Victor Nozadze on Geopolitics of the Caucasus

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The paper deals with the political visions of a famous Georgian scientist and public figure Victor Nozadze (1893-1975). It refers to Nozadze's attempts to comprehend Georgia and Caucasus through the concepts and categories of the new discipline of those times—geopolitics. The study uncovers the main propositions of his work On the Geopolitics of the Caucasus (A Struggle for Oil) which could be considered as one of the seminal works in the history of the geopolitical thought of Georgia. The paper argues that Nozadze was significantly influenced by the works of a German geo-politician Erich Obst and he became interested in the problems of geopolitics through the publications appearing in the Journal of Geopolitics. The study proves that geopolitical analysis of Obst and Nozadze are not contradictory; rather they deal with the different geopolitical aspects. The study proposes the geopolitical conception of Victor Nozadze, which could be formulated as follows: for the empires of the old and contemporary times of Caucasus was “an area of growth and enlargement”, “an area of competition of geopolitical powers”, the place where “all imperial powers clash each-other”. “Caucasus was and remains an area of competition of geopolitical powers.” According to Victor Nozadze, the Transcaucasia was a single entity in geographic terms and due to its geographical location Georgia always strove towards acquiring a leading role in the unification of the Caucasus. He assumed that Georgia should have maintained the same role in the future as well. Although he was well aware of those aspects which hindered the unity of the Caucasus: contradictions between Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as the different foreign orientations of these people. Although he considered continuation of attempts for unification of the Caucasus as a necessity and tried to justify his claim through the norms and rules of geopolitics.

Keywords: geopolitics, Caucasus, Georgia, oil, international relations

Introduction

A Famous Georgian scientist and public figure Victor Nozadze (1893-1975) had to live most of his life abroad due to the fait accompli of history. At the end of the 1919, Victor Nozadze, together with 70 young Georgians, was sent abroad with the purpose of receiving higher education under the decision of the government of the Democratic Republic of Georgia. He was never back to the home country, as he could not live through the Soviet regime. During emigration, Victor Nozadze was active in social and scientific activities. After graduation from the University of Berlin, in 1928, Victor Nozadze moved to Paris, where he took over publicist and editorial activities (Sharadze, 1991, p. 394).

Victor Nozadze was the first among emigration circles who paid attention to the popularity of the geopolitical studies in Germany of the 1920s and 1930s. He tried to comprehend the problems of Georgia and Caucasus through the concepts and categories of the new discipline of those times. In 1930, he published a work titled as On the Geopolitics of the Caucasus (A Struggle for Oil) (Nozadze, 1930a, No.
The mentioned work has been lying under the dust for a long period of time, although it can be regarded as one of the seminal works in the history of the geopolitical thought of Georgia.

Victor Nozadze dealt with the political problems of Georgia and Caucasus in other works as well. For example, on the same year he published a work *Europe and Caucasus (A Struggle for Oil)* (Nozadze, 1930b, No. 51-52). Nevertheless, the work *On the Geopolitics of the Caucasus* is entirely dedicated to the comprehension of the Caucasian development through the lens of geopolitics.

**Geopolitics: A Discipline and Its Main Concepts**

The work of Victor Nozadze “For the Geopolitics of the Caucasus” provides the essence of geopolitics as a discipline and sets definition of its main concepts. He does not cite any particular author, although we can assume that he was significantly influenced by the works of a German geo-politician Erich Obst.

Obst travelled to Georgia after the rebellion of 1924 and in December of the same year published the article—“Georgia. A Geopolitical Study” which was primarily based on his impressions (*Journal of Geopolitics*). Interestingly, the *Journal of Geopolitics* was founded in 1924 and was the first periodical dedicated to the development and propaganda of geopolitics. It could be assumed that Nozadze became interested in the problems of geopolitics through the publications appearing in the “Journal of Geopolitics.” The work of Erich Obst, a geopolitical study on Georgia, would be a great stimulus for the Georgian emigrants to become interested in geopolitics. In 1964, after 40 years of its first publication, the article of Obst was translated into the Georgian language and published in the journal “Kavkasioni” (*The Caucasus*) (Obst, 1964).

Obst analyzes the rebellion of 1924 and reflects on the subsequent developments; he describes the existing circumstances after the rebellion, provides the description of attitudes of the Caucasian people towards religion and their perception of the outer space. That is he uncovers the geopolitical image of Georgia, alienation of Georgians from Russians and the aspiration of the former towards Europe. He also reflects on the geopolitical role of Tbilisi and provides a brief introduction to the key moments from the history of Georgia (Obst, 1964, pp. 5-11).

The highlights of the main aspects of the Obst’s article leads to uncovering the originality of the conception of Victor Nozadze. The geopolitical analysis of Obst and Nozadze are not contradictory; rather they deal with the different geopolitical aspects.

The works of Obst and other geopoliticians created theoretical foundations for Nozadze to reflect on various issues of Georgia and Caucasus in the context of Geopolitics. Nozadze could also rely on those geopolitical approaches which dominated those-days Georgian geopolitical thought: It is noteworthy that Victor Nozadze opened his article with the words of Ilia Chavchavadze (1955), wrote back in 1879, describing Caucasus as an area of competition between different empires.

The geopolitical analysis of Georgia and Caucasus is attached with the definition of geopolitics as a discipline.

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1. The Newspaper “Damoukidebeli Sakhartvelo” (Independent Georgia) was published in 1926-1939, in Paris. It was the main publication of the united front of the political parties of Georgia. In 1928-1939 it was published in the form of journal. In total 159 issues of the newspaper were published (Sharadze, 2001, p. 79). Victor Nozadze actively collaborated with the newspapers.

2. These two works of Victor Nozadze are closely interrelated. In his essay “Europe and Caucasus” Nozadze discusses the ongoing war of the I World War and in 1919 for the oil of the Caucasus, whereas his another work “For the Geopolitics of the Caucasus” discusses the struggle for the oil from 1920, when Azerbaijan was occupied by the Soviet Russia.

3. Those days famous German geopoliticians were assembled around the journal: Haushofer, Obst, Maull, Benz, Zivert, Ross, Kiung, Vovinkel.

4. Although much has changed in the world during the last 5-6 thousand years, but the isthmus of the earth, called Caucasus, which used to the door of Asia and Europe and which was conquered by various invaders, still remains as the object of strive and competition (Chavchavadze, 1955, p. 18).
discipline. According to him, “geopolitics is the study of interrelation between political processes and land, which are tightly interconnected” (Nozadze, 1930a, No. 54, p. 9). Nowadays, this definition would have different accents: “Geopolitics is a science on the linkages of political events to the land”. The provided definition of geopolitics is a reflection of an article published in the Journal of Geopolitics and titled as *Foundations of Construction of Geopolitics* (1928). According to this article, “geopolitics is a knowledge on connections of political events to the different areas of the earth”; geopolitics is a “weapon of political action and guide to the political life.” Geopolitics becomes “a normative science, which can manage a practical politics” (Tikhonravov, 2000, p.118).

Nozadze stressed that geopolitics should not be mixed with a “political geography”, which is a discipline to study the geographical essence of a state, as well as organisms of political space, their structure and organization (Nozadze, 1930a, No. 54, p. 9).

Nozadze wrote that geopolitics is a discipline for a scientific study of “an image of political life, tied with a land.” According to him “a living space created by geography” provides a framework for geopolitics to run various political processes. In this case, “its success is obvious”. The managers of political life sometimes cross the margins of the framework, but sooner or later “connections to the land” will bring them back to the “framework” (Nozadze, 1930a, No. 54, p. 9).

Victor Nozadze defined those main terms and concepts of geopolitics, which were useful for the analysis of the geopolitics of Georgia and the Caucasus. He referred to the three main concepts: (1) Line of geopolitical powers: a special dimension of the development of political forces; (2) Top of growth and enlargement, a headstock: this is “the political strong point of a state in another, alien environment or an attempt of its creation”. The top of growth is the “last point of lines of geopolitical powers and in particular circumstances a starting point for the new power-lines”; (3) Area of Power Competition: A country where power lines of a particular state merge, separate or meet/clash with power lines of other state (Nozadze, 1930a, No. 55, p. 9).

The above-mentioned three geopolitical concepts were used by Nozadze for the description of geopolitics of the Caucasus. Besides, Nozadze refers to a great variety of factual materials from the ancient and contemporary history of Georgia and the Caucasus.

**Caucasus: The Area of Competition of Geopolitical Powers**

The geopolitical conception of Victor Nozadze could be formulated as follows: for the empires of the old and contemporary times (geopolitical subjects) Caucasus was “an area of growth and enlargement”, “an area of competition of geopolitical powers”, the place where “lines of geopolitical powers cross each-other”, the place where “all imperial powers clash each-other”, “Caucasus was and remains an area of competition of geopolitical powers” (Nozadze, 1930a, No. 55, pp. 9-10).

Tbilisi has always been the top of enlargement in the Caucasus. With seizure of Tbilisi the conqueror paved the way towards all other areas of the Caucasus and effectively ruled over them.

At the end of the 18th century this was the move made by the Russian Empire: After the capture of Tbilisi the enlargement of Russia was logically continued towards the Caspian and the Black Seas”. Whereas for the Soviet Russia Baku played the role of historical Tbilisi, as the former became the “headstock of the alien empires” (Nozadze, 1930a, No. 55, p. 10).

As Victor Nozadze notes, in the contemporary era the desire of taking control over the oil deposits of Baku became the main driving factor for the geopolitical subjects to get into the Caucasus.
A Struggle for the Oil of the Caucasus

In his article *Europe and Caucasus*, Nozadze provides a detailed description of development of the oil industry in the Caucasus from the end of the 19th century, putting emphasize on the military use of the oil, apart from its commercial and economic significance. Oil became the source of dominance on sea, air and land. During the World War I, “the oil became of decisive importance for the warrior parties” (Nozadze, 1930a, p. 4).

The Caucasus, which was rich with the oil resources—the Baku-Batumi route—got a strategic importance in the world politics. After the defeat of Russia in the war, the struggle for the oil of the Caucasus extremely intensified. “The seven sides fought each-other for the control over Baku” (Nozadze, 1930b, No. 52, p. 4).

As Nozadze noted, in 1918, the opportunity of taking control over the resources of the Caucasus, and primarily on the oil, and on the railway link Baku-Tbilisi-Batumi, became the main driving factor for Germany to support the independence of Georgia.

England also wanted to capture the oil of Baku. In the beginning of 1918, the English military unit entered Baku, although it was not a successful attempt. With the defeat of Germany and its allies in the World War I, Great Britain took control over the entire Transcaucasia and over the oil fields of Baku. Nozadze noted that control on the Caucasus had a particular significance for the British Empire, although her desires and possibilities did not met at that time. The Entente tried to substitute the military units of England in the Caucasus with the Italian one, although it did not prove to be successful (Nozadze, 1930b, No. 52).

The strive of the Soviet Russia towards Baku, like the occupation of Georgia in 1921, could be explained by its interest in oil, as long as Moscow (“A World Proletariat Revolution”) needed the transit route of oil, that of Baku-Batumi. The west, in the form of oil magnates, was a bit unified in it stance towards Russia and did not accepted the fact of occupation of the Caucasus; Although, from March 1923, “the common front against Russia was changed with the contention over the oil of the Caucasus and that of competition among oil companies and different governments” (Nozadze, 1930a, No. 57, p. 9).

Big oil companies easily made a deal with the Soviet Russia over the oil deposits of the Caucasus. “The common front against Russia was changed with the competition for the oil of the Caucasus” and the “increased sympathy of the oil politicians towards Russia logically led to the negation and oblivion of interests of nations of the Caucasus”.

Victor Nozadze noted that “the interest in oil is superior than the interests of freedom of people” and the presence of oil in the Caucasus “hinders the national-liberation strive of the Caucasian people” (Nozadze, 1930a, No. 57, p. 9).

The Geopolitics of Georgia: A Strive towards Unity of the Caucasus

According to Victor Nozadze (1930a), due to its geographical location Georgia always strove towards acquiring a leading role in the unification of the Caucasus. During the pick of its might Georgia tried to unite entire Caucasus in the framework of a single state: “the kings of Georgia always tried, and this was their constant interest, to get control over the Caucasus” (No. 55, p. 10).

As Nozadze noted, “the Caucasian political-statehood aspiration of the Georgian kings” was determined by the location of Georgia and geographical positioning of the Caucasus. According to Nozadze, the Transcaucasia was a single entity in geographic terms. The natural geographical boundaries of Georgia lie
across Caucasian range in the North and Armenian plateau and the River Araks to the South. When Georgia was a powerful state of the Caucasus, it tried to take control over these boundaries independently (that was the interest of its defense politics), whereas at the times of its weakness it tried to run a neighborly relations towards other political entities of the Caucasus, which were in control of these boundaries at that time. “This was the necessity, which was well perceived by the rulers of Georgia and tried to pursue this policy line”, Victor Nozadze wrote; he further added that “this was conditioned by the geographical circumstances of the Caucasus” (Nozadze, 1930a, No. 55, p. 10).

Victor Nozadze assumed that Georgia should have maintained the same role in the future as well. According to Victor Nozadze, Tbilisi was the geographical center of the Caucasus. Empires, which tried to conquer the Caucasus, strove towards capturing Tbilisi; Tbilisi was the stronghold for the powers interested in unification of Georgia and Caucasus.

**Unity of the Caucasus: Foundation of Independence of the Caucasian Countries**

Nozadze noted that the countries of the Caucasus would gain their independence only in case of successful “political unification of the Caucasian people” (the political form of the suggested unity was not discussed by him). “Caucasus is the unified entity historically, geographically, economically or even culturally”, Nozadze wrote at that time.

Internal weakness, “attraction” of external powers, uncertainty and “non-comprehension of the common politics” were listed as the main reasons of the dissolution of the Transcaucasian Seym by Victor Nozadze (Nozadze, 1930a, No. 58, p. 8).

During the existence of the independent states of the Caucasus, Georgia tried to promote “unity of the Caucasian People”5, but these attempts were not much successful and did not find any meaningful basis for its practical implementation. “This was the starting point of defeat of the Caucasian nations” (Nozadze, 1930a, No. 58, p. 8).

According to V. Nozadze, “at a glance there was all objective preconditions for the unification of the Caucasus,” but subjectively, the nations of the Caucasus “were not prepared and prepared for launching the project of united Caucasus” (Nozadze, 1930a, No. 58, p. 18).

As Nozadze noted, the lesson of history—“the Caucasus should be united and formed as monolithic entity” was not, or could not be comprehended by the peoples of the Caucasus, or it was absolutely forgotten. The peoples did not manage to fulfill this task in 1918-1921, thus they were easily conquered one by another by the Soviet Russia. “So suddenly, so easily and without much opposition—the Caucasus has never been conquered by any other enemy before”—short of Bolsheviks in 1920-1921. “Unfortunately, at the brink of their independence” the peoples of the Caucasus “did not manage to find a common ground, failed to comprehend the needs and necessities of the Caucasian politics” (Nozadze, 1930a, No. 56, p. 4).

The problem of the “Unity of the Caucasus” was activated after its re-conquest by Russia (Nozadze, 1930a, No. 58, p. 8). In the emigrant circles of the Caucasian countries the uniting movement emerged, which was aimed at creation of the “Caucasian Confederation”.

On February 6-12, 1930, the conference of national organizations of Azerbaijan, Georgia and the North

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5 In the collection of works “For the Unity of Transcaucasia. The Course of Foreign Policy” Nozadze included an essay titled as *The Foundations of the National Unity*, which discusses the efforts of the Democratic Republic of Georgia for consolidation of actions of the Transcaucasian countries (Nozadze, 1944, pp. 6-11).
Caucasus, united in “Prometheus”⁶ was held in Warsaw. The Independence Committee of the Caucasus was restored (Mamulua, 2012, p. 211). The organization as aimed at launching the propaganda of idea of independence among the republic of the Caucasus. It tried to organize them for the restoration and defense of their independence and tried to unite Caucasian republics in the form of confederation (Mamulua, 2012, c.75).

In June 1930, Victor Nozadze published the work “For the Geopolitics of the Caucasus”; he tried to support the above-mentioned unifying movement and justify the idea that the Caucasian people would fail in their separate attempts regaining independence. Unification of the emigration circle of the Caucasus brought the Caucasian people close to the idea of liberation. Besides, the unified Caucasus would have more weight and significance, both for the Caucasian peoples as well as for foreigners.

Nozadze was well aware of the difficulties of launching a common ground for “unified political image of the Caucasus.” Pointing to the treaty signed by the representatives of the Caucasian peoples in emigration, which was aimed at “political unification of the Caucasian people”, Nozadze stressed that it was aimed at “political unification of the Caucasian people”. He pointed to further uneasy and hard tasks the Caucasian people faced and urged for their proper comprehension and analysis. According to Nozadze, it was necessary to investigate the essence of the Caucasus, what should become the political shape of the Caucasus and on what basis and under which conditions “Caucasus should be united. (Nozadze, 1930)

Apart from the study, the idea of the united Caucasus should be “widely promoted”, as it would help to “cement this idea among all those people who are interested in the independence of the Caucasus and are concerned with the fate of the Caucasian people in general, and that of the Georgian nation, in particular”.

Nozadze noted that the idea of the unity of the Caucasus should be promoted not due to the tactical consideration, but rather “due to comprehension of its necessity”.

The Main Propositions of the Geopolitical Conception of Victor Nozadze

The main propositions of the geopolitical conception of Victor Nozadze, which were justified through his works, could be formulated into the following way: (1) The Caucasus represents to be an unity in terms of history, geography, economy and culture; (2) Interests of each nation of the region is the interest of the Caucasus; (3) Caucasus, as an unified political and economic entity, has more power and significance in the world politics; (4) The fate of Georgia is tightly connected to the fate of the Caucasus and independence of Georgia is conditioned by the independence of the Caucasus; and (5) A separated Georgia, found beyond the rest of the Caucasus, which would fall in the hands of Russia, would not succeed in the fight against Russia.

Nozadze was well aware of those aspects which hindered the unity of the Caucasus: contradictions among the people of the Caucasus (between Armenia and Azerbaijan in particular), as well as the different foreign orientations of these people. Although he considered continuation of attempts for unification of the Caucasus as a necessity and tried to justify this claim through the norms and rules of geopolitics.

References

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⁶ Prometheus: A political project, which was promoted by Polish politician Józef Piłsudski (1867-1935) and was aimed at supporting the national-liberation movement of the peoples included in the Soviet Union. In 1926, an organization “Prometheus” was founded in Paris, which included representatives of Azerbaijan, Georgia, North Caucasus, Kuban, Cossaks of Don, Idel-Ural, Ingría, Karelia, Kom, Crimea, Turkmenistan and Ukraine.