

**The Relationship between Religion and the State in Connection to
Democracy: The Case of Georgia**

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Master Thesis

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Abstract

The thesis aims to analyze the relationship between the religion and the state in connection to democracy. The research focuses on the contemporary Georgia. The main religion in Georgia is Georgian Orthodoxy. Thus the Georgian Orthodox Church's role in the society and the state is examined. The analysis is done starting from the so-called Rose Revolution in 2003 which marks the first steps of modern era in Georgia's political system. Significant reforms have been done in Georgia since the Rose Revolution when the government started country's democratization process. However, the GOC is an influential institution in Georgia and it creates the controversies between the state and the church. Therefore the role of the Church in contemporary Georgia is analyzed in order to see the specific relationship between the state and the church and find out whether that relationship can bring the positive outcomes to the country's democratization process. The chosen case of Georgia is believed to be an interesting example of how the relationship between the two entities can be analyzed.

Moreover, the secularization and modernization theories are used as a relevant tool to approach the problem and answer the thesis questions. The framework of the thesis analysis follows the logic while firstly examining whether the religious institution in Georgia influences the decision making process. Therefore the first part of the analysis is focused on the question whether religion has an institutionalized role in the state. The second part of analysis discusses the Church's role in the society. It aims to answer the question of how religion is perceived in society of Georgia. Thus the analysis goal is to see whether Church is a part of formulating society's opinion, and whether Georgian Orthodox Church is a part of the social realm. Furthermore, the analysis is focused on the various events and processes in Georgia that illustrates the Georgian Orthodox Church's role in the state matters as well as in the society. The conclusion is dedicated to answer the thesis problem of whether religion in Georgia can reinforce democracy in the country. Therefore the taken steps of the analysis are chosen in the particular way that helps to unfold the thesis problem and answers to the raised questions.

Keywords: religion, state, secular, secularization, modernization, liberal democracy, Georgia, Georgian Orthodox Church, society, democratization, political development, human rights.

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Introduction

Nowadays, the relationship between religion and the state grew into one of the most debated issues in political science. The complex issue that brings the discussion into the level of the public discourse is religion's role in today's modern democratic states. The subject is relevant for the countries' political development as it involves the state as well as society. Religious institutions also play one of the most meaningful roles in contemporary states and societies. However, depending from the states, the boundaries are set according to the democratic principles. Thus together with modernization, the secularization theory has been challenged. Despite the fact that in the twentieth century academics raised the topic of modernization and argued that the modernization of states and societies will lead to the decline of religion in public sphere as well as in private, the reality of today's world is totally opposite. Religion plays one of the important roles in societies as well as it may engage in the states' policy agenda.

Therefore **the aim of the thesis** is to analyze the relationship between religion and the state in connection to democracy by taking Georgia's case. Georgia, former Soviet Union country, became independent in 1991. Despite anti-religious communist regime, after the independence of Georgia, Georgian Orthodox Church developed into one of the most important institutions in the country. Therefore, the case of Georgia is a significant example for the discussion on the topic of the church-state relations.

Problem Formulation

Georgia is in its democratization process and the state has taken Western democracy as an example model for Georgia's further development. However, the Georgian Orthodox Church plays one of the most significant roles in Georgian society. Thus the secularization principle of democratic states needs to be discussed. Moreover, the existence of the relationship between religion and the state can be discussed from two different perspectives: firstly, the institutionalized relationship between religion and the state; secondly, how religion is organized in social life of the country. Therefore **firstly**, the thesis will seek to answer the question does religion in Georgia have a direct institutionalized role in the matters of the state. That is, does the official religion of Georgia, Georgian Orthodox Church, influence the state's political decisions?

If there is such relationship it will be seen either the democratic principle of being ruled by the people would be contradicted or no. **Secondly**, the relationship between religion and the state may exist in the way of how the religion and its institutions are organized in the social life. Thus the second question of the thesis is - does the church in Georgia is a part of formulating society's opinion? If the church in Georgia is a part of social realm, it can play a positive role while encouraging people to cooperate, promoting democratic values such as human rights, tolerance. Religion can play an interactive role between the state and society and thus be an interconnecting link for democracy in the country. **Therefore the thesis problem is –**

Whether religion in specific case of Georgia plays an interactive role between the state and society and whether religion can reinforce democracy in the country?

1. Methodology

The chapter will discuss the research strategy, methods of the thesis. It explains the structure of the research, the chosen timeframe and the key concepts. Also, chapter provides with the overview of the literature resources that are used in the analysis. Therefore the chapter explains what choices of used research strategy have been made in order to realize the research goal and answer the thesis problem and questions.

The thesis is a case study of Georgia. In order to analyze the relationship between religion and democracy in Georgia and answer the thesis questions, **firstly the research discusses** the theories of modernization and secularization. Both theories are the core of understanding church – state relationship and getting into further analysis of the relationship between the two entities in connection to democracy. Therefore **the second chapter** presents the theoretical approach used in the thesis. It gives an overview of the secularization theory within the two perspectives – sociological and institutional. The theoretical framework is based on F. Fukuyama's, A. Stepan's thoughts on the relationship between religion and state in connection to democracy. Moreover, J. Casanova's, Charles Taylor's secularization theory and secularization concepts are used which gives better understanding of the secularization paradigm. Thus the second chapter describes modernization and secularization theories and explains how the theories are related to religion, society and democracy.

The third and the fourth chapters discuss relationship between religion and the state in connection to democracy by focusing on the case study of Georgia. Georgia's main religion is the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC). Thus the specific case of Georgia focuses on the Georgian state and Georgian Orthodox Church's relationship in connection to democracy. The third chapter follows the structure while firstly analyzing if there is institutionalized role of religion in the state matters. Thus the question of the GOC's role in the state is examined. Afterwards the fourth chapter discusses the Georgian Orthodox Church's role within Georgian society and GOC's influence on the Georgian society's opinion in connection to democracy in the country.

Therefore following the strategy of the analysis, **the third chapter** focuses on the Georgian Orthodox Church's influence on the state matters and seeks to answer the question whether there is a direct, institutionalized role of the Church in the political decisions of the state. **The third chapter** is also set to answer the question whether the Georgian Orthodox Church and religious authorities seek political influence in Georgia.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to the discussion of Georgian Orthodox Church's role in the society and society's perceptions towards the Georgian Orthodox Church. The chapter seeks to answer the question whether Georgian Church plays mobilizing role and if it has an influential power within the society in Georgia. Thus the fourth chapter focuses on the Georgian Orthodox Church's influence on the society. Also it seeks to answer the question how Georgian society perceives GOC. Basically the chapter examines how the GOC is build in the society and whether GOC is a part of formulating the society's opinion.

The aim of the analysis is to answer the thesis problem - whether the Georgian Orthodox Church in Georgia can reinforce democracy in the country? Therefore, the analysis will show religion's role within the state and society in connection to the democratization process in the country.

The two chapters of the analysis give an assessment of how the Georgian Orthodox Church and religious authorities' are organized within the political system of the country. First of all, the

analysis is done from the institutional perspective that is the analysis firstly focuses on the institutionalized role of religion in the state matters. The next chapter focuses on the Church's role in the society. Thus it examines whether the Georgian Orthodox Church is a part of the social realm in Georgia. Both analysis chapters follow the logical structure and are divided into subchapters. Moreover, at the end of the two analysis chapters the concluding summary about the discussed issues is done.

The purpose of the analysis **is to realize the thesis goal** – to examine the complex relationship between the religion and the state in connection to democracy while focusing on the specific case of Georgia. Therefore the two analysis chapters are focused on the particular events of the church – state relationship issues which help to answer the set questions. Therefore the chosen case of Georgia is believed to give not only specific conclusions in regards to Georgia, but also better understanding of the relationship between religion and state in a broader perspective. Furthermore, the case study of Georgia is an interesting example of the church – state interactions and it gives a good insight of how to approach the issue of relation between religion and the state in connection to democracy. Thus **the concluding chapter** summarizes the analysis based on the theoretical approach and gives answers to the raised questions. Also the conclusions give suggestions to the further studies and relevant recommendations on the subject.

Speaking more about the subject of the relationship between religion and the state relationship in connection to democracy, it is important to note that the thesis examines one side of the two entities' interaction that are precisely religion's role in the state and how it is organized within the political system of the chosen case of Georgia. The first question of the institutionalized, direct role of the religion in the state matters seeks to examine whether the political system somehow incorporates the institutions of religion and whether the religious representatives have a direct say in the matters of the state. Thus it will give an insight of how the two entities are intertwined with each other.

The second part of the analysis focuses on the religion's as a social realm role and discusses how religion, its institutions are organized in the social life. Also, whether religion is a part of formulating society's opinion. Thus the framework is build upon the two different ways of how

the church and state can interact in order to discuss the relationship between the two entities in connection to democracy. As Thorleif Petterson notes, “Religion can be related to politics in a number of ways. For instance, religion has been found to legitimate regimes, to divert social grievances into other-worldly concerns, to yield support for social movements, and to provide understandings of justice which have given rise to social change.”¹ Therefore the taken two ways of analysis about religion’s and state’s interactions identifies different aspects of how the two entities can relate with each other in connection to democracy. As democracy requires the state and the people who can be ruled, religion can play role as a mediator between the two. Also it can play either positive or negative role towards the democratization processes. Thus the thesis aims to examine how the religious institution and the state interact and what role this relationship plays in connection to democracy while taking the specific case of Georgia.

In addition to this, Thorleif Petterson argues that there are different dimensions and/or levels of the religious and political systems to consider, and different contexts in time and space to take into account. Thus, the many relationships between religion and politics may depend on both the contents and levels of the various religious and political systems, and their different socio-cultural contexts.² Thus the case of Georgia will try to reveal the specific aspects of the case study.

Analyzing the topic and answering the questions requires explaining some **key concepts**. To begin with, Jonathan Fox’s work on the theories between religion and politics³ is very helpful in thorough understanding of the issue. Jonathan Fox gives an explanation of **religion’s concept** from the socio-political perspective, which is also used through this research onwards. According to J. Fox, “Religion seeks to understand the origins and nature of reality using a set of answers that include the supernatural. Religion is also a social phenomenon and institution that influences the behavior of human beings both as individuals and in groups. These influences on behavior manifest themselves through the influences of religious identity, religious institutions, religious

¹ Thorleif Petterson, “The relations between religion and politics in the contemporary Western World”, World Values Survey Publications, 1, <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSPublicationsBooks.jsp> (Accessed 2015-05-02)

² Petterson, Ibid. 1.

³ Jonathan Fox, “Introduction to Religion and Politics: Theory and Practice”, Routledge Studies in Religion and Politics, Great Britain, 2013

legitimacy, religious beliefs, and the codification of these beliefs into authoritarian dogma, among other avenues of influence.” Also as he adds that “religion is more than this and that a complete definition of religion would include many of its social functions and influences, [...]”.⁴ As for the case study of Georgia, the main religion in Georgia is Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC), the head (Patriarch) of the GOC’s is Catholicos Ilia II (Ilia the Second) elected in 1977 and remains the religious authority in Georgia at present time.⁵ In addition to this, the other religions in Georgia are Islam, Judaism, Armenian Apostolic Church, Roman Catholics, and other minorities of religious and belief groups.⁶

The next important concept to grasp is ‘**liberal democracy**’ which is explained by F. Fukuyama: “*Liberal democracy* is more than majority voting in elections; it is a complex set of institutions that restrain and regularize the exercise of power through law and a system of check and balances. In many countries, official acceptance of democratic legitimacy was accompanied by the systematic removal of checks on executive power and the erosion of the rule of law.”⁷ Finally the state is understood here by following Max Weber’s which is also used by Francis Fukuyama, is an institution that concentrates and employs power to enforce rules and carry out policies over a defined territory.⁸

Timeframe

The timeframe of the thesis is from the period of the so-called Rose Revolution in 2003. It marks the time of contemporary Georgia when the government of the President Mikheil Saakashvili came to power in 2004 and started country’s Westernization project and democratization reforms. Therefore the thesis analysis focuses on the period of the two governments of Georgia – Mikheil Saakashvili’s Presidency, who was reelected in 2008 and ruled till 2013, and the current President of Georgia Giorgi Margvelashvili. Thus the thesis analysis of the relationship between

⁴ Jonathan Fox, “Introduction to Religion and Politics: Theory and Practice”, Routledge Studies in Religion and Politics, Great Britain, 2013, 6

⁵ The Orthodox Church in Georgia

<http://www.cnewa.org/default.aspx?ID=21&pagetypeID=9&sitecode=HQ&pageno=4> (Accessed 2015-02- 17)

⁶ Freedom of Religion and Belief in Georgia, South Caucasus Conference 2014, European Centre for Minority Issues, Caucasus Office, <https://forbcaucasus.wordpress.com/georgia/> (Accessed 2015-01-20)

⁷ Francis Fukuyama “The Origins of Political Order”, Profile Books, Great Britain, London, 2011, 5

⁸ Francis Fukuyama “States and democracy”, in *Democratization*, Vol. 21, No. 7, Routledge, 1327

religion and the state in connection to democracy is focused on the situation of the contemporary Georgia starting from the 2003 to the present time. The reason of taking the last two governments is because the thesis aims to analyze contemporary Georgia and focuses on the present times, as the author believes it is interesting and relevant for today's discussions on the topic of religion – state relationship in connection to democracy. Therefore the analysis focuses on the contemporary Georgia's ongoing tendencies between the Georgian Orthodox Church and the state in connection to democracy.

Literature/Resources

The thesis is mainly based on the secondary resources. However, the recent World Values Survey (2014) of Georgia⁹ and the International Republic Institute's poll¹⁰ provides with helpful information about the overall views of Georgian society's values and opinions towards religious, social and political matters. The assessments of the society's perception towards the GOC allowed further understand and analyze the issue. Moreover, the Bertelsmann Transparency Index¹¹, together with Freedom House¹² gives a thorough background about the democracy situation and its progress in Georgia.

The information about the recent events and processes in regards to the GOC's involvement in the state matters either its role in society were collected by taking various internet resources such as news web pages, including local with provided English translation as well as international. In addition to this, various reports of official institutions as well as NGO's were used in order to get acquired about Georgia's situation. For example, issues of human rights are well illustrated in Ombudsman's of Georgia reports¹³, which objectively evaluate and assess ongoing trends in the country. Also, internationally acknowledged webpage of Amnesty International provides with the Georgia's most recent human rights situation.¹⁴ Moreover, the Church – state relations

⁹ World Values Survey, <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV6.jsp> (Accessed 2015-05-02)

¹⁰ International Republic Institute, IRI Georgia Poll 2015, <http://www.iri.org/resource/iri-georgia-poll-georgians-are-less-optimistic-continue-desire-deeper-ties-west-wary> (Accessed 2015-05-02)

¹¹ Bertelsmann Transformation Index, BTI Georgia 2014, <http://www.bti-project.org/downloads/bti-2014/country-reports-2014/post-soviet-eurasia/>

¹² <https://freedomhouse.org/country/georgia#.VWbZ5ILLOHs>

¹³ <http://www.ombudsman.ge/en/reports>

¹⁴ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/europe-and-central-asia/georgia/>

analysis is based on various academic articles as well as books on the topic of religion and the state relations for the specific case of Georgia.

The academic literature on religion's role in politics, as well as relationship between religion and the state can be acknowledged as widely discussed topic. However, when going into specific issue of the Orthodox religion and its relationship to the state matters, the academic literature differs with less choices. Moreover, while going deeper into the specific case of Georgia, most academic literature is written by Georgian academics. Also, most resources can be found in English. Nevertheless Georgia is becoming an interesting case for the international academics. For example, the article of Marilisa Lorusso¹⁵ analyzes the secularization in Georgia and its connection to modernization and democratization. However, most publications focus on the ethnic minority issues. The other significant in-depth analysis was written by Andrea Filetti¹⁶. She focuses precisely on the two Caucasus Region's countries that are Georgia and Azerbaijan. The research gives good insights of how religion is build among the society in Georgia. Moreover, the research gives valuable statistical data that can be used for the specific case of Georgia. Also, it is interesting to compare the two countries of the region as it gives better insight of the situation in Georgia.

In addition, the existing literature of Georgia's case mostly focuses on the identity and nationalism questions as it is an important part of getting familiar with different issues connected to Georgia. Thus the article of Georgian political analyst, Ghia Nodia¹⁷ can be suggested as the valuable resource to get familiar with the background of political developments in Georgia. Moreover, the other various academic articles are used in the thesis, for example by Konstantine Ladaria¹⁸, Lasha Markozashvili¹⁹, Tamara Grdzeldze²⁰. They particularly focus on the Georgian

¹⁵ Marilisa Lorusso, "Georgian Secularism Between Modernization and Democratization: Minority Issues and social cohesion", Analysis No. 174, May 2013, ISPI

¹⁶Andrea Filetti, "Religiosity in the South Caucasus: searching for an underlying logic of religion's impact on political attitudes", Southeast European and Black Sea Studies, Vol. 14, No. 2, 2014, Routledge

¹⁷ Ghia Nodia, "Georgia: Dimensions of Insecurity",

<http://amacad.org/multimedia/pdfs/publications/books/Nodia.pdf>, in Statehood and Security: Georgia after the Role Revolution by Bruno Coppieters and Robert Legvold, Cambridge, 2005,

<https://www.amacad.org/content/publications/publication.aspx?d=379> (Accessed 2015-04-23)

¹⁸ "Georgian Orthodox Church and Political Project of Modernization"

¹⁹ "Transitions towards democracy – problems"

²⁰ "The Orthodox Church of Georgia: challenges under democracy and freedom"

Orthodox Church's perceptions towards the state's democratization processes as well as on the identity issues which refers to religion and the society. Moreover, the articles of Elene Gavashelishvili²¹ and Giga Zedania²² speaks about the Church's positions towards specific issues and its involvement in social and political events are showed. Also Zaza Vakhridze²³ and Aleksandra Gabisona²⁴ focus on the discourse of the nationalism in Georgia. In addition to this, the academic articles can be found in the Georgia's Ilia State University's webpage under the online journal of Identity Studies in the Caucasus and the Black Sea Region.²⁵ The articles were very beneficial in order to grasp the thorough understanding of the Church's role in today's Georgia. Also, academic journal of Caucasus Analytical Digest²⁶ was a trustful resource of getting general understanding of the topic, also specifically focusing on the Georgia's case.

However, the mentioned resources do not refer to the issue of democracy while analyzing relationship between the state and the church. Furthermore, it is important to mention the recent work of Sophie Zviadadze²⁷ who focused mostly on the Georgian youth and its active role in the events related to religion and was one of the most relevant works in regards to the thesis topic. It provided with the thorough insight of how religion is perceived in contemporary Georgia. The other various articles gave understanding of Georgia's political system development and governmental changes. However, the articles that concentrated on the democratization issues in Georgia did not examine the religion's role in the countries democratization processes. If the Georgian Orthodox Church's role was mentioned it was from the state's perspective.

Most literature on the topic of relations between religion and the state is connected with Islamic world as it is undoubtedly one of the most significant examples to unfold the complex issue of

²¹ "Anti-Modern and Anti-Global Tendencies in the Georgian Orthodox Church", *Journal of Identity Studies in the Caucasus and Black Sea Region*, Vol. 4, 2012

²² Giga Zedania, "The Rise of Religious Nationalism in Georgia", *Journal of Identity Studies in the Caucasus and Black Sea Region*, Vol. 3, 2011

²³ "Two Faces of Nationalism and Efforts to establish Georgian Identity", *Journal of Identity Studies in the Caucasus and Black Sea Region*, Vol. 4, 2012

²⁴ "Formation of the Georgian National Discourse", *Journal of Identity Studies in the Caucasus and Black Sea Region* Vol. 4, 2012

²⁵ <http://ojs.iliauni.edu.ge/index.php/identitystudies/index>

²⁶ <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Series/Detail/?lng=en&id=94386>

²⁷ Sophie Zviadadze, *Georgian Orthodox Church and Human Rights: Challenges to Georgian Society*, in "Religion and Human Rights: International Perspective" by Hans-Georg Ziebertz, Gordan Crpic (ed.), Springer International Publishing, Switzerland, 2015

the state – religion relation and its connection to democracy during the socio-political transformations in the countries. However, as it will be seen from the research, Georgia is an extraordinary example of how religion and the state can be intertwined. Moreover, the country of Georgia is still a developing country and has already undergone important socio-political transformations in connection to the country's democratization processes. Therefore the ongoing events in the country are widely discussed among Georgian academics and the country also receives the attention from the academics outside Georgia.

In regards of theoretical literature, one of the most noteworthy books titled “Rethinking Secularism”²⁸ was used through the thesis. The book consists of the articles collection dedicated to the topic of secularism. It was very useful in order to understand the secularization principle and problems in modern societies from the social as well as political perspectives. The book includes works of Charles Taylor²⁹, Jose Casanova³⁰ and Alfred Stepan's³¹ which theoretical premises were used in the research. The collection of the articles was the point to find the other works of the authors. The book consists of the work of Alfred Stepan and his premises on multiple secularism and twin tolerations are explained. Moreover, the works of Francis Fukuyama³² lead to better understanding of political developments of the countries and what is needed for democracy to flourish. Besides the books and articles, the increased role of the technologies in today's modern world let to use the recorded video lectures which were regarded as a valuable resource of understanding the topic of religion and democracy from the broader perspective. The relationship between the state and religion in connection to liberal democracy led to video lectures by Francis Fukuyama and Alfred Stepan. Finally, the recent book of Jonathan Fox³³ is important to mention is. It focuses on the theories of religion and politics. The book was a source of understanding how better to approach the analysis of religion and the state.

²⁸ Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, Jonathan VanAntwerp (ed.), “Rethinking Secularism” Oxford University Press

²⁹ Charles Taylor “Western Secularity”, 31-54

³⁰ Jose Casanova, “The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms”, 54-75

³¹ Alfred Stepan, “The Multiple Secularisms of Modern Democratic and Non-Democratic Regimes”, 114-145

³² Francis Fukuyama “The Origins of Political Order”; articles “Culture, Identity and Democracy in the Face of Democratization”, “States and democracy”, “Liberalism versus State building”.

³³ Jonathan Fox, “Introduction to Religion and Politics: Theory and Practice”, Routledge Studies in Religion and Politics, Great Britain, 2013

Also the book provided with beneficial insights of how religion and politics are, and can be interrelated in today's societies and countries.

Delimitation

The thesis does not aim to show that one or the other religion is or does not suitable with liberal democracy. The aim of the thesis is based on socio-political approach and focuses on the issue of how religion is organized in the political system of the country, in this case of Georgia. Also, it is important to note that the thesis focuses on the role of religion as an institution. Therefore the two suggested ways of analyzing the relationship between religion and state in connection to democracy are discussed from the perspective of Georgian Orthodox Church as institution. Also, the thesis analyzes how the church and the state interacts only from the Georgian Orthodox Church's perspective and its influence on the state, not *vice versa*.

2. Theoretical Approach

The chapter presents the main theories that are used in the thesis. It gives the basic assumptions of modernization and secularization theories.

In order to understand the complex relationship between religion and democracy, theories of secularization and modernization are relevant key points to start the discussion. To begin with, one of the main reasons for secularization to flourish was the modernization's theory thought. Basically the origins of modernization and secularization that is the decline of religion, within social science academics are usually traced back from the French and Industrial revolutions in Europe in 19th and 20th centuries. It was believed that the world will modernize and the economic development will replace the religious role in the societies and states.³⁴ Therefore the idea of free, liberal democratic states has assumption that religion's role in public sphere cannot exist and for democratic states to flourish the separation between state and church is a necessity. Thus the links between modernization, secularization and democracy are highly related. However, modernization theory failed to prove its principles that with the modernization religiosity will

³⁴ Elke de Jong, "Religious Values and Economic Growth", NICE Working Paper, 08-111, November 2008, Nijmegen Centre for Economics, Institute for Management Research, Radboud University Nijmegen, Netherlands, 2-5

decrease whereas in today's world religion plays one of the most important roles in private and well as public lives. Thus it is important to look at the secularization theory that suggests clear division between religion and the state in the democratic countries.

Since in today's modern states religion plays a significant role, the secularization theory had to be revised among the academics. As Jonathan Fox notes that "[...] secularization theory still has a dramatic influence on our current state of knowledge on religion and politics, both because it discouraged the study of the topic until the past few decades and because it continues to influence the development theory on the interactions between religion and the political."³⁵ Therefore the secularization theory and the concept of the secular cannot be understood without religion's concept, which in the analysis is seen only from the social sciences point of view.

Speaking about the secular state and secularization theory, the main idea is the clear division of the state and church in the country. Moreover, as there are various definitions of secularism, a key problem in grappling with the topic of constitutional and institutional boundaries between religion and state that are needed to sustain a liberal democracy. However, Alfred Stepan argues that secularism is often assumed, but its necessity for liberal democracy is rarely argued.³⁶ A. Stepan's theory on religion and democracy is useful for many reasons but primarily because it concentrates attention on the precise points of friction between religious groups and the liberal-democratic state. While Alfred Stepan insists that a form of religious –state separation is necessary to sustain liberal democracy, he also develops a theory that is versatile, allowing for multiple possible scenarios in which religion and democracy can coexist.³⁷ In addition to this, the secular and secularization concepts have shifted its meaning thus the secularization theory had to be revised and rethought.

Since the thesis analysis takes the two different ways of how religion and the state can interact. That is the Georgian Orthodox Church's role in the state matters and its role the society, it is

³⁵ Jonathan Fox, "Introduction to Religion and Politics: Theory and Practice", Routledge Studies in Religion and Politics, Great Britain, 2013, 17

³⁶ Alfred Stepan, Alfred Stepan, "The Multiple Secularisms of Modern Democratic and Non-Democratic Regimes", in "Rethinking Secularism", by Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, Jonathan Van Antwerpen (ed), Oxford University Press, 2012, 116

³⁷ Hashemi Nader, Islam, Secularism and Liberal Democracy: Towards a Democratic Theory towards Muslim societies, USA, Cambridge University Press, 2009, 104

important to show the different ways of how the secularism principle and secularization theory can be seen. That is from the sociological and the institutional perspectives.

Secularization theory from the sociological perspective

Contemporary secular theories try to explain the comeback of religion³⁸ in modern society with the transformation of religion.³⁹ “Religions have acquired new forms and have become increasingly influential actors in society in recent times. The “trace” of religion can be found in political processes and cultural identity and values. More importantly, religion has become a major actor of public life”.⁴⁰ The return of religion to the public space is a phenomenon which has clashed with the paradigm of secularism.

Thus together with modernization the secular process in the state emerged. Secularism from the sociological sciences point of view can be described as the change of values in modern societies, such as decline in traditional values, privatization of religion and decrease number in religiosity among citizens. However, as Thomas Luckmann argues, with modernization and secularization processes religion has also undergone transformations by taking the new social form of religion.⁴¹ Thus the contemporary theories of secularization explain the ‘come back’ of religion in modern societies.⁴² It also can be assumed that the religion returned in the new forms of religiosity which led to the new forms of religion itself. Therefore according to Thomas Luckmann theoretical approach the “social forms of defining religion according to which the last form is suited for modern states where religion is being represented by religious institution.”⁴³ In addition to this, it creates the secular distinction between the sacred and secular institutions and thus the privatization of religion emerges. Luckmann intends to show that out of the idea of religious privatization the beginning of re-emergence of public religion starts.⁴⁴

³⁸ Martin Riesebrodt, “Fundamentalism and Resurgence of Religion”, *Numen*, Vol.47, No. 3, *Religions in the Disenchanted World*, Brill, 2000, 266

³⁹ Thomas Luckmann, “Transformations of Religion and Morality”, in *Social Compass*, 50(3), 2003, 275-285

⁴⁰ Jose Casanova, “Private and Public Religions, *Social Research*, Vol. 59, No. 1, Religion and Politics, Spring 1992

⁴¹ Thomas Luckmann “Transformations of Religion and Morality in Europe”, *Social Compass*, p 283 - 284

⁴² Martin Riesebrodt, “Religion in Global Perspective”, in “Global Religions: An Introduction”, in pdf1 2001, 95-96

⁴³ Joan Estruch, “A Conversation with Thomas Luckmann”, *Social Compass*, 55(4), 2008, 538

⁴⁴ Joan Estruch, “A Conversation with Thomas Luckmann”, *Social Compass*, 55(4), 2008, 538-539,

Thomas Luckmann's position is that religions have acquired new forms and have become increasingly influential actors in society in recent times. Moreover, the identities based on religion have not been gone. Therefore, privatization of religion has become the most questioned. According to Jose Casanova, religion has become a part of the public space, and he offers the thesis known of *Deprivatization of Religion* arguing that the public interest towards the church and religious has increased.⁴⁵

The relation of religion and democracy can be drawn from the fact that religion sets specific beliefs which also reflect in the democratic values. However, as Charles Taylor and other authors agree the modern societies changed and the secularism principle has also to adapt to these changes. As Charles Taylor notices, that secularism involves complex requirements which start from three categories of French Revolution trinity: liberty, equality, fraternity. Moreover, the concepts of 'secular', 'secularization' can take different meanings; it depends from the taken perspective of analyzing the concepts. Charles Taylor looks at the term 'secular' from the social side. He argues that the secular is not only about the separation of the church and state. Taylor draws his attention on what secularism basically requires from the state. He argues the separation of state and church requires the state to fulfill the categories of French Revolution trinity. Thus the three: liberty, equality and fraternity, are highly linked to the 'secularization' and 'secular state' concepts. Afterwards, Ch. Taylor argues that the three principles must be in a given political system and the state's role is to realize agreed three general principles.⁴⁶ Thus the other side of secularism is the institutional arrangements between the state and religion.

As there is not one theory of secularization there are basic agreements over its general parameters. Put it simply, secularization theory predicts the decline of religion, and perhaps its disappearance, as a significant force in the public sphere, owing to a number of processes inherent in modernization.⁴⁷ Therefore it leads to the modern social thought and the modernization theory is also related to the understanding of further development of secularization which gives the relevant background for the complexity of religion's role in

⁴⁵ Jose Casanova, "Private and Public Religions, *Social Research*, Vol. 59, No. 1, Religion and Politics, Spring 1992

⁴⁶ Charles Taylor, "The Meaning of Secularism", in "Rethinking Secularism", by Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, Jonathan Van Antwerpen (ed), Oxford University Press, 2012, 23-33

⁴⁷ Jonathan Fox, "Introduction to Religion and Politics: Theory and Practice", Routledge Studies in Religion and Politics, Great Britain, 2013, 18

politics and democratization processes. Secularization theory refers to the ‘continuing correctness of the persistent loss of the social relevance of church and religion in modern societies. One theory’s of secularization reasoning of why religion should be excluded from the democratic public sphere is its irrationality.⁴⁸ The question is how the boundaries between the sacred and the secular are drawn and by whom. Therefore it is important to understand the secularization theory and its link to democracy from the institutional perspective.

Secularization theory from the institutional perspective

Speaking about institutional separation of the church and state according to the secularization theoretics as Charles Taylor, Jose Casanova the main principle of secularism is that the state cannot be officially linked to some religious confession. Therefore leaving the individual level and speaking about the secularization principle, one must admit that the division between the sacred and the secular institutions in the modern democratic societies is the main part of the secularization theories. Moreover, as the thesis topic analyzes the relationship between the state and the church in connection to democracy, there is also a question of how religion can be linked to democracy in such modernized states and societies? Therefore, the thoughts of J. Casanova, Ch. Taylor’s A. Stepan’s and Luckmann can be traced by the ideas of the above mentioned change of religion’s role and functions in the modern state and societies. Thus in-depth discussions of religion’s role in today’s modern states by the secularization theoretics suggests that secular and secularization concepts can have multiple meanings as it depends on the understanding of secular and the religious role in the state processes. That is the level of institutional separation of state and church.

In order to understand the relationship between the religion and democracy it is important to expand the ideas of secularism. As J. Casanova notes, there are three main meanings of secularism, and it is important to analyze them separately as to understand the complex relationship between the state and religion.⁴⁹ According to J. Casanova, “Secularism also refers to different normative – ideological state projects, as well as to legal-constitutional frameworks

⁴⁸ Jose Casanova, “The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms”, in “Rethinking Secularism”, by Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, Jonathan Van Antwerpen (ed), Oxford University Press, 2012” , 69

⁴⁹ Jose Casanova “Rethinking Secularization: A Global Comparative Perspective”, Essays, 1, <http://www.iasc-culture.org/THR/archives/AfterSecularization/8.12CCasanova.pdf> (Accessed 2015-02-18)

of separation of the state and religion and to different models of differentiation of religion, ethnics, morality and law.” The secularism as a statecraft principle as Casanova argues, is when the separation between religious and political authorities exists “for the sake of neutrality of the state *vis-a-vis* for the sake of protecting the freedom of conscience of each individual, or for the sake of facilitating the equal access of all citizens, religious as well as nonreligious, to democratic participation.”⁵⁰

The principle of separation and the principle of state regulation of religion in society - it is the relationship between the two principles that determines the particular form of secularism and its affinity with democracy.⁵¹ Eventually, however, as a result of this particular historical process of secularization, “the secular” has become the dominant category that serves to structure and delimit, legally, philosophically, scientifically and politically, the nature and the boundaries of “religion”. Therefore the changing world requires expanding understandings of the secular and secularism.

Alfred Stepan suggests the relevant theoretical relationship between religion, secularism and liberal democracy. Alfred Stepan argues that religion and democracy can coexist in modern state and raises the question of what was needed for both democracy and religion to flourish. The answer was a significant degree of institutional differentiation between religion and the state. This situation of the differentiation Alfred Stepan summed up as the “twin tolerations.” In a country that lives by these two tolerations, religious authorities do not control democratic officials who are acting constitutionally, while democratic officials do not control religion so long as religious actors respect other citizens’ rights. Many different patterns of relations among the state, religion, and society are compatible with the twin tolerations. There are, in other words, “multiple secularisms of modern democracies.”⁵²

⁵⁰ Jose Casanova, “The Secular, Secularizations, Secularisms”, in “Rethinking Secularism”, by Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, Jonathan Van Antwerpen (ed), Oxford University Press, 2012, 66

⁵¹ Casanova, *Ibid.*, 72

⁵² Alfred Stepan, “The Multiple Secularisms of Modern Democratic and Non-Democratic Regimes”, in “Rethinking Secularism”, by Craig Calhoun, Mark Juergensmeyer, Jonathan Van Antwerpen (ed), Oxford University Press, 2012, 116

Along with the state and church there is civil society which is an interactive player between the two. Civil society as F. Fukuyama's argues shows democratic accountability of the state's performance. Thus modern state basically cannot exist without democracy. Therefore in order to build the democracy in the country one must fulfill its basic principles of liberal democracy which, according Fukuyama takes procedural democratic accountability (free, fair elections) coupled with the liberal rule of law.⁵³ Furthermore, as it is seen the religious involvement in the state affairs becomes complex issue as it affects the three general principles of democracy which state has to realize as well as the democratic performance of the state. The concept of political democracy according to Carsten Anckart is that "public policy is to be governed by the freely expressed will of the people whereby all individuals are to be treated as equals". This definition includes three essential features of democracy: self determination, the principle of freedom and the principle of equality.⁵⁴

Finally, all of three principles are highly related not only to the state, democracy, but also the society in the modern democratic states. However, since the modernization theory have not developed its premises that the more modernized societies become, the lower religiosity level they embrace, the secularization theory also experienced the challenge about its main principle of the strict separation of the church and the state. Therefore the issues related to secularism have to be rethought in the way as it would more adapt to the modern society, where the religion obviously plays one of the crucial roles. As Charles Taylor assumes that, "One of our basic difficulties in dealing with these problems is that we have the wrong model, which has a continuing hold on our minds. We think that secularism (or *laicite*) has to do with the relation of the state and religion, whereas in fact it has to do with the (correct) response of the democratic state to diversity."⁵⁵

⁵³ Fukuyama, States and Democracy, in *Democratization*, Vol. 21, No. 7, Routledge, 1329

⁵⁴ Carsten Anckart, "Religion and democracy: A Worldwide comparision", Routledge studies in Religion and Politics, 2011, 10

⁵⁵ Charles Taylor, "The Meaning of Secularism", http://iasc-culture.org/THR/archives/Fall2010/Taylor_lo.pdf , 25, (Accessed 2015-02-10)

3. The role of the Georgian Orthodox Church in the state matters

The chapter focuses on the issue of Georgian Orthodox Church's influence on the state political decisions. It discusses GOC's position on specific issues which help to answer the question if the attitude and opinion of the religious authorities in Georgia has an influence on the political decisions of the state. The chapter analyzes if there is an institutionalized role of the religion in the state matters of Georgia. The final part of the chapter summarizes the discussed events and processes and gives the answers to the raised questions. The existence of the direct, institutionalized role of the church in the state matters contradicts the principle of democracy therefore the direct role of GOC on the state matters has to be analyzed.

3.1 Overview of the Church and state relations in Georgia

In Georgia's Constitution it is written that Georgia is a democratic country with the separation of the church from the state affairs. If there was a direct influence of the Georgian Orthodox Church in the state decisions that would contradict the democratic principle of the rule of 'demos' (people), and also secularization principle. Therefore besides the state's perspective to religion, there is the other side of the religion's role in the state matters. Thus the following discussion is about how the GOC is organized in the political system of the country. In 1977 Ilia II became the leader (Patriarch) of the Georgian Orthodox Church. After the independence of Georgia in 1991 during the period of different ruling governments Georgia's Orthodox Church's power in the state was changing due to the growing involvement of the Georgian Orthodox Church and its leader in political affairs of the country. Looking two decades back, when in 1991 Georgia gained its independence, the first government of Georgia showed its own will to include the Georgian Orthodox Church in the state matters. Thus GOC's power was growing during the years and today's Georgia experiences religious resurgence period.

The most important change in the role of the Church - state relations in Georgia was the Rose Revolution in 2003 and the new government election in 2004. The relations between the Church and the state in contemporary Georgia compared to the first decades of the independent Georgia has changed in regards of government position. Since the Rose Revolution in 2003, the state of Georgia stepped into the period of reforms and political transformation. The ruling coalition of the former President of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili started the new policy of Georgia, which

was based on the country's Westernization project. Therefore various democratic reforms were started. Basically at that time the contradictions between the state and the church emerged when President Mikhael Saakashvili came into power and started his pro-Western policy. The former President began the attempts to decrease GOC's involvement into the political affairs of the state. "The Church's previous attempts to insert itself into the Georgian political milieu were curbed by Saakashvili, who sought to maintain a firm boundary between church and state interests. However, this partnership is straining due to differences in opinion regarding Georgia's political future: the government wants the country to become part of the West while the church would have Georgia align with Russia and adopt an anti-liberal value system."⁵⁶

Since Georgia has chosen the path of country's Westernization the newly elected President in 2013, Giorgi Margvelashvili continues to direct the country towards democratization. Also Georgia aspires to have closer ties with the European Union. However, the last two Georgia's governments of Mikheil Saakashvili and the current President Giorgi Margvelashvili's chosen path towards the West and democratization has been openly opposed by the powerful institution of GOC in Georgia. Interesting scenario of Georgia's case is the struggle of GOC to have a direct influence on the state decisions by openly and directly stating its positions on the political issues of the country. As Jonathan Fox notes, the religion indeed has power and capabilities to engage in the political processes of the country. Despite the fact that religious organizations are not designed and should not be willing to engage in the political action. However, across the globe they seem to have done precisely that.⁵⁷ The Georgia's case has two sides of the issue, one is from how the state incorporates the Church within its political system. A very short example of that is discussed in the last Bertelsmann Transformation Index Report (2014) of Georgia: "Even though the Georgian Parliament adopted The Rule of Registration of Religious Organizations as Legal Entities of Public Law in July 2011, taking an important step toward integration of minority faiths, the Georgian Orthodox Church still enjoys privileged status, having signed a constitutional agreement with the Georgian state in 2002. The Georgian Orthodox Church has also signed agreements with the Georgian Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Education and

⁵⁶ Ariela Shapiro, 'Ivanishvili And the Georgian Orthodox Church: An Alliance Starting to Sour?', May 30, 2013, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12743-ivanishvili-and-the-georgian-orthodox-church-an-alliance-starting-to-sour?.html>

⁵⁷ Jonathan Fox, "Introduction to Religion and Politics: Theory and Practice", Routledge Studies in Religion and Politics, Great Britain, 2013, 84-85

Science, which means that it could influence both the educational process and the penitentiary system.”⁵⁸ Thus it shows the policy towards the religion from the state’s perspective. However, the thesis aims to examine the other side of the state church relations that is how the Church engages in the state matters in Georgia. Therefore the Georgia’s case is a good example as Georgian Church plays an important role not only in the matters of religion. The GOC and its leader Patriarch Ilia II also tries to engage in the state policy matters.⁵⁹ Thus it is important to focus on the specific issues in Georgia in order to see how the GOC tries to get involved into the state and if the GOC has a real direct influence on political decisions of the state.

3.2 Analysis

3.2.1 Challenges for the GOC in today’s Georgia

Firstly, it is important to discuss the GOC attitudes on particular issues that directly relates to the state matters. The Church of Georgia is said to be one with the ultra-conservative stance. One of the most worldwide changes is globalization and modernization of which influence Georgia is not an exception too. However for the Georgian Orthodox Church it is a huge challenge to handle the changes. Since most of the changes in the state of the contemporary Georgia since the Rose Revolution are regarded as ‘evil’ by the Church. This is well illustrated by the fact that the Church openly declares its anti western policy as well as the position of taking modernization and globalization as a threat for Georgia and its society: “ [...] the Georgian Orthodox Church perceives Westernization, globalization, and integration with NATO and EU, as forced and artificially created processes that endanger nationality, faith, traditions and culture.”⁶⁰ Difficult state’s situation occurs since Georgia’s government has chosen state’s policy direction towards the West and democratization (European Union path). Whereas one of the most influential institution in Georgia, Georgian Orthodox Church, holds an opposite position towards the chosen path of the last two governments in Georgia:

⁵⁸ Bertelsmann Transformation Index, Georgia 2014, <http://www.bti-project.org/downloads/bti-2014/country-reports-2014/post-soviet-eurasia/>, 6-7 , (Accessed 2015-05-10)

⁵⁹ Ilia Zviadauri, ‘The Georgian Orthodox Church: Some Aspects of Its Rhetoric and Practice’, April 15, 2013, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=40733#.VVNoW_DLOHt](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=40733#.VVNoW_DLOHt) ; Caroline Funke, ‘The Georgian Orthodox Church and Its involvement in National Politics’, The Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst, August 14, 2014, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/13023-the-georgian-orthodox-church-and-its-involvement-in-national-politics.html> (Accessed 2015-03-23)

⁶⁰ Elene Gavashelishvili, “Anti-modern and Anti-globalist Tendencies in the Georgian Orthodox Church”, p 6-123

“In 2008 it was proclaimed that any steps taken towards European integration and ecumenization are a deviation from Christ’s path and accordingly, a foreign investment sustaining the Antichrist agenda (performed with governmental funds acquired through selling Georgian land).”⁶¹

In addition to this, recently in 2014 April GOC openly stated its position towards the EU and opposed Georgian parliament’s decision to adopt the anti-discrimination law.”⁶² It was a direct and clear position stated by the GOC. The Patriarch of Georgia strongly opposed the new anti-discrimination law which provides the protection of all kinds of discrimination and asked the government to postpone its adoption.⁶³ The bill was an agreement for Georgia’s further path to European Union and it was a part of Association Agreement between the EU and Georgia. Thus the clashes occur between the influential religious institution in Georgia and the state government. Interestingly, the Ministry of Justice which prepared the administration of the law stated that they had the consultation with clerics during the preparation of the draft in order to reach an agreement.⁶⁴ Therefore it can be argued that the Georgian Orthodox Church tries to engage itself in the state matters and seeks political influence in the country. However, the government keeps to its decisions, as it is seen from this case that the law was signed despite the Patriarch’s appeal. The fact poses an active religion’s inclusion in the state’s matters. On one hand the state showed the respect and tolerance towards the Church’s position while having consultations with clerics. On the other hand, the state at the same took its own decision as it should be in the democratic country. However there should not be such activity and involvement in the state matters from the Church’s side as that would provoke the clashes between the two institutions.

There was other important event which shows the religion’s active role in the state issues. Regarding human rights issues in Georgia, a peaceful demonstration on the occasion of the Day against Homophobia and Transphobia on May 17th, 2013 was attacked by thousands of people,

⁶¹ Gavashelishvili, Ibid.,124

⁶² “Georgian Church Speaks out Against Anti-discrimination Bill”, April 28, 2014 <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=27175> (Accessed 2015-05-05)

⁶³ ‘Orthodox Church against EU in Georgian Parliament’, April 30, 2014, <http://dfwatch.net/orthodox-church-against-eu-in-georgian-parliament-57404-28332> (Accessed 2015-05-05)

⁶⁴ ‘Georgian Orthodox Church Opposed to Anti-discrimination law’, April 29, 2014, <http://dfwatch.net/georgian-orthodox-church-opposed-to-anti-discrimination-law-24785-28275> (Accessed 2015-05-10)

led by the Orthodox clergymen. The international media and the EU were concerned of this event in Georgia, because the state did not take an action in trials of the clergymen to sentence them.⁶⁵ The American and European media stated, that “The international community’s reactions to the violence were swift with both American and European diplomats registering “shock” at the violence and that “such acts of intolerance have no place in democratic societies.”⁶⁶ Thus the fact indicates failing activities of the state to objectively react to the occurred situation. The reason of the previous government’s refrain from criticizing the Church and its politics was because it was the parliamentary pre-election time and politicians tried to support Church’s position as to receive the support from the society.⁶⁷ The Church lately tried to defend itself claiming that first of all they warned the government earlier and also, condemned the priests who participated in the attacks. However, it shows the clear position of the GOC and the strong opposition towards the state’s policy.

Also, it is worth to mention the Church’s involvement into elections period and its political aims in the 2012 Parliamentary elections. The Church played an important role in the Georgia’s parliamentary elections in 2012 by opposing the President’s Mikheil Saakashvili government. Thus with the intervention of the Church, the election replaced President Mikheil Saakashvili’s government. There were a lot of disagreements between the GOC and the former President of Georgia M. Saakashvili’s government, especially over legislation granting other religions equal status with the Orthodox Church in Georgia.⁶⁸ M. Saakashvili was associated by Church conservatives with lax Western values. Patriarch Ilia II insisted that the Church maintain neutrality in the election, but that signaled it was not endorsing the government. One scholar described it as "a very active and anti-governmental neutrality." As the election approached,

⁶⁵ Andrew Roth, Olesya Vartanyan, ‘Slow Response by Georgians to Mob Attack on Gay rally’, May 19, 2013 http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/20/world/europe/georgian-officials-react-slowly-to-anti-gay-attack.html?_r=1 (Accessed 2015-05-10)

⁶⁶ Ariela Shapiro, “Ivanishvili and The Georgian Orthodox Church: An Alliance Starting to Sour?”, The Central Asia –Caucasus Analyst, 30 May, 2013, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12743-ivanishvili-and-the-georgian-orthodox-church-an-alliance-starting-to-sour?.html> (Accessed 2015-05-10)

⁶⁷ Georgia and the West: Choppy Waters, The Economist, April 2, 2014, <http://www.economist.com/blogs/easternapproaches/2014/04/georgia-and-west> (Accessed 2015-05-09)

⁶⁸ Ellen Barry, ‘Church’s Muscle Helped Propel President’s Rivals to Victory in Georgia’, October 13, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/14/world/europe/churchs-muscle-aided-win-of-presidents-rivals-in-georgia.html?_r=0

Patriarch Ilia arranged for an airplane carrying icons and holy relics to circle over the country while priests prayed for its future.⁶⁹

The other specific issue in which GOC actively involved its opinion was the establishment of electronic ID cards by the Georgian government in 2011. The Orthodox groups campaigned against them and addressed the government that the electronic documents should be terminated and alternative documents need to be developed. Lately the Georgian Holy Synod issued a statement addressed the government:

“Administrative enforcement of electronic documents (ID cards, biometric passports, any plastic cards for banking, different services and transportation) should be terminated and alternative documents of all sorts need to be developed. Payment in currency should continue everywhere in the country. All these processes, whether the introduction of new cards or complete replacement of currency with plastic cards, are aimed at establishing electronic control through administrative enforcement, which once again infringes upon humans’ worth, personal freedom, religious honesty and the supreme image of God.[...]”⁷⁰

Therefore it is one more example of how religion in Georgia tries to influence political decisions of the state. Also it shows the deep relationship between the state and the GOC. Based on these specific issues it can be assumed that GOC has always been playing a certain role in politics of the country and mostly indirectly is always involved in the state politics. However, the expected shifts in church-state relations should take place as Georgia moves towards the greater association with the EU and the state tries to strengthen its secular policy.

3.2.2 Issues of Religious Minorities

Moreover, there were disputes between the Georgian Orthodox Church and the state over the issue of freedom of religion in July 2011. The state decided to amend the law and allow religious organizations to register as legal entities under public law. Previously only the Georgian

⁶⁹ Barry, Ibid. (Accessed 2015-05-05)

⁷⁰ Elene Gavashelishvili, “Anti-modern and Anti-globalist tendencies in the Georgian Orthodox Church”, 128 - 129

Orthodox Church had this status. Therefore the GOC took the state's decision as directed against Orthodoxy in the country, as it is noted, "The church synod, meanwhile, issued a statement asking political leaders to consult the Patriarchate in advance of any future decisions of this kind."⁷¹ Public debates over the adoption of laws concerning religion, as well as granting the status of a legal entity under public law to religious minorities are vivid illustrations of the ambivalent position of the Church. The Georgian Orthodox Church requested a postponement of the adoption of the law on religion that in practice meant its cancellation. The Church Representatives felt that the law might threaten and diminish the dominant role of the Georgian Orthodox Church ("no other religion should be equal to the religion of majority"—Orthodox Christianity). The public debates revealed fundamentalist ideas that were enrooted in society in July 2011. Radical groups organized protests against the adoption of the law. In an effort to ease the tensions representatives of the Patriarchate met with a group of Georgian MPs to discuss potential solutions to the problem. As a result of the talks, the Holy Synod (*a ruling body of GOC*) issued a compromise resolution on July 11, 2011, which said that:

"Whilst the Georgian Orthodox Church accepts and respects universal norms and values enshrined in international conventions and the Constitution of Georgia, it declares that all Georgian citizens regardless of their religion, as well as every religious organization, are equal before the law. Religious freedom shall not depend on the membership of a congregation. According to the Constitution of Georgia and the Concordat, which represents the will of the Georgian people, the exclusive legal status of the Georgian Autocephalous Orthodox Church by no means restricts or denies freedom of worship and equality before the law of other religious associations." (Statement of Holy Synode 2011).⁷²

This clarification could be seen as the recognition of freedom of religion and equal rights of all religious organizations. This statement was a step forward. But its implementation remains a

⁷¹ 'Georgian Church in Rare Spat with Government', Institute for War and Peace Reporting, July 22, 2011 <http://www.refworld.org/docid/4e30045f2.html> (Accessed 2015-05-10)

⁷² Sophie Zviadadze, *Georgian Orthodox Church and Human Rights: Challenges to Georgian Society*, in "Religion and Human Rights: International Perspective" by Hans-Georg Ziebertz, Gordan Crpic (ed.), Springer International Publishing, Switzerland, 2015, 54

serious challenge to the Church itself, and is causing additional tension in Georgia's social-political life. In a modern pluralistic society it will be put to the test every day.⁷³

In addition to this, despite the newly elected President and government in 2013 the Church has not reduced its engagement in the state matters. The GOC influence on the state matters can be noted when in August 2013, the newly installed minaret of the mosque in the village of Chela was removed by the authorities after the local Orthodoxy clergy objected to its presence.⁷⁴ The other interesting case of Georgian Orthodox Church's involvement in the state matters is the idea for political prisoners to spend their time at the monastery. As the media notes, "Although the scheme is being organized by the Georgian government, the initiative came from the Georgian Orthodox Church - the country's most prominent and powerful religious institution, one directly funded by the government."⁷⁵

Thus GOC is a powerful institution in Georgia and seeks political influence. One more example is the involvement of Georgian Orthodox Church when Turkish and Georgian governments tried to reach an agreement about the restoration of the buildings. It ended with an interesting case of conflict between the Government and the Church. A number of Georgian monuments on Turkish territory are in urgent need of restoration. In exchange for the right to restore these monuments, the Government of Turkey is asking the Georgian Government to restore and/or reconstruct four mosques on Georgian territory. This requires an agreement to be signed between the Georgian and Turkish Governments. A draft of this agreement was already ready in 2007, but the Georgian Orthodox Church opposed its signature. The Georgian Government, finding itself in a difficult situation because of opposition protests, decided not to go against the Church and did not make the issue the subject of a public debate. But this tension turned into a conflict again when the Government tried to push again for the signing of the agreement in 2011.⁷⁶ Moreover, the GOC was actively protesting against the building of the new mosque in the city of Batumi and the

⁷³ Zviadadze, *Ibid.*, 54

⁷⁴ Marilisa Lorusso, "Georgian Secularism between Modernization and democratization: Minority issues and social cohesion", ISPI, Analysis No. 174, May, 2014

⁷⁵ Georgian convicts swap cells for monastery, BBC News, April 5, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8603357.stm> (Accessed 2015-05-01)

⁷⁶ Giga Zedania, "The Rise of Religious Nationalism in Georgia", *Identity Studies in the Caucasus and Black Sea Region*, Vol. 3, 2011, 126-127; 'Georgian Orthodox Church says 'Ignored' in Turkish – Georgian Talks on Restoring Historical Sites, February 7, 2011, <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=23116> (Accessed 2015-05-15)

situation remained uncertain.⁷⁷ Furthermore, it is important to note, that GOC has its own closed policy in regards to the other confessions what shows it's preference to the isolation from international religious communities, as it has withdrawn itself from other ties with other religious confessions and international religious communities. Thus it shows the closed policy of the Georgian Church while breaking its ties with the international religious communities.⁷⁸

3.2.3 GOC's ties with Russian Orthodox Church and Russia

The most concerned fact of the GOC's involvement into the state matters is its relations with Russia which shows the Church's involvement even in the external relations of the state. The Church's opposition towards the West implies its pro-Russian position and its positive attitude to Russia. As Russia is also an Orthodox country, Georgia's religious leader, Patriarch Ilia II holds close ties with Russian Orthodox Church. However, Georgian Patriarch not only keeps close ties with Russian Orthodox Church, but he also involves in politics. He has an attitude that Georgia has to hold closer ties with Russia as Russia has never associated itself to the "West" and it is addressed with esteem and respect.⁷⁹ After the war with Russia in 2008 Patriarch Ilia II made public remarks on the policy of Georgian government: "Georgian Orthodox Church leader Patriarch Ilia II has criticized President Mikhaeil Saakashvili for his actions in South Ossetia in August 2008 that led to a military conflict with Russia."⁸⁰ Thus the Church leader even stated that the state of Georgia could avoid the war with Russia if not the government's mistakes.⁸¹ Moreover, in 2013 Patriarch of Georgia met the President of Russia despite the fact that Georgia and Russia does not have diplomatic relations after the 2008 war.⁸² Therefore the GOC with its pro-Russian attitude tries to play the role in the country's foreign affairs. Also, the GOC uses its

⁷⁷ Mari Nikuradze, 'Uncertainty About the Plans for New Mosque in Batumi', October 24, 2013, Democracy and Freedom Watch, Georgia, <http://dfwatch.net/uncertainty-about-plans-for-new-mosque-in-batumi-53912-23512> (Accessed 2015-05-03); 'Patriarchs Petitions to Georgian and Turkish Governments',

<http://www.religiebi.info/index.php?a=main&pid=47&lang=eng>; Statement by Patriarchate, 2011-01-18, Patriarchate of Georgia, http://www.patriarchate.ge/en/?action=news_show&mode=news&id=177

⁷⁸ Gavashelishvili, Ibid., 120-121

⁷⁹ Gavashelishvili, Ibid., 129

⁸⁰ Georgian Orthodox Church Patriarch Criticizes Saakashvili for War, October 16, 2009, http://www.rferl.org/content/Georgian_Orthodox_Church_Patriarch_Criticizes_Saakashvili_For_War_/1853790.html (Accessed 2015-05-09)

⁸¹ Kornely Kakachia, "Is Georgia's Orthodox Church an obstacle to European values?", PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 322, June 2014, 3

⁸² Michael Vardzelashvili, 'Will Ilia II reconcile Georgia and Russia?', January 21, 2013, <http://www.eurodialogue.eu/europe-east/Will-Ilia-II-reconcile-Georgia-and-Russia%3F> (Accessed 2015-05-10)

power to the state while addressing and at the same time stating its opinion publicly to the state authorities and Georgian society.

3.2.4 Summary

The aim of the above discussed analysis part was to answer the question whether the Georgian Orthodox Church has a direct, institutionalized role in the matters of the state. The discussed events illustrate that Georgian government has a difficult task of trying to reduce the Georgian Orthodox Church's and its authorities influence on the state matters. The high involvement of the Church in the state matters encounters in many political issues in Georgia. The state must continue to hold on to secular and democratic principles and at the same time apply proper institutional mechanisms for the further church-state relations without alienating the powerful religion of Georgia. The characteristic trend of GOC's involvement in the state matters is directly and openly linked with the purpose of religious institution to affect the state's political decisions.

The GOC in contemporary Georgia continues to exercise as much influence on the political elite as ever before. Yet those who perceive Georgia's Euro-Atlantic integration as a threat dominate the hierarchy of the Church. The GOC interference in politics is becoming increasingly incompatible with Georgia's pursued path of Euro-Atlantic integration and its attempts to establish social and political pluralism. Thus as the GOC's influence and power have increased there are much concerns about its too close relationship with the state, and its attitude to minority religions and human rights, democratic principles in Georgia. As Georgian theologian Levan Abashidze suggests is: "What the Church really needs to do is to adapt to the changing reality, to draw red lines for itself," said theologian. "It has to take the role that churches have in modern societies, when the church has a moral, not a legal authority."⁸³ Thus it can be argued that the GOC in Georgia plays an active role in the matters of the state and sometimes the interference in the state matters may bring influence on the political decisions of the state. It weakens country's democratization processes and reforms which the state aims to implement.

⁸³Giorgi Lomasadze, "Georgia: Where does the Church End and the State begin?", May 22, 2013, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/67004>

However, the clashes between the church and the state are common in contemporary Georgia. At present time with the coming waves of globalization and modernization the government's policy direction is to get closer to the European Union and to focus on democratization processes. Due to the conservative policy of the GOC the disagreements between the Church and the State occur. In addition to this, the analysis shows that because of the active role of the church in the state matters the two entities are highly interlinked with each other. Therefore the Church's influence on the state political decisions has to be reduced. However, since the Georgian Orthodox Church and the Patriarch Ilia II seeks to keep its power and is aware of its high authority in the society, the appearance of the clashes between the state and the church are common issues and raises serious concerns of where the church ends and state begins in Georgia. Critics argue that the Patriarchate is the only institution in Georgia to demonstratively disobey secular legislation and that it improperly interferes in civil affairs. Because the GOC is a powerful symbol of the country's sovereignty and an important part of the Georgian national narrative and consciousness the stance of the GOC on moral, ideological and political issues carries significant weight.⁸⁴

From the analysis it is seen that there is no institutionalized role of the religion in matters of Georgia's state. However, the influence of the Georgian Orthodox Church during the years of different governments starting from Georgia's independence in 1991 was growing. At present times Georgian Orthodox Church plays an influential role in the state matters as politicians are aware of the GOC's popularity among the society in Georgia. The GOC seems to be an interconnecting link between the state and society. Therefore the next chapter discusses the importance of the Georgian Orthodox Church in the society.

⁸⁴ Kornely Kakachia, "Is Georgia's Orthodox Church an obstacle to European values?", PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 322, June 2014, http://www.ponarseurasia.org/article/20140610_Kakachia (Accessed 2015-03-23)

4. Georgian Orthodox Church's role in the society

The chapter discusses the Georgian Orthodox Church's role and its importance for the Georgian society. Firstly it gives a brief explanation of why religion and religious institution became highly important element in contemporary Georgian society. Lately the chapter goes into analysis of specific events and processes in Georgia which reflect the Patriarch's Ilia II and GOC influence on the society. Furthermore, the chapter aims to give an insight of how religion is organized in Georgian society. At the end of the chapter the summary of the GOC's role in society and its connection to democracy is given. The chapter is divided in a several subchapters which help to follow the question it aims to discuss.

4.1. The issue of Georgian Identity and its connection to the GOC

The complexity of Georgian Orthodox Church's role stands from the fact that Georgian identity is build upon religion in Georgia. F. Fukuyama notes during his lecture at Ilia State University in Georgia, that for the country's development and further democratization process it is always better to build the identity upon something other than religion, for example, ethnicity.⁸⁵ However, the identity is a separate and highly discussed topic for the case of Georgia, thus for this research it is important just to note the basic arguments in order to understand that the GOC with its nationalistic ideology brought the power to itself within Georgian society.

Therefore, without going into deeper discussions about the identity issues in Georgia, one can shortly argue that the Orthodox Church of Georgia is still a powerful symbol of the Georgian nation. As Tamara Grdzeldze notes that "the relationship of the Church to the democratizing Georgian State and to attitudes prevalent in Georgian society is an important area of current concern [...]".⁸⁶ The Georgian Orthodox Church has been deeply rooted from the early history to the newly independent state of Georgia.

⁸⁵ "Building a Modern State in 21st Century – Georgia", lecture by Francis Fukuyama at Tbilisi Ilia State University, "Meeting with Francis Fukuyama and Eric Jensen", September 2nd, 2014, Tbilisi, Georgia, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FEuII53-vlo> [at 1:36:00 to 1:38:00] (Accessed 2015-02-17)

⁸⁶ Tamara Grdzeldze, "The Orthodox Church of Georgia: Challenges under Democracy and Freedom", *International Journal for the Study of Christian Church*, Vol. 10, May - August 2010, Routledge, 160

Since Georgia regained its independence in 1991 the Georgian Orthodox Church has been strengthening its influence on the society and contributing much to the construction of national identity. After the collapse of Soviet Union the government in Georgia has not been strong to maintain its power and thus was not trusted among society.⁸⁷ Therefore GOC took the initiative of bringing nationalism in the country and GOC became an important part of Georgian identity. The previous governments of Georgia adopted more tolerant policy towards the Georgian Church compared to previous anti-religious campaigns pursued in the USSR. Also, in the end of the twentieth century, the Georgian Orthodox Church became a symbol in the resistance of Georgians to the USSR. Moreover, with the first government of the President of independent Georgia's state, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, emphasized religion in the identity – and state-building processes by appearing frequently in public with the Patriarch Ilia II. The same trend was observed, albeit more weakly, after the second President Eduard Shevardnadze and his government to power. Consequently, the Georgian Constitution (beyond a specific reference to God in the preamble) recognizes ‘the special role of the Apostle Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Georgia in the history of Georgia and its independence from the state’ (Art. 9).⁸⁸

The Georgian Orthodox Church seems to give a solution by generating the formula according to which to be Georgian is to be Orthodox.⁸⁹ In fact, one of the spheres where the relevance of the GOC and its growing importance in the development of Georgian national identity can be observed is the field of politics. Furthermore as the GOC's role grows, it considers itself to be the bearer of the ideology of the state.⁹⁰ On the contrary, this new form of nationalistic ideology was advanced by informal networks in civil society and by political actors who managed to come to power carried by the wave of national upheaval. It was only after the full disintegration of the Soviet Union, civil war and ethnic conflicts that the Georgian Orthodox Church started to become the institutional embodiment of this new form of nationalist ideology. But it came into its own only after the revolution of 2003 and the spread of the new kind of revolutionary

⁸⁷ Andrea Filetti, “Religiosity in the South Caucasus: searching for an underlying logic of religion’s impact on political attitudes”, *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 2014, Routledge, 224

⁸⁸ Filetti, *Ibid.*, 224

⁸⁹ Tatia Mebegishvili, Elene Gavashelishvili, et al., “The Orthodox Church and the Reframing of Georgian National Identity: a New Hegemony?”, paper for ECPR General Conference, 24-27 August 2012, Reykjavik, Iceland, <http://ecpr.eu/filestore/paperproposal/ad47a2db-2d9e-44e6-8928-4c1cfa855a0b.pdf> , 1, (Accessed 2015-05-18)

⁹⁰ Mebegishvili, *Ibid.*, 1

nationalism.⁹¹ Thus GOC became one of the most influential and most trusted institutions in today's Georgia. It is important to examine Georgian society's attitude towards the Georgian Orthodox Church so as to have a thorough view of how the religion is build within Georgian society and the Church's role in it.

Also, as Konstantine Ladaria notes, the reason of GOC's influential role in Georgia's society can be explained by the concept of *ideological vacuum*.⁹² It suggests that dissolution of the Soviet Union created a problem of self-definition along with other socio-political challenges. Therefore religion and ethnicity became new dominant elements of Georgian identity. Trust in the Church compensated for the lack of trust in state institutions.⁹³ Thus from a secondary institution, the Georgian Orthodox Church soon turned into a spiritual and cultural leader of the nation, and without damaging Universalist nature of religion, continues to have a strong, but unproportional, relationship with ethnicity. According to the Church, being an Orthodox Christian does not translate into being a Georgian, but being a Georgian equals to being an Orthodox Christian. Starting from the 1990's the Georgian Orthodox Church was the only organization that could ideologically unify the society and provide services.⁹⁴

Therefore, in Georgia, traditional values are mostly associated with the Georgian Orthodox Church. The institution apparently played a considerable role in preserving Georgian national identity throughout the centuries, and nowadays possesses enormous influence on the society. The special status of the Georgian Church was authorized by the government with the constitutional agreement (The Concordat). The Concordat between the state and the patriarchate gives the religious institution full freedom and significant material benefits.⁹⁵

⁹¹ Giga Zedania, "Rise of religious nationalism in Georgia", Journal of Identity Studies in the Caucasus and Black Sea Region, <http://ojs.iliauni.edu.ge/index.php/identitystudies/article/view/28/20>

⁹² Konstantine Ladaria, "Georgian Orthodox Church and Political Project of Modernization", Journal of Identity Studies in the Caucasus and Black Sea Region, Vol 4 (2012), 106-107

⁹³ Ladaria, Ibid., 107

⁹⁴ Ladaria, Ibid., 108

⁹⁵ Lasha Markozashvili, "Transition towards democracy – Georgian problems", <http://przeglad.amu.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/pp-2014-3-185-202.pdf> 2014, 3

4.2 Analysis

4.2.1 Basic Overview of religion's role in Georgia's society

Firstly, Georgia is relatively religiously homogenous: Although Georgia possesses a larger religious minority (10% of the population – mainly from the Azerbaijani ethnic minority – are Muslim), 85% of the population belong to Orthodox Christianity and a comparable percentage are agnostic (3%). The data regarding religious intensity shows that 91% of Georgians confer importance to their religion. More interestingly, younger generation in Georgia is more religious than average, 45% of younger people deem religion as very important in contrast to 37% of older people. Also, more religious people live in the capital of Georgia, Tbilisi, than in the rural areas of the country.⁹⁶ According to the latest (2014) World Values Survey data, religion's importance among Georgian citizens reaches 85%⁹⁷, among which 93 % identifies themselves belonging to Georgian Orthodox Church.⁹⁸ Moreover, the questions related to active/inactive membership at the voluntary organizations, belonging to religious organization/church reaches the highest ranks among Georgians. Whereas belonging to political organization, political parties, sport organizations, other does not reach more than 1.5 %⁹⁹. Also, the traditional values are among one of the most important for Georgian society: to the question if the tradition is important to the person, to follow the customs handed down by one's religion or family, for the 56% of the respondents it is very much important and for 30% it is important. Also for the child qualities, religious faith is the most important (64%) according to World Values Survey.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, the traditional values reflect on the questions regarding human rights. For example 37% of respondents in Georgia would not like to have as neighbors people of different faith.¹⁰¹ In addition to this, the question for essential characteristics of democracy when religious authorities interpret the laws 10% of the respondents answered that it might be a characteristic of the democracy, 2% totally agreed on the fact. Around 15% thinks that it's not compatible with

⁹⁶ Andrea Filetti, "Religiosity in the South Caucasus: searching for an underlying logic of religion's impact on political attitudes", 02 May 2014, Routledge, 225

⁹⁷ World Values Survey, Results Georgia 2014, <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV6.jsp>, 6 (Accessed 2015-05-02)

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 77

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 12-16

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 9

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 18

democracy.¹⁰² Finally, it is noteworthy that according to the World Values Survey, the trust in the Georgian Orthodox Church is more than average among the respondents, 64% strongly agrees and 23% agrees that the religious institution is the most trustable in the country.

In comparison to the World Values Survey, the more recent polls were conducted by International Republican Institute (2015 February 3 – 28). 1500 permanent residents of Georgia aging under 18 years old participated in the survey. The question about the work of the institutions in Georgia, the most trusted institution in Georgia is the Georgian Orthodox Church with 91 % of all the respondents.¹⁰³ Parliament and President's Office and other state institutions regarded as trustful only for the half of the respondents. All in all, the recent surveys data illustrates the high religiosity level and the importance of religion and traditional values among society in Georgia. As a consequence, the high levels of society trust in religious institution influence the establishment of religion in the public discourse.

4.2.2 Patriarch's Popularity among Georgian Society

Religion is playing an important role in the Georgian society. As it was discussed above, the majority of population in Georgia identifies themselves belonging to GOC. Furthermore, the identity is build upon religion, what makes Georgian Orthodoxy, very important for its citizens. This fact already gives specific power for religious institution of Georgian Orthodox Church among the society in Georgia. Also, the most influential person in Georgia is the Patriarch Ilia II who has been the head of Georgian Orthodox Church from the 1977.

Thus religion in Georgia is playing significant role from individual level to the public level within the society. Patriarch Ilia II is active and visible personality in Georgia as he publicly speaks not only during religious sermons but often comments on different social as well as political ongoing events. Patriarch Ilia II often publicly speaks in regards to the state matters by addressing the government as well as society. Moreover, the Patriarch uses his authority among Georgians and usually speaks in the name of all Georgians by representing the people of

¹⁰² Ibid.,67

¹⁰³ International Republican Institute, Public Opinion Survey, Residents of Georgia, February 3 -28, 2015, http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/iri_georgia_public_2015_final_0.pdf (Accessed 2015-05-02)

Georgia. Or also as a defender of Georgians by stressing what is good and bad, how one should behave. Thus one of the GOC reasons of being so powerful and influential is the high authority of the Church's leader, Patriarch Ilia II, who is the most trusted man in Georgia.¹⁰⁴ "The patriarch is seen by many as a respected source of stability. According to a 2008 poll published by the Tbilisi-based International Centre on Conflicts and Negotiation, 94.2 percent of [Georgians](#) surveyed ranked Ilia II the most trusted man in the country.¹⁰⁵ Interestingly, Patriarch Ilia II used his power on the question of how to rise demography in the country.¹⁰⁶ In December of 2007, the Patriarch announced he would personally baptize newborns in an effort to battle Georgia's declining birthrate. Official statistics show that in 2008, Georgia had its highest number of births in nine years. Ilia II claims partial credit for the surge in births.¹⁰⁷ Thus the society showed the importance and trust for the Church's religious authority.

As Alexander Rondeli, a political analyst with the Georgian Foundation for Strategic Studies comments such active role of the religious leader Patriarch Ilia II: "It is tradition that the church has to moderate. The church has to calm down everything," said. "He [Ilia II] is playing this role quite well." The Patriarch openly declares its significance over the Georgian society: Ilia II says his greatest accomplishment has been to help unify Georgia after the collapse of the Soviet Union.¹⁰⁸ Therefore Ilia II is not only a national symbol. He is a leader whose interests extend far beyond faith and politics.

Also, as international media notes, the Patriarch's influence on Georgian society is very high. The Church and its leader Patriarch Ilia II plays a significant role as the mediator between the state and the society. Therefore, in general, the Church is one of the most important institutions in the country as it has influential role on both – the state and the society. However, the state of Georgia has further to develop its mechanisms in order to strengthen its position and keep up to the democratic state principles.

¹⁰⁴ Ivan Watson, Patriarch Ilia: 'II most trusted man in Georgia', April 26, 2010, CNN <http://edition.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/europe/04/23/georgia.powerful.patriarch.ilia/> (Accessed 2015-05-06)

¹⁰⁵ Watson, Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Tom Esslemont, 'Church leader sparks Georgian baby boom', March 26, 2009, BBC News, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7964302.stm>

¹⁰⁷ Watson, Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Watson, Ibid.

4.2.3 Human Rights Issues

The Church builds its influence in the most spheres of social life in Georgia. The attack on the peaceful demonstration on the Day of Homophobia, May 17th, 2014, in which the clergymen also participated, is one of the examples of the Church's influential power within the society of Georgia. Also it shows the Church's attitudes and the position towards human rights issues. The position of religious leaders and the Church towards the protection of human rights is mostly ambivalent. Quite often, radical statements made by Church representatives become the source of social tension. The general public called for the Church to be more critical and active in protecting human rights and condemning homophobia and religious radicalism even in clerics.¹⁰⁹ The Church officially declared its positions on the issue for the anti-discrimination law. The Georgian Church mobilized society and also gave GOC's perception towards human rights. The May 17 events demonstrate the Georgian Orthodox Church's emergence as a cogent political force capable of en mass mobilization. On the same day, Patriarch Ilia II issued a statement expressing regret for the violence and acknowledging that some clergy behaved "impolitely" in confronting demonstrators. He added, however, that the ideas of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) activists "are completely unacceptable in Georgia."¹¹⁰

4.2.4 Education

Besides the issue on human rights matter, the Church also has an influence on education in Georgia.¹¹¹ As the report says the Orthodoxy has been included at school's curricula for all pupils despite their religion. This also raises the issue of the violence and discrimination against the other religions. Children of the other religions are not tolerated at schools unless they attend the Orthodoxy classes. Thus the religion's importance reflects its significant role in the public education.¹¹² It is noteworthy that teaching of religion in educational institutions is regulated by the state and the church's Constitutional agreement.

¹⁰⁹ Sophie Zviadadze, "Georgian Orthodox Church and Human Rights: Challenges to Georgian Society", in "Religion and Human Rights: International Perspective" by Hans-Georg Ziebertz, Gordan Crpic (ed.), Springer International Publishing, Switzerland, 2015, 51

¹¹⁰ Ariela Shapiro, "Ivanishvili and The Georgian Orthodox Church: An Alliance Starting to Sour?", The Central Asia –Caucasus Analyst, 30 May, 2013, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12743-ivanishvili-and-the-georgian-orthodox-church-an-alliance-starting-to-sour?.html> (Accessed 2015-05-10)

¹¹¹ 'Georgia: Orthodoxy in Schools', March 10, 2007, <http://en.a1plus.am/5615.html> (Accessed 2015-04-15)

¹¹² Natalia Antelava, 'Georgia: Orthodoxy in the classroom', May 7, 2015, BBC News, Georgia, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-32595514> (Accessed 2015-05-05)

Moreover, Patriarch Ilia II called on parents on October 3, 2010, to avoid educating their children abroad. "So we should refrain very much from sending young people, especially children, abroad. This practice in most cases will harm the child," the head of the Georgian Church declared.¹¹³ Ilia II, the Georgian Orthodox Patriarch, has warned Georgians that placing their children in foreign schools would harm them morally.¹¹⁴ Moreover, religious symbols, icons are usually displayed in the schools. The "collective prayers, preaching and indoctrination in public schools have been on the rise," says Eka Chitnava from Georgia's Tolerance and Diversity Institute, which recently conducted a survey of 33 religious minorities. All said their children are facing pressure at school, especially Muslims and Jehovah's Witnesses. Moreover, the priests are coming to the schools and teaching despite the religious difference of the pupils. Radical elements in the Patriarchate were allegedly behind the violent group called the Union of Orthodox Christian Parents that orchestrated fistfights and other unlawful actions against minority groups in 2010 and 2012.¹¹⁵ After the parliament of Georgia passed an amendment allowing religious minority groups to be registered as legal entities under public law, radical priests helped organize protest rallies demanding the immediate annulment of the bill. The Church and political parties known for their pro-Russian orientation harshly condemned the new regulation, which was hailed by influential international human rights organizations and Georgia's Western partners as an important democratic achievement.¹¹⁶

Thus the Orthodox Parent's Union (OPU) organization is a good example of how the Church mobilizes society in the public education sector. OPU is the influential organization, an umbrella group of parents and priests which stands for the religious traditions in the schools. Seems the OPU is against any changes as it protested, for example, against Harry Potter, Halloween

¹¹³ Ilia Zviadauri, "The Georgian Orthodox Church: Some Aspects of its Rhetoric and Practice", Eurasia Daily Monitor, Volume 10, Issue 70, April 15 2013, (Accessed 2015-05-10) [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=40733#.VVXd3vDLOHu](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=40733#.VVXd3vDLOHu); Patriarch: 'Refrain from Sending Kids Abroad for Education', October 3, 2010, <http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22722>

¹¹⁴ Andrew Roth, Olesya Vartanyan, 'Slow Response by Georgians to Mob Attack on Gay rally', May 19, 2013 http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/20/world/europe/georgian-officials-react-slowly-to-anti-gay-attack.html?_r=1

¹¹⁵ Zviadauri, Ibid.; 'March of Gay Activists Ends in Scuffle in Downtown Tbilisi, 17 May 2012, <http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=24775> (Accessed 2015-05-10)

¹¹⁶ Zviadauri, Ibid.; 'Thousands Protest Law on Religious Minorities Legal Status', July 10, 2011, <http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=23728> (Accessed 2015-05-10)

celebrations and lobbied against education reform.¹¹⁷ Moreover, the OPU is also sending the direct message to the state, thus is a tool of the Church's influence on the state matters.

4.2.5 Religious Minorities

The issue of religious minorities' rights has to be underlined separately because the status of religious minorities' rights in Georgia is very complicated. Violence against the freedom of other faiths is very common in Georgia and it remains popular issue in the public discourse. The protection of religious freedom and the integration of religious and ethnic minorities became one of the main concerns in the sphere of human rights for the new government of Georgia. The issue is a widely discussed topic and it would require a separate in-depth research. Since the thesis is not focused on the precise topic of religious minorities, in this section the short overview of the situation and the main examples of the events is drawn in order to get better understanding of the issue.

Regarding Muslim minorities in Georgia there can be mentioned some cases where the rights have been violated and the GOC's influence on society's opinion is visible. For example, the society's attitude towards Muslim minorities reflects in the recent events of the protests against Islamic religious school (Madrassa) opening in the village of Kobuleti where the Muslim community is settled.¹¹⁸ The event caused the deep insult of the Muslim community in the village when the slaughtered pig's head was nailed on the Muslim school's door. Moreover, the other event against Muslim community can be noted. In August 2013 the restored minaret of the mosque in the village of Chela was dismantled by the local Georgian authorities.¹¹⁹ After the Georgian authorities decision to dismantle a mosque minaret, the incident in Chela village provoked tensions between the Christians and Muslims.¹²⁰ After the discussions and the minaret

¹¹⁷ Natalia Antelava, 'Georgia: Orthodoxy in the classroom', May 7, 2015, BBC News, Georgia, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-32595514> (Accessed 2015-05-05)

¹¹⁸ 'Pig's Head Nailed to Planned Muslim School in Kobuleti', September 10, 2014, <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=27654> (Accessed 2015-05-03)

¹¹⁹ 'Authorities Remove Minaret Forcibly, Sparking Muslim Community's Protest', August 26, 2013, <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=26386> (Accessed 2015-05-03)

¹²⁰ Giorgi Menabde, 'Events in Ajara May provoke Tensions Between Georgia and Turkey', Eurasian Daily Monitor, Vol. 10, Issue 76, September 5, 2013, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews\[tt_news\]=41320&no_cache=1#.VVzJLFLLOHs](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=41320&no_cache=1#.VVzJLFLLOHs) (Accessed 2015-05-

of the mosque was put back up.¹²¹ In addition to this, there are disputes between the religious communities in Georgia about the religious buildings. As the Report of the Conference on the freedom and belief in the region reports: “Another pending issue is the property restitution of disputed properties between the Georgian Orthodox Church and other denominations, confiscated during the Soviet period and never returned to their original owner. While the property rights of the Orthodox Church have mostly been restored, minority denominations are still experiencing problems in this regard. Though the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Roman Catholic Church, Judaism and synagogues, and Islam with mosques, have coexisted with Georgian Orthodoxy for centuries, the main concerns refer to the property related disputes.”¹²² Furthermore, according to the Georgian Public Defender’s Office Report (2014) “the issue of ownership of the disputed religious buildings still remained problematic. Full intensity of the problem demonstrated itself in the village of Mokhe in the Adigeni Municipality, where the Adigeni Municipality took the decision to dismantle the mosque without involvement of the local Muslim community, which was followed by the protests of the population.”¹²³

The dispute between the Georgian government and the GOC about the reconstruction of the mosque in Batumi is another example of active Georgian Orthodox Church’s role in the state matters. The GOC and its leaders protested against the agreement between the Georgian government’s decision with the Turkish authorities about the Mosque’s restoration in the city of Batumi in Georgia.¹²⁴ The Patriarch of Georgia referred that the state violated the Constitutional Agreement between the Georgia and the Georgian Orthodox Church. As Sophie Zviadadze comments, “In this case, the wave of protests stemmed out from the efforts of the Georgian Orthodox Church to be included in the decision making process related to such issues on the one hand, and echoed the religious-nationalist-radical tendencies gaining momentum in the broader

10); ‘Minaret Conflict in Chela still unresolved, Democracy and Freedom Watch, Georgia, November 12, 2013, <http://dfwatch.net/minaret-conflict-in-chela-georgia-still-unresolved-23762-24029> (Accessed 2015-05-03)

¹²¹ ‘Minaret Re-Erected in Chela’, November 28, 2013, <http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=26732> (Accessed 2015-05-03)

¹²² “Freedom of Religion in Georgia and Armenia”, Conference Report, 2013, http://www.ecmcaucasus.org/upload/reports/FoRB_conf_Report.pdf , 7

¹²³ Human Rights and Freedoms in Georgia, Public Defender of Georgia, Report 2014, <http://www.ombudsman.ge/en/reports/specialuri-angarishebi/human-rights-and-freedoms-in-georgia-2014.page> , 7

¹²⁴Salome Achba, ‘Dispute about Aziziye Mosque <http://religiebi.info/index.php?a=main&pid=58&lang=eng> (Accessed 2015-05-03)

Georgian public, on the other.”¹²⁵ Moreover, the Muslims in Batumi do not have where to pray therefore the permission to build a new mosque’s was asked by the local Muslim community.¹²⁶ However, the request was met with a lot of negative opinions from the local Georgians and the clergymen.¹²⁷ Therefore the question of the new mosque’s building in Batumi is still uncertain.¹²⁸

Assessing the given examples it can be argued that the Church’s stance about the religious minorities’ rights encourages violence and hatred in Georgian society. Moreover, as looking at the events and religious minority rights violations, the government does not apply or either does not have the right mechanisms to protect religious minorities. Thus GOC is has a monopoly of power in Georgia which has the force of mobilizing masses. One of the simple examples of Georgian Church’s importance being a part of the social realm and shaping the opinion of the society is the interviewed mother who said she was proud to help a local priest organize a demonstration against a local Jehovah's Witness community's plans for a temple. The Georgian Church tops a list of societal and national institutions that are most trusted by the public.¹²⁹ As Sophie Zviadadze notes, religious pluralism is the biggest challenge to the Georgian Orthodox Church in the modern world.¹³⁰ It can also be perceived as a threat to the national identity.

4.2.6 GOC’s relations with Russia

Also, the GOC position is close to the Russian Orthodox Church’s position. It is being discussed that Moscow might be using the church to spread the same anti-Western message in Georgia. However, The Georgian Orthodox Church denies being an instrument of Russia, saying the links

¹²⁵ Sophie Zviadadze, *Georgian Orthodox Church and Human Rights: Challenges to Georgian Society*, in “Religion and Human Rights: International Perspective” by Hans-Georg Ziebertz, Gordan Crpic (ed.), Springer International Publishing, Switzerland, 2015, 54

¹²⁶ Mari Nikuradze, “Muslims in Batumi hoping for permission to build new mosque”, April 28, 2014, Democracy and Freedom Watch, Georgia, <http://dfwatch.net/muslims-in-batumi-hoping-for-permission-to-build-new-mosque-27691-28241> (Accessed 2015-05-03)

¹²⁷ “Batumi Residents Promise to destroy the mosque with bulldozers”, January 30, 2012, Democracy and Freedom Watch, Georgia <http://www.georgiatimes.info/en/news/71264.html> (Accessed 2015-05-03)

¹²⁸ Mari Nikuradze, “Uncertainty about plans for new mosque in Batumi”, October 24, 2013, Democracy and Freedom Watch, Georgia <http://dfwatch.net/uncertainty-about-plans-for-new-mosque-in-batumi-53912-23512> (Accessed 2015-05-03)

¹²⁹ Zviadauri, Ibid.

¹³⁰ Zviadadze, Ibid.,51

are historical. The links with Russia is one of the biggest threats to the country of Georgia. And the Church can be seen as not only as religious player with religious peace message, but as political player that support national claims.¹³¹

As it is seen GOC is concerned not only about religious matters but also actively engages into the state matters. The Church leader speaks not only about the social and religious issues during his sermons and speeches, but Patriarch Ilia II periodically veers from spiritual advice to outspoken commentary about political events. Addressing thousands of worshippers at a Sunday service last month, Ilia II denounced a hoax news report on Georgian TV about a fake Russian military invasion. He called the controversial program, which spread panic throughout the population, a "crime against humanity." After Georgia lost a brief-but-bloody 2008 war with Russia, Ilia II was the highest ranking Georgian dignitary to meet face-to-face with Russian president Dmitry Medvedev in Moscow. In March 2008, Ilia II helped negotiate an end to a hunger strike led by opposition parties against the Georgian government.¹³²

4.2.7 Summary

The second part of analysis aimed to analyze the church's role in the society. The analysis shows that the GOC is an influential institution among Georgian society and is a part of social realm in Georgia. Since most of Georgian society trusts religious institution, the Patriarch's opinion is one of the most important and influences the society's views towards particular issue. Thus Georgian society follows religious leader's position as its identity is built upon religion. Therefore Georgian Orthodox Church has a huge power of shaping the opinion of the Georgian society and is able to mobilize the society in regards to the state issues. It is true, that religion can enforce democratic values such as tolerance, human rights or encourage less violence or hatred in the society. However, as for Georgia's case, the example of mobilizing the masses against peaceful demonstration for the Day of Homophobia on May 17th, 2013, leaves a lot of doubts that GOC at

¹³¹ Innes-Jacqueline Werkner, "Religion and its Importance in International Politics: A Case Study of 2008 Russian – Georgian War", *Caucasian Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 4 (3), Summer 2010, http://www.cria-online.org/12_3.html

¹³² Ivan Watson, Patriarch Illia: 'II most trusted man in Georgia', April 26, 2010, CNN, <http://edition.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/europe/04/23/georgia.powerful.patriarch.ilia/> (Accessed 2015-05-06)

least at present can be a positive force for democracy in Georgia. GOC is a powerful institution which encourages its traditional values in the country. Moreover, according to analyzed data, the Church stance about the religious minorities encourages violence and hatred in Georgian society. Therefore the GOC is a powerful institution in Georgia which has the force of mobilizing masses and it can use it against the state.

Analyzed examples also illustrates that GOC is trying to engage in different public spheres in Georgia. It can be argued that the GOC has the power of monopoly and is able to create the opinion of the society. Therefore the Georgian case is a good example of how religion becomes public religion as it is discussed by Jose Casanova.

Moreover, it supposes the fact that the Georgian Orthodox Church's ideology is anti-modern where sacred and secular in Georgia has no distinction and its objective is to prevent open society building.¹³³ The fact that religion and ethnic identity are closely intertwined has bolstered loyalty towards the Church, which has accumulated a substantial symbolic capital: the Georgian Patriarch, the Orthodox clergy, religious and national traditions are highly respected by a considerable number of Georgian citizens nowadays.¹³⁴ One of the reasons is the high confidence of the society in the Church's authority the Patriarch Ilia II. Thus the analyzed events and processes is a good illustration that the GOC is a part of formulating society's opinion in Georgia. Therefore it makes the GOC powerful and influential institution in the country.

¹³³ Zviadauri, Ibid.

¹³⁴ Zviadadze, Ibid., 50

Conclusion

The thesis examined two different ways of how the church and the state can interact. First of all the research discussed the actual practice of religious institution in relations to the state. The first part provides with the answer whether the Georgian Orthodox Church (GOC) plays a direct institutionalized role in the state matters. The case of Georgia showed that the GOC is an active religious institution and seeks influence in the political matters of the state. Due to the GOC's conservative policy and its loyalty to the traditional values it becomes hard for the GOC and religious leaders to accept the country's modernization and democratization processes. The ongoing tendencies of the church - state relations are rather linked to the disagreements between the two entities. At the same time the relationship between the state and the church creates tensions in the society.

The first part of the analysis illustrates recent events and processes in Georgia that lead to the disputes between the State and the Church. The confrontation between the two entities occurs mainly in the issues where the GOC's traditional values clashes with the state's democratization policy.

The other dimension of how the Church and the state interact was analyzed from religion's role in relation to the social sphere in Georgia. Since the goal of the thesis was to examine the relationship between the two entities in connection to democracy, the second part of the analysis discussed the question of how the Georgian Orthodox Church is perceived within the Georgian society and what is society's opinion towards the role of religious institution. First of all, the analysis shows that religion plays an important role for the Georgian society since the identity is build upon religion in Georgia. Moreover, the tendency of religious upheaval can be traced in contemporary Georgia. As it is discussed in the analysis, today's Georgia is a country with a high level of religiosity where around 90% of population belongs to the Georgian Orthodox faith. The rising role of religion is taking the characteristics of *public religion* concept and religion is becoming a part of public discourse in Georgia. The GOC is aware of its popularity and ability to influence public opinion. The positive role of the GOC in Georgia can be seen from its ability to act as a mediator between the state and society in order to calm down political tensions.

However, closely interlinked relations between the church and the state create controversy among the two institutions in Georgia.

The research analysis identifies the active role of the Church in political as well as social life of the country. According to the second part of analysis, the other reason of the GOC's influential role in the society, besides the high level of religiousness, is the popularity of religious authority Patriarch Ilia II. Moreover, the increased influence of the Church is seen in different spheres of public life. These facts illustrate that the Church has an influential power to mobilize the society. Thus the GOC is an important part of the social realm in Georgia.

The Church in Georgia also acts as a mediator between the state and the society. However, the analyzed events and processes show that the Church's position towards pro-Western state's policy is rather negative. Therefore the examined case of Georgia gives the answer to the problem of the thesis - whether religion can reinforce democracy in today's Georgia. According to the theoretical premises used in the thesis, religion and secular in today's world has acquired new meanings and religion can be a positive force for the democratic processes in the country. However, the chosen case of Georgia shows that although Church is influential institution within the state as well as society, it does not play a positive role towards democratization of the country and cannot reinforce democracy in the country. Mostly because of the GOC's conservative position which clashes with the more liberal policy of the state.

In addition to this, the society is rather linked to acquire Georgian Orthodox Church's traditional attitude since the GOC is the most trusted institution in the country. However, due to the government's pro-Western policy there are positive developments towards democratization in the country, such as increased public awareness in human rights issues. Although the positive developments the Georgian Orthodox Church remains the most trusted institution in the country. Moreover, the Church's loyalty to the state decreased due to the government's secular policy. The fact creates the conflict between the two entities. At the same time the state tries to keep the good relations with the Church and its authorities by creating the space for religious institution and its authorities to have a direct say in matters of the state. Therefore religion remains a source of legitimacy for Georgian politicians.

The analysis part also shows that besides the fact that the developing countries experience political transformation, the religious transformation in the country is also necessary as democratization requires the changes in the political system as well as it means a different set of values. However, the clash between the traditional and modern values is still visible in today's Georgia. Although democratic values gain more importance in the society of Georgia, the Church's influence remains. Moreover, if the Church's influence in Georgia would lead to the greater support for the democracy in the country, the country's case can be assumed as a challenge for the secularization theories. Also, it would be supportive to Francis Fukuyama's ideas that one of the democratic society's elements is religion. However, for now Georgia contradicts Francis Fukuyama's theory as he says that democratic institutions have to promote pluralism, security and enforce tolerance in the countries. Today's Georgia has problems with human rights, especially within equality issues and religious minorities. Thus the democratic principle of freedom and pluralism in the society is being weakened by the active role and influence of the GOC. Also, it is noteworthy that the Georgian Orthodox Church's active position in the matters of the state creates close relationship between the state and the church. However, according to the democratic principle the two institutions should act independently from each other and focus on their specific areas as not to contradict the principle of the secular state. The specific case of Georgia illustrates an example where the two entities are strongly interlinked with each other. The close relationship challenges both institutions and discourages the further processes of political as well as social developments in the country.

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