

Summary of doctoral thesis

Marcin Olejnik, M.A –

„Political culture in Georgia during the rule of Mikheil Saakashvili (2004 – 2013)“

Political events in the area of the former USSR focus the attention of Polish, European and world researchers. The collapse of this country, Poland's neighbor, which occurred in 1991 resulted in a number of significant changes of geostrategic, but also regional importance. The analysis of events leads to a broad and multi-disciplinary treatment and development of research on this issue. The collapse of the largest country in the world, one of the superpowers dominating the world arena in the 20th century, was the basis for the development of scientific reflection mainly in the field of history, political science and cultural studies.

The discussed doctoral thesis was devoted to a selected period in the recent history of Georgia, one of the former union republics of the USSR, which was part of this country until 1991.

The doctoral thesis consists of an Introduction, an Introduction to the topic of the doctoral thesis and six chapters.

The first chapter is titled „The political situation in Georgia after regaining independence in 1991“. In this chapter, the author explains the political situation in decline of the USSR, focusing on the democratization and independence processed in the then Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Republic of Georgia. It discusses the role of few opposition leaders, but with a great influence on the independence activities undertaken by society, such as Merab Kostava, Zviad Gamsakhurdia and Irakli Tsereteli. This chapter also includes research results on the formation of the Georgian political scene in the early 1990s.

The second chapter is titled „The Rose Revolution as a Catalyst of Political Processes“ and describes the actions that led to the so-called „Rose Revolution“ in November 2003, one of several „color revolutions“ that took place, among others, in the post-Soviet area, in the first decade of the 21st century.

Political dispute between the then president of Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze (formerly Minister of Foreign Affairs of the USSR), and the opposition leader Mikheil Saakashvili, led to questioning the legality of the results of the next presidential elections, the removal of Shevardnadze from power and the holding of early elections in January 2004, as a result of which Saakashvili became the next, third president of Georgia. This chapter also shows the mechanisms of geopolitics, focusing on the desire of the superpowers, especially the USA, to pursue their interests in the area of the former USSR, including Georgia.

The next, third chapter titled „Characteristics of the presidency of Mikheil Saakashvili „, focuses on his biography and role in politics in the post-Soviet area (in Georgia and Ukraine) as well as the moral, character, program and political characteristics of the leader of the United National Movement, the party of which he was the initiator and leader. In this chapter, the author of the work also analyzes individual stages of two terms of office, i.e. 2004-2007 and 2008-2013, and the main achievements and failures of Mikheil Saakashvili as president.

The fourth chapter, the most extensive in the entire of the doctoral thesis, titled „Forms of political culture after 2003“, mainly contains the author's answers to the research theses set out in the introduction. The chapter contains the following subchapters: State-building myths, Name of the state, Proximity to the Holy Land and the traditional of Byzantium, Political symbols (national flag and emblem, national anthem), State reforms during the rule of Mikheil Saakashvili, The stage of the political theater of Georgia, Political culture of researchers, i.e. history in the service of politics, Customs, rituals, rituals of power and society, Architecture in the service of Georgian power – „Misha's period“, Street art, Propaganda leaflets.

The fifth chapter is titled „Cultural and political changes after the parliamentary elections in 2012“. In this chapter, the author analyzes the situation arising after the change of power in Georgia as a result of the parliamentary elections that took place in October 2012. As a result of the elections, the previous party in

power – the United National Movement – lost its majority in parliament, and President Mikheil Saakashvili was forced to cooperate within the framework of cohabitation governments with a new entity on the political scene, the Georgian Dream party and its founder and leader Bidzina Ivanishvili.

In chapter six, „Presidential elections in Georgia in 2013 – the end of the post-Soviet era?”, the author discusses the consequences of the victory of the representative supported by a coalition of political groups Giorgi Margvelashvili’s Georgian Dream (fourth president) and the defeat of the candidate of the United National Movement, David Bakradze (created by the political environment of Mikheil Saakashvili’s supporters). This chapter also includes an analysis of the transformations that took place in Georgian society between 2003 and 2013, especially in development of new patterns of political culture.

It is worth noting that extremely important research material collected by the author were interviews conducted and recorded in Georgia in the years 2010 – 2024. The author conducted over 70 conversations with the most important participants in political and social life in this country. This group included, among others – Catholicos – Patriarch of All Georgia Ilya II, former president Eduard Shevardnadze, Konstantin Gamsakhurdia, son of the first president of Georgia – Zviad, Bidzina Ivanishvili, leader of the Georgian Dream party, Nino Burjanadze, former speaker of parliament, one of the leaders of the Rose Revolution, and Giorgi Margvelashvili, president of the country in 2013 – 2018. The record of the views, opinions and memories of direct participants of events in this country was an invaluable source, helpful in building one’s own interpretation of political culture in contemporary Georgia.

Additionally, the doctoral thesis contains a Summary, a Calendar and a list of the most important, in the author’s opinion, political and social events that took place in Georgia during the discussed period. An important component of the discussed doctoral thesis is the Bibliography, which contains over 140 items including books, articles, documents, accounts of event participants (oral history) and other source materials on which the author based his work.