



PROBLEMS OF USING GEORGIA'S GEOPOLITICAL LOCATION POTENTIAL IN REFLECTION THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

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ABSTRACT

The role of the geopolitical factor in the development of global economic processes has never been as great as it is today, so it should be considered not only as an economic process, but also as an active strategy used by states to act on a global scale.

In the conditions of the Russia-Ukraine war, which was manifested by the radical confrontation between Russia and the West with geopolitical ambitions, the issue of its own role and function in the global political and economic space, which is essentially determined by its geopolitical location, became relevant for our country. The aim of the paper is to analyze the aspects of the impact of the geopolitical factor on economic development, considering the generated reality, when the possibilities of using potentials of the geopolitical location of Georgia are increasing even more.

Keywords: Geopolitics, geostrategy, global economy, geopolitical location.

Introduction

February 24, 2022, is a date that changed not only the present and the future of Ukraine's development, but also became the basis for fundamental changes in global politics and economics. Today, the confrontation of civilizations was manifested by a radical change in the relations between Russia and the West, which has great political ambitions. The "restraint" policy chosen by the West during the 2008 Russia-Georgia war and the 2014 Russia-Ukraine war (in which both countries lost a significant part of their territory), somewhat intensified Russia's geopolitical ambitions and the desire to restore "lost" spheres of influence. As researchers in the field point out, the significance of the "Russia-Ukraine" war for the world lies in the fact that Russia rejects the system of international relations based on values, tries to rewrite the game, and restore a world where small states will be directly influenced subordinated to Moscow. Accordingly, the issue of its own role and function in the global political and economic space has become relevant for our country, which is essentially determined by its geopolitical location.

Main Text

Geopolitical location refers not only to the geographical environment, landscape and natural resources, but also comprises four main groups of components that make up the geopolitical completeness, namely, the actual geographical location, political structure and orientation, socio-economic parameters and national culture, mentality. Among these factors, the geographical location which plays a decisive role, has historically suited one or another country and, unlike other parameters, is the basis of a relatively unchanged economic and political heritage.

The geographical factor is the marker of the area where the history of the nation should pass. During the nation's history, this area often changes, but the borders of the nation's settlement or state are drawn one way or another by natural materials. Just these natural materials were the determiners of the political and economic development of Georgia for centuries. In his work "Borders of Georgia" Iv. Javakhishvili focuses on their importance and writes: "It is as if nature itself has created for the Georgian nation a huge sentinel with the main pass of the Caucasus in the north and the border of high mountains in the south, while its territory is surrounded by the Black Sea in the west, and a strip of rivers in the east. In this regard, Georgia is one of the most naturally fortified countries. Thanks to these conditions, during its long historical existence, the Georgian nation was able to repel many enemies, often much stronger than itself, and protect its nationality. (Iv. Javakhishvili 1919, pg.5). Among other conditions, relations, with neighboring states and those countries that were driven by different intentions towards our country or the Caucasus as a whole, were important. Historically, as the Georgian historian P. Surguladze notes: "It was our luck that around us lived such people who were very attracted by warfare and invading." [P. Surguladze 1989, pg.125]. 415. Therefore, the periods of political instability were the most frequent in the history of Georgia, and their reason was the geopolitical location.

This applies not only to Georgia, but to the entire Caucasus region, which is distinguished by a heavy historical legacy, which, according to politicians, is a historical feature for the Caucasus. This region, as one of the "delicious morsels" of the planet, has become a hostage of its geopolitical location. "East-West-North-South roads, a crossroads of trade and, most importantly, military interests, a strategic stronghold in the never-ending and not-so-peaceful conflict of the surrounding powerful states; This is where the spring of inhibition and therefore resistance of all historical consequences is laid" [Katsitadze K., 2001, pg. 163]. This is how politicians explain Caucasian peculiarity. Indeed, during many centuries of history, the countries of this region, including Georgia, rarely determined their geopolitical orientation voluntarily. This often happened due to the circumstances, because the historical and geographical fate was created by the neighborhood with the big states. As it is known, a powerful state tries to dominate over everything around it, the most familiar form of this domination is the gaining sphere of influence. The sphere of influence in the region was often the subject of fighting between neighboring big states, which essentially limited the independence and positions of small states in the international arena. At the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, a choice was made... The period of Georgia's existence in the geopolitical space of Russia spans more than two centuries. It is true that in this period, Georgia managed to preserve its language, culture, faith, but lost its statehood. Being in this space, Georgia was isolated from the rest of the world as a state and political entity. In the 90s of the last centuries, big geopolitical changes began in the world, the main result of which was the end of the bipolar structure of international relations.

It became the crucial point for establishing of new sovereign states in Eastern Europe and the post- Soviet space. These geopolitical changes became the basis for the national independence of Georgia as well as Ukraine in 1991. But again, the clash of geopolitical or geostrategic interests of other states became the cause of political instability in the region. Of course, Georgia was not an exception: Territorial conflicts in Samachablo and Abkhazia, the 2008 Russia-Georgia war, the 2014 Russia-Ukraine war and the annexation of Crimea, and finally the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war for the restoration of the country's territorial integrity are proof of this. Nevertheless, at the turn of the XX-XXI centuries, the geopolitical location of Georgia presents itself as an important resource potential, which was manifested by obtaining the role of a transport corridor connecting European and Asian countries. The West saw that the geographical location, relief, landscape of Georgia has good potential to be developed a transmodal communication network [Kharbedia L., 2002., p. 45]. Land, sea and air highways via Georgia are quite convenient routes for connecting Europe and Asia. In terms of transit, from the point of view of stability, quite good relations with close neighbors, especially Azerbaijan and Turkey, as well as active cooperation with the Black Sea Commonwealth and Central Asian states, which are interested in the functioning of the Eurasian transport corridor are considered an important factor. Therefore, Georgia's independence and obtaining strategic

function is related to its geopolitical location, which has been a connecting point of European and Asian centuries. Here we should consider not only trade routes, but also bringing European and Asian cultures close to each other, which was facilitated by the operation of the Great Silk Road. It is known that due to cataclysms and harsh circumstances, the Great Silk Road ceased existence for hundreds of years, which caused political instability not only for Georgia, but for the entire Caucasus region. Continuous conflicts between the Ottoman Empire, the Russian Empire and Iran with each other and with European states resulted in gradual decline of the international economic function of the Silk Road. Great geographical discoveries of the XV-XVII centuries opened new interests and concerns for Europeans, and the Great Silk Road was finally forgotten. In such conditions, Georgia was completely neglected by the European world and became the battlefield among the three great empires, which determined its fate and at the turn of the 18th-19th centuries it became a political entity subordinate to Russia. Since Russia's interest in obtaining Caspian (Baku) oil and access to the Black Sea was great, important measures were taken in this direction in Georgia. In the 50s of the 19th centuries, for the first time, building a harbor in the Rion river delta became the concern of the time - in 1858, Poti was declared a harbor city and the construction of the harbor began. In 1901 with the initiative and direct participation of N. Nikoladze, the fundamental reconstruction of the breakwater started, the new northern entrance was opened in 1905. The port of Poti gained commercial importance in the second half of the 19th century. In 1918-1921, Transcaucasia states, including Georgia, because of gaining independence, began to care for the restoration of the international function. Certain conditions for this were created after Great Britain temporarily took Baku oil under its protectorate, and Germany - the port of Batumi and the transit highway of Georgia, which indicates that the interest of the West in this region was quite big. But these countries could not gain an international function for the simple reason that they were again occupied by a big state - they became a constituent part of the USSR and were cut off from world economic development for 70 years. As we can see, historically, this region has always been a transit bridge between Europe and Asia. Certain historical realities, incessant wars, confrontation between the West and the East led to the regression of its economic function, but the Caucasus always maintained its political and economic potential in the form of a calculating energy. The regions of this country have always been waiting for the return of their international, strategic function, and this time has come. Almost three centuries later, at the end of the 20th century, both the West and the East remembered the Great Silk Road again, which connected the two civilizations, their values and economic interests for centuries. The idea of restoring the Great Silk Road was reflected in the projects of the century. The European Union considered the Eurasian continental transport corridor as one of the means for integration of the post-Soviet countries into the world economy. Back in 1991, at the initiative of the European Union the TACIS (Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States) program was developed, which aimed providing technical assistance for the reconstruction of highways and creating of new transport infrastructure, of the Commonwealth of Independent State. And in May 1993, at the Brussels conference, the foundations of TRACECA (Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia) were laid, the declaration was signed by the representatives of the EU member states, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Later Ukraine, Moldova and Mongolia joined it. The main goal of the project is development of trade-economic and transport cooperation between the Mediterranean Sea-Black Sea-Caspian Sea regions and forming common geo-economic space. The most important component of TRACECA is the Caucasus Trade-Transit Road, which is the key section of this corridor. It is a region with the greatest economic function and is a transit bridge between Europe and Asia in both the West-East and North-South directions, Georgia, which has direct access to the Black Sea is the gate of the transit bridge of the Caucasus. In such conditions, the Ports of Poti and Batumi gain special importance, the increase of trade between Europe and Central Asia and the further expansion and development greatly depend on their capacity and volume of turnover of these ports. The main result of the project is that the Caucasus countries became more attractive for foreign investors, and the investments made in this area so

far contributed to the increase of business activities in the main areas of economy, which was reflected in the level of the country's overall economic development. At the beginning of the current century, it became possible to turn the geopolitical location for the good of our country. Georgia got in the sphere of global strategic interest, which provided it with an international economic function. This function is related to the participation in the "projects of the century", which makes Georgia's transit function real. It is of fundamental importance to bring the three Transcaucasia countries closer together and to activate the economic potential of the region, which has not been possible so far only because of political reasons.

Special attention should be paid to the implementation of the unified communication system of the Caucasus. Today, when transport and communications are recognized as priority sectors, we must consider the prospects our country has in forming the communications infrastructure, first and the most, making Georgia the main actor in this transport corridor.

CONCLUSION

Due to its unique geopolitical location, Georgia has always been a junction place of two cultures, two civilizations – European and Asian – and this is what determined and still determines the peculiarities of its political and economic development.

It should be noted that during centuries the political instability of Georgia and the entire Caucasus region was due to their geopolitical location. Only at the turn of XX-XXI centuries, it became possible to turn the geopolitical location in favor of our country. Georgia entered the global strategic sphere of interest, which granted Georgia with an international economic function. This function is related to participation in the "projects of the century". Participation in these projects became the basis of its integration into the world economy and one of the main directions of its development. Due to the present of modern events, the importance of the Caspian energy resources for Western countries is growing even more, therefore Georgia is becoming a key link and an important player in the continental transport corridor connecting Europe and Asia. Opportunities, of using the potential of Georgia's geopolitical location, are increasing.

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საქართველოს გეოპოლიტიკური მდებარეობის რესურსული პოტენციალის გამოყენების პრობლემები რუსეთ-უკრაინის ომის გათვალისწინებით

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რეზიუმე

გლობალური ეკონომიკური პროცესების განვითარებაში გეოპოლიტიკური ფაქტორის როლი ისე დიდი არასოდეს ყოფილა, როგორც დღეს, ამიტომ იგი უნდა განვიხილოთ არა მხოლოდ ეკონომიკური პროცესების უბრალო განყენებულ დადასტურებად, არამედ აქტიურ სტრატეგიად, რომელსაც სახელმწიფოები იყენებენ გლობალური მასშტაბით მოქმედების სახელმძღვანელოდ. რუსეთ-უკრაინის ომის პირობებში, რაც გეოპოლიტიკური ამბიციების მქონე რუსეთისა და დასავლეთის რადიკალური დაპირისპირებით გამოიხატა, ჩვენი ქვეყნისთვის კვლავ აქტუალური გახდა საკითხი გლობალურ პოლიტიკურ და ეკონომიკურ სივრცეში საკუთარი როლისა და ფუნქციის შესახებ, რასაც არსებითად მისი გეოპოლიტიკური მდებარეობა განაპირობებს. ნაშრომის მიზანია ეკონომიკურ განვითარებაზე გეოპოლიტიკური ფაქტორის ზემოქმედების ასპექტების ანალიზი შექმნილი რეალობის გათვალისწინებით, როდესაც საქართველოს გეოპოლიტიკური მდებარეობის რესურსული პოტენციალის გამოყენების შესაძლებლობები კიდევ უფრო მეტად იზრდება.

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