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Article



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DEVELOPMENT OF THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION SYSTEM IN GEORGIA

Abstract: Despite Georgia's long historical journey, its public administration system lags behind those of more advanced countries. The public administration system of Georgia belongs to the so-called "Traditional Public Administration," which is based on Max Weber's ideal bureaucracy theory and was developed in the first half of the 20th century. However, by the end of the 20th century, the model of "New Public Administration" emerged, and in advanced countries, it is being further transformed into a system tentatively called "Public Value Management".

All abovementioned models work in the current world, and the choice of which one to use depends on a country, its development level, society's education and finally country's administrative system (in most cases it's bureaucracy) readiness and will to develop appropriate system. In this work the previous experience of the nation is important, as well as experience of the other nations, their best practices, international organizations' support, scientific research, and expert advice on the field of public administration.

The current article discusses some historical experiences of public administration development in Georgia, the factors that have hindered the development of Georgia's public administration system and explores the potential prospects for the country in this area, along with the issues that could contribute to its further development.

Key words: Public Administration System of Georgia, Bureaucracy, Public Society development.

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Introduction

The statehood of Georgia, of which state and public administration are important components, has traveled a long historical path. There have been both successes and failures along this journey, influenced by Georgia's conquerors. During its development, the public administration system of Georgia could not avoid all the harmful events that also affected other countries. However, in the end, a governance system based on the world's best practices and experience was established in Georgia. It can be said that there are few studies in Georgia dedicated to public administration, bureaucracy, and their impact on national security. Based on this, when discussing this issue, we will rely on in-depth interviews with high-ranking active and retired Georgian government officials and representatives of academic circles, as

well as the author's personal experience and conclusions.

We must begin discussing this issue by addressing the perception of bureaucracy that exists within broader segments of society. This perception serves as the cornerstone of the interaction between the public and the bureaucracy, determining public trust and support for the public administration system. Unfortunately, in the broader circles of society in Georgia, bureaucracy is perceived as the dead weight of the state apparatus, a completely useless and harmful phenomenon. The reason for this can be traced back to the history of Georgia's state administration system.

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Just as in ancient Iran¹ (Cook 1983) and Rome² (Homo 1966), nobles were appointed to lead governance in Georgia, performing the functions of key positions. Their subjects, like those in Persia and Rome, were specially selected individuals of merit (primarily military). This system existed from the 12th century BC and lasted until the end of the Roman Empire. During this time, the class of “nobles” was created, which would later become the predecessor of the nobility class. It was the nobles, and later the aristocracy, who would form the lower tier of the hierarchical system.³ (Muskhelishvili, Davit, Samsonadze, Mikheili, Daushvili, Aleksandre, 2012)

From the 5th century B.C., changes took place in Georgia that introduced a feudal system. During this period, the gentry class was strengthened in both military and non-military systems. The army was divided into services, with the nobles representing the elite of the military. In general, the role of the nobles in state affairs grew, and a seniority system was established. King Vakhtang Gorgasali played a significant role in this process. However, it should be noted that the development of the governance system was frequently hindered by enemy invasions. These invasions often led the conquerors to attempt to dismantle the existing governance system and impose a new one that would make ruling the conquered country easier for them. As a result, there was no unitary state in Georgia (except for the relatively brief period from King David Agmashenebeli to Queen Tamar), and the state’s interests were often sacrificed to the private interests of individual rulers.

The next stage, which greatly influenced the development of the public administration system in Georgia, was the period when Georgia was part of the Russian Empire. Unlike Finland, which had a special status and rights within the Russian Empire, including its own autonomous government system, Georgia operated under a public administration system common to the rest of the empire. On the one hand, the system in the Russian Empire, starting from Peter I, tried to imitate the systems functioning in Europe. On the other hand, issues such as bribery, nepotism, and bureaucratic obstacles hindered the development of the public administration system.⁴ (Иваненко 2019) Unfortunately, Georgia was no exception and mirrored all the flaws of the Russian system. This period ended with the declaration of the Democratic Republic of Georgia in 1918.

Despite the fact that the Democratic Republic of Georgia existed for only three years, significant

reforms were initiated in all spheres of state governance. A government was created, the position of governor was abolished, and local self-governments were established in districts, cities, and communities. Additionally, a structured regular army was formed. In designing the public administration system, the best Western models were employed, which, if fully implemented, had the potential for future success.⁵ (გურული, ვახტანგ 2003) It is likely due to this system that, despite numerous attempts by Russia and the Bolsheviks, Georgia was able to maintain its independence and internal peace, and Russia ultimately needed to resort to direct military aggression to conquer Georgia.

The next seventy years of Soviet rule were characterized by an inflexible, rigid, and highly bureaucratic public administration system, in the worst sense of the word. At various times, this system included centralized governance, party leadership, a command-and-control structure, party-controlled personnel policies, centralization of power, a planned economy, and the dictatorship of the proletariat. At different points, it also comprised emergency management bodies such as Revolutionary Committees (РевКом), the Emergency Commission (ЧК), and the United State Political Department (ОГПУ). Moreover, the bureaucratic system was a key part of the Soviet repressive apparatus. Toward the end of the Soviet period, the public administration system completely lost its effectiveness and practically relinquished the reins of governance. As with the governance system of the Russian Empire, bribery, nepotism, and a lack of bureaucratic oversight prevailed.

The newly independent Georgia inherited the Soviet system of public administration, as well as its bureaucracy. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the situation was catastrophic, as there was no system of appropriate guiding documents, a proper organizational structure, personnel training and retraining programs, or effective oversight of the bureaucratic apparatus. The situation was further exacerbated by the civil war and conflicts with Russia. However, despite these challenges, Georgia was able to establish its own national public administration system, including a new state bureaucracy, within a relatively short historical period.

As a reason for this success, we can cite three factors: assistance and support from Allies and Partner Nations and International Organizations, the change of generations of leaders in the public administration

¹ Cook, J. M. 1983. The Persian Empire. New York: Schocken Books.

² Homo, Leon. 1966. Romans Political Institutions, from City to State. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd.

³ Muskhelishvili, Davit, Samsonadze, Mikheili, Daushvili, Aleksandre, 2012, "History of Georgia, from ancient times to 2009", Tbilisi, Gumbati.

⁴ Иваненко, Игорь. 2019. „Государственное и местное управление в российской империи.“ Гуманитарные, Социально-Экономические и Общественные Науки.

⁵ გურული, ვახტანგ. 2003. საქართველოს ისტორია, XX საუკუნე. რედაქტირებული ვახტანგ გურული-ის მიერ. თბილისი: თბილისის უნივერსიტეტის გამომცემლობა, არტანუჯი.

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system, and the introduction of new technologies. International support is nothing than invaluable. It consisted of the training programs for leaders and key personnel overseas and a lot of different trainings and exercises for the personnel inside the country. In addition, great support, moral, technical, and financial, was provided during the reorganization and transformation of the system. This was accompanied by a shift in generations of the leadership of the public administration system, which led in the position of new leaders with a "clear" conscience, who were free from corruption. Finally, the introduction of new technologies has contributed to visibility and transparency, and significantly accelerating the processes⁶ (UNDP Report 2019).

Currently, Georgia developed a public administration system known as "traditional public administration," which is based on the Weberian ideal bureaucracy concept⁷ (Weber 1947). This system has both positive and negative aspects. The positives include a proper structural organization, strict control of employees and bureaucrats, and a system for the selection, training, and promotion of personnel. However, strict control of these employees and bureaucrats can be considered as a negative aspect, when it sometimes leads to micromanagement, which stifles initiative and reduces the system's flexibility. The effectiveness of the selection, training, and promotion system only positively impacts management when impartiality and equality toward all employees are ensured, which has not yet been fully realized in Georgia's current context. Additionally, society, still remembering the recent past, is not ready to grant greater freedom to the bureaucracy. Based on all the above, we can assert that the issues surrounding the existing bureaucratic model of public administration in Georgia will be resolved only through appropriate education and development of society.

However, signs of a transition to a new governance model have already emerged in Georgia. Early in the history of bureaucracy, the military system of government took the initiative. The implementation of the principle of "mission command" grants military commanders greater freedom while also increasing their responsibility for conducting assigned tasks⁸ (Army 2019). Of course, the officials and bureaucrats working within this new system of governance will have oversight; however, this oversight must differ from that used in the previous system. It is crucial that it does not devolve into micromanagement, which limits initiative and

undermines civil servants' willingness to take responsibility. Therefore, the system should primarily focus on controlling the results, then the processes that lead to those results, and only in particular cases, the specific activities of individual officials. Control should be conducted not to punish the official, but to analyze the situation and make corrections if necessary ". This approach will enhance officials' confidence in the system and encourage their broader involvement in governance processes. And when we speak about modern Ideal Bureaucracy we can agree with Dr. Michael Boomer how stated that it "is one that can innovate, reward success, recognize reasonable failure as a learning experience rather than a need to punish, explain its operation to the electorate, and responds to the politicians in a way that incorporates their policy decisions in the daily activities of government but informs them of poorly conceived policy in time to keep it from becoming poor law. Ethical without being self-absorbed, moral without being judgmental, an ideal bureaucracy would constantly re-invent itself to meet the needs of the population that it serves"⁹ (Boomer 2024).

For officials to be genuinely involved in management processes, their professional development is vitally necessary; this development should be systematic, consistent, purposeful, and of high quality. We are not stating anything new here. Max Weber articulated this principle, and it remains relevant today and will continue to be for a long time as long as there is a need for management.

All the above fosters public trust, which is the main driving force behind the development of any country. It is this public trust that builds support and encourages involvement in management processes.

In summary, the public justice system and the bureaucracy operating within it are crucial for the proper and efficient functioning of society. The model of public administration depends on the level of societal development and the demands that society places on the government. Well-organized and effectively functioning public administration and bureaucratic systems are the cornerstones of national security. Dr. George Topic expressed this well when he stated that "a successful bureaucracy that serves the public and individual citizens will have many positive effects on national security in the broadest sense. If people trust the bureaucracy to have their best interests at heart, they will be willing to make personal sacrifices, whether that means paying taxes or volunteering for military or other government service." It is important to note that bureaucracy is not

⁶ Challenges of the Bureaucratic System in Georgia, 2017,

⁷ Weber, M., The Theory of Social and Economic Organizations. Translated by A. M. Parsons and T. Parsons. New York: Free Press, 1947.

⁸ ADP 6-0 Mission Command: Command and Control of Army Forces, Headquarters Department of the Army, 2019, Washington,

D.C.,

https://armypubs.army.mil/epubs/DR_pubs/DR_a/ARN34403-ADP_6-0-000-WEB-3.pdf, Reviewed 31 December 2024

⁹ Michael Boomer, PhD, Colonel Canadian Army (Ret.), interview by Giorgi Kbiltsetskhilashvili. 2024. Bureaucracy and its Impact on Ensuring National Security (January 3).

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only a formal part of the national government; all aspects of public life, including commercial activities,

are also part of a collective system recognized as bureaucracy.¹⁰ (Topic 2024)

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¹⁰ Topic, George, PhD, Colonel US Army (ret.), interview by Giorgi Kbiltsetskhilashvili. 2024. Bureaucracy and its Impact on Ensuring National Security (January 3).