenkeli used this opportunity to clarify that Turkey did not claim for Batumi, Batumi region and Artvin. Turkey considered Artaani under ownership of Turkey, however, expressed readiness to achieve consensus when Georgia presented written clarifications on the issue. France facilitated closer relations, balanced peaceful politics between Georgia and Turkey. This opened Georgia new perspectives of integration with European countries through strengthening its geopolitical status.

The American and European countries considered a problem of Georgia in the context of the international policy. Taking into consideration Russia’s real interest and power balance, they were concerned by instability in Caucasus and their disagreement in regards with the borders. There was a secret battle at the Paris Conference over mandate system and distribution of influence. Therefore, the strategies and political decisions used to unexpectedly change.

The new government of Italy refused to allot the mandates to Georgia and Azerbaijan. In January 1919, according to the decision of the Paris Conference, the United States of America was offered to take a mandate over Armenia (Mentetashvili, 1992: 162). The decision was also influenced by the Armenian Diaspora’s active political actions. The United States of America remained to be the only real ally in Caucasus (Trudi instituta istorii azerbaijana, 1958: 344.).
democratic government this time duly assessed the importance of the United States of America and took some positive steps to strengthen collaboration with the American Missions. A stenographic record of the meeting of 9 June 1919 of the Georgian delegation to the Paris Conference is oriented towards the pro-American diplomacy (Tbilisi, 1989:12.07).

More meetings were conducted with the American Delegations. On the 11th June 1919 the Georgian Delegation had a meeting with Edward House, the closest friend and a chief advisor of the president Wilson. The meeting is also reflected in the diary of House (Seymour, 1926:73).

The Georgian delegation sent the president Wilson the memorandum where the Transcaucasian Federation was accentuated. The work on the conference initiated by Georgian government, where representatives from Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia and the Republic of Mountaineers were invited, was also presented. The key focus was on the request to the United States of America to mandate Georgia. In addition, the directive called Miller’s work was elaborated where temporal independence of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan were officially recorded for the first time with the purpose of uniting the federation in any form in the future.

The attempt of creation of anti-Russian block of Caucasus, through integration with Europe, is well evidenced in the report to the government of Dumenil, the Admiral of French armoured cruiser “Waldeck-Rousseau” which was placed in Batumi from December 1920 through January 1921. The report mentions that the government of Georgia valued presence of French armoured cruiser which would ensure Georgia’s self-defence in case of military intervention of the Soviet Russia. He also underlines that all people of North Caucasus are secretly preparing for the rebel and this can be real if they are respectively provided by the certain conditions. Georgia could ensure movement of all military arms on its territory to supply population of North Caucasus. The Georgian initiative to start negotiations on creation of united block became effective only in January 2021, when North Caucasus joined the battle. This demonstrated unity of Caucasus region, “Caucasus House”, and brilliant plan how to defeat the Soviet Occupation of Caucasus and achieve integration with Europe. The archive material show that initially Entente countries were the part of this union. On the 10th of 1921, in the premises of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of France, a special session of Entente Council was conducted which was chaired by Prime Minster of France, Georges Clemenceau. The session was participated by representatives of the United Kingdom: Lloyd George, the Prime Minister, Lord Curzon, the Foreign Secretary; Winston Churchill, the Military Secretary; and the Prime Minister of Italy - Francesco Nitti and other high military officials of these countries. The actions how to stop the Bolsheviks in Transcaucasia, military support of Dagestan and its provision with the military arms, were discusses at the meeting. The representative of the Republic of Georgia (K. Chkheidze, I. Tsereteli, Z. Avalishvili) and Azerbaijan (Topchibashev, Magaramov) participated in the meeting. Caucasian side requested financial, political and military support. The interest of having the regular army was also expressed. Lloyd George expressed readiness to support with two battalion that was remaining in Batumi.
Despite of rigorous disputes, the allies refused to send three divisions to Caucasus which was earlier promised. Finally, it was decided that Transcaucasia would be supported only with military arms and machinery and through food supply. In fact, in 1920-1921, the Georgian democratic government manged to find the real way to preserve independence and avoid the Bolsheviks aggression through the mentioned union, if the promised support with the military forces had been provided.

From the second half of 1920 the cabinet of Lloyd George and other English officials were unable to correctly set the political course acceptable to their country, thus, encouraging implementation of the aggressive actions of the Soviet Russia. In 1921 at the International Conferences in London and Genoa, Lloyd George often repeated: “until Russia is rejected by Europe it is not able to live peacefully… Restoration of economic relations of Russia will create trading place for English industry”. However, Lloyd George also stressed his interest in the geopolitical strategy and natural resources of Georgia with the prime minister of Italy:” Request mandate over Georgia and Azerbaijan at the Versailles Conference, I shall support you and you will be rich with natural resources and materials” (George, 1919:351-378). After withdrawal of British military forces from Transcaucasia, close contracts were established with France and Italy. The cooperation covered strategic, political, military (military aviation, military arms and trading, European radio-connectivity technology, etc.), economic and cultural cooperation. Colonel Shardin, the head of French mission in Georgia, informed the Military Minister in France on the 25th February 1919, that prestige of the united Kingdom had been altered in Georgia. Thus, he tried to strengthen the position of France in the country. The democratic Georgia expressed its priorities on the scale of Europe and the United States highlighting exclusivity of the Caucasian region in the geostrategic partnership with Europe.

Support and goodwill of the American administration in respect to independence of newly created countries of Transcaucasia can also be read in the reports sent from Washington by Volte Chandler who was unofficial representative of Georgia in the Congress (Saqartvelos erovnuli arqivi, F.2121:C1:9).

In spring 1919, after the completion of the second term of the president Wilson, a strong opposition of isolationist was activated both in the Congress and Senate against foreign political initiatives of the president which was leaded by the Senator Henry Cabot Lodge. They considered that only Armenia ought to be mandated and 20 000 military troops of the United States of America would be enough for this. In order to strengthen his position the president sent the King-Crane Commission to the Near East, Turkey and Transcaucasia. The commission was assigned to find out ‘what type of guardianship the territories of the Near East would like to obtain’. The scales of the research and population inquiry were very detailed and impartial. In order to reach the final agreement with the Congress and Senate to mandate Caucasus the president Wilson directed a well-experienced general James Harbored with the military mission. He was assigned to thoroughly study the situation in the region and report to the American government on the coast-benefit of mandating Transcaucasia on geopolitical and economic levels (Sakhalkho Sakme,
Manana MICHITASHVILI

1919:223-224). According to mission, there would be a need for 59 000 expedition corps for the mandated territory. (Afanasyan, 1981:83).

Harbored in his report to the president confirmed the readiness of the Georgian society to give America mandate over Georgia. However, from his 27 arguments 14 were positive on the mandate and 13 negative (Harbord, 4:13). We consider that Harbored with this report tried to avoid a responsibility in the Senate to debate with the opposition of Wilson. Isolationists used the reports of the missions to strengthen their positions and managed to hinder the decision to send expedition corps to Caucasus. They also efficiently opposed to mandate Armenia and the negative decision was made. The decisions turned out to be fatal for the Caucasian republics that were left without any other allies. In Autumn 1920, Zurab Avalishvili was sent to America as the authorized Ambassador having diplomatic, political and economic tasks assigned. In 1922, he informed the immigrated government of Georgia that the steps taken were pretty late. He also wrote about the serious diplomatic mistakes made by the Georgian government back in 1920.

4. Results

Thus, the Georgian diplomacy turned out not to be ready to accurately evaluate the role of the new powerful country, the United States of America, in the international politics after the First World War. The effective ways to get closer to the administration of Woodrow Wilson was not timely found. The goal and efficiency of the American Missions were not properly assessed. Agreement on the mandate system did not turn out to be enough. There was a need for the courageous political requests to bring the United States of America to fulfil the role of guarantor and introduce the military forces of the United States of America in the region, after withdrawal of the British Military Forces, to stop anticipated Bolshevik Annexation of Georgia. On the other hand, the government of the United States of America was sceptical about Georgia’s determination for independence. The United States of America neither considered the national and political interests of Georgia nor established diplomatic relations with the first Republic of Georgia, refusing to recognize its independence and mandate the South Caucasus.

Furthermore, taking into consideration the international situation of that time, verbal support of the European socialists and the controversial political platform of the Georgian diplomats produced number of questions about the instability of political course of the Democratic Government of Georgia not positively effecting the decisions of the Paris Conference or the League of Nations. All mentioned above, caused mistrust of Georgia as a secure partner in the common fight against the Bolshevik Russia.

It is noteworthy that in the 20s of the 20 century the Georgian government, through the important supportive role of world society, used the real opportunities and the existed sanctions against the Soviet Russia to request the following from the European countries:

1) In 1921, at the second session of the League of Nations, an agreement was reached that in line with the charter of the League of Nations, Russia ought
to be placed under trade, economic, transportation, information and diplomatic blockade;

2) As per N. Zhordania’ request, Genoa Conference obliged Russia to withdraw the military troops from Georgia, in order to restore the legal rights of the Georgian nation (saqarTvelos demokratiuli respublikis mikrofiri 1333:16-44);

3) The Genoa Conference was the first one where creation of the international organization was raised. It was also decided to study the situation in Georgia and create the proper conditions for the plebiscite that would express the attitude of the Georgian people towards Russian occupation;

4) On the bases of the note from A. Chkhenkeli, the Cannes Resolution, the participant countries of the Genoa Conference took the responsibility not to take the aggressive measures against the neighbouring courtiers (Tavisufali saqarTvelo, 1922:15:8).

It is said enough that both Europe and the United States of America had all the levers not to allow further strengthening of the Soviet Empire and not to leave the Democratic Georgia and its people alone to face the Soviet dictatorship for the next seventy years.

The challenges of the time: the crises after the First World War, reparation issue, a danger of Turkish and Russian cooperation, the trade cooperation agreement between Russia and England signed on the 16th March 1921, occupation of Ruhr by France and prioritizing trading and economic cooperation with Russia by the European countries, stopped the political activity of Georgia to obtain mandate over the country in order to protect it from anticipated annexation by the Bolshevik Russia. Despite of this disappointment, having seen the actions of Russia, including the military aggression in August 2008, the integration with the United States of America and Europe is an absolute guarantee for the security and economic development of Georgia.

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384
Manana MICHITASHVILI

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