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TRANSNATIONAL FRONT OF THE CAUCASUS POLITICAL EMIGRATION, WESTERN VALUES (1952–1955)

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ABSTRACT

The years 1952–1955 are one of the most important stages in the history of Caucasian political emigration. It was during this period, on the basis of high-level conferences held in Paris, that an anti-Soviet transnational political front was formed, based on democratic values, national self-determination, and cooperation based on regional equality. The movement aimed not only to fight against the Soviet regime, but also to create a new political architecture for the Caucasus region based on a federal or confederal model. The article draws on archival documents and American strategic materials from the Cold War period and provides an interdisciplinary analysis of both documentary sources and the ideological content of the discourse. The main focus is on the "Union Council" and "Working Committee" created by the Paris conferences, which prepared the institutional form of Caucasian unity. The text also reflects on the relations with Western institutions (ACEN, Crusade for Freedom) with the aim of bringing the Caucasian anti-Bolshevik movement into the framework of the global democratic discourse. Special emphasis is placed on the fact that political emigration actors did not identify with aggressive nationalism, but rather supported multi-ethnic coexistence, a legal framework, and Western civilized values. The study shows that the formation of the anti-Bolshevik front in the Caucasus was one of the first transnational attempts to achieve regional security, sovereignty, and democratic institutionalization.

KEYWORDS

Caucasian Émigré, Paris Conference 1952, Confederation, Anti-Bolshevik Strategy, Gegechkori, Gvarjaladze, Cold War

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Introduction.

The years 1952–1955 are a period of unparalleled importance in the history of Caucasian political emigration. It was during these years that high-level anti-Soviet conferences held in Paris, through political memoranda and agreements, formulated a unified political strategy for the Caucasus region, based on democratic values, the principle of national independence, and united resistance to Bolshevism as a global threat. The leaders of this movement, including Yevgeny Gegechkori, Konstantine Gvarjaladze, Ziyaddin Shamil, Afker Agha Sheikh-ul-Islam, Ali Khan Kantemir, and others, aimed not only to change the Soviet system, but also to construct a new geographical and political structure for the future of the Caucasus region - in a federal or confederal model.

The chronological framework covers the period from October 1952 to early 1955, which coincides with the period of active geopolitical configuration of the West, when, with the support of the US National Security Council (NSC 20/4) and the CIA, cooperation with various emissary organizations was carried out to weaken the Soviet Union. The Paris Conference in this context also somewhat coincides with the strategies coordinated with émigré organizations in the Baltics, Ukraine, and Central Asia (e.g., ABN – Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations).

The geopolitical space includes Paris as the main center of political organization, Istanbul as an unrecognized zone of Black Sea activity, and the Caucasus region as a target for political transformation. This includes both historical Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, as well as the peoples of the North Caucasus (Ingush, Chechens, Dagestanis, etc.), whose participation is emphasized in almost all agreements.

Topic Relevance

The history of the formation of a unified anti-Bolshevik platform of the Caucasian political emigration of 1952–1955 is more relevant today than it would have been in the context of the Cold War alone. Against the backdrop of modern geopolitical processes — Russia’s strengthening of its revisionist policy in the post-Soviet space, the intensification of regional conflicts (Georgia, Ukraine, Nagorno-Karabakh), and the need to protect the Western value system — it becomes necessary to analyze the Soviet legacy not only by reviewing repressive mechanisms, but also models of anti-Soviet resistance.

The confederal vision proposed by the Caucasian emigration of the 1950s, based on equality, national self-determination, and Western democratic values, provides a unique opportunity to consider alternative paths to contemporary regional politics. This initiative constitutes the first institutional effort to develop a cooperative model among the ethnic groups of the Caucasus—an approach that continues to be recognized today as a potential foundation for regional security, inclusive governance, and political solidarity.

At the same time, this topic represents a significant scientific loss in Georgian historiography, where the transformative potential of emigration as an independent political project is poorly understood. Accordingly, this research contributes not only to the restoration of historical information, but also to the expansion of the discourse in national political memory.

Research methods

The present study is based on a multi-level, interdisciplinary approach that combines historical-documentary analysis, ideological-discursive deconstruction, and a geopolitical interpretive framework. The main starting point of the study is primary sources based on the archive of the Caucasian political emigration of 1952–1955, the content and comparative analysis of which was carried out in the context of both internal (intranarrative) and external (transnational) fields. This methodological framework ensures both a high degree of analytical precision and the continued relevance of the research in contemporary historiographical studies.

Discussion

The Paris Conferences and their political legacy (1952–1953)

The Caucasian Political Emigration Conferences held in Paris on October 21–22 and November 5–7, 1952, were held with the aim of defining not only a common historical past, but also a common political future. As documented, these conferences were attended by both Georgians (Evgeni Gegechkori, Konstantine Gvarjaladze), as well as North Caucasian (Ziyaadin Shamil, Abdullah Namitok), Armenian and Azerbaijani political leaders, who, taking into account the experience of the 1930s–40s, tried to establish a new, more stable model of cooperation: “The peoples of the united Caucasus - Azerbaijanis, Armenians, Georgians and North Caucasians - solemnly declare that they firmly stand by the idea of the state independence of their countries” (Central State Historical Archive of Georgia (CSHA) Fund 1861, Anna. 3 Sak, 306 pp. 2–3).

The delegates in attendance developed a joint political document called the “Basic Principles of the Agreement,” the very first provision of which defined the political ideology: “The Caucasus for Caucasians” (ibid., p. 4). This phrase expressed not only a position based on national sovereignty, but also an anti-liberal ideological position against the imperialism of the Soviet Union.

The document also states that the political future of the Caucasus should be determined not by emigration, but by the will of the people. The form of the future Caucasian state – whether it is a federation, confederation, or other – is determined by the free will of the people (ibid., pp. 5-6). This approach took into account the mistakes made in the past, when different ethnic and political groups acted with priority over each other.

One of the values of the conference was its readiness for Western support. The document clearly states: “The formation of a common front coincides with the hope that American committees (ACEN and others) will support regional anti-Bolshevik forces” (1952-Georgian.docx, p. 11). Indeed, as A. Zubov writes, in the 1950s, the concept of the so-called “absolute coup” became active in American foreign policy, within the framework of which they aimed at “a strategy of disruption based on internal ethnic conflicts in the Soviet Union” (Zubov, 2008, p. 413).

Thus, the Paris conferences of 1952–1953 were not just an attempt at émigré self-organization. They were shaping a transnational Caucasian ideology that rejected all chauvinism, was based on the principle of equality (SCSSSA, fun. 1831, an. 2 Sak. 177, p. 7), and sought to establish a place on the map of the Western political community as a reliable anti-Bolshevik force.

One of the most significant outcomes of the 1952 Paris Conferences was the formation of a unified coordinating governance structure, intended to transition from a decentralized model of émigré policy to a centralized, inclusive, and collaborative platform. To realize this objective, the 'Union Council' was established—an institutional body founded on the principles of equality, representation, and consensus-based decision-making.

In parallel with this discourse, as Zubov points out, the dissident structures of the 1950s, operating in exile, paid great attention to the formation of formalized bodies in order to consolidate their position in the eyes of the West with legal status (Zubov, 2008). In this regard, the role of the “Union Council” would go beyond mere activity in the conflict with the Soviet bloc—it represented a preliminary form of the constitutional laboratory of future Caucasian statehoods.

Thus, the “Soviet Union” was not only an émigré political administration, but also a collective political experiment that sought to construct a model of transnational representation and postcolonial democratic governance. Its significance remains a crucial research question in the process of post-Soviet statehood formation.

One of the most notable achievements of the Paris conferences of 1952–1953 was the establishment of ideological unity. Beyond political agreement, the participants offered the world a positive vision of the multi-ethnic and anti-Bolshevik movement in the Caucasus, basing their struggle on universal values and democratic principles. In this way, they aimed to place the Caucasian question not only in a geopolitical, but also in a moral-legal framework.

The same document presented practical instructions on how to build an information and propaganda strategy. In particular, a plan was presented for the creation of special research centers, which would be tasked with preparing the necessary research, historical-cultural analysis, and political prospectuses for the dismantling of the Soviet system” (1952-Georgian.docx, pp. 49–50). Such centers were tasked with preparing “the construction of an anti-Bolshevik ideology so that it would be based on historical truth and not on the mere demonization of the enemy.

The ideological platform of the Paris conferences was an important component of mid-20th-century anti-Bolshevik politics, which was primarily oriented towards the expression of principles, not just positions. The movement clearly distanced itself from ethno-nationalism and constructed a democratic, multi-ethnic, values-based political alternative. The propaganda strategy was aimed not only at changing public opinion, but also at occupying intellectual space: in academia, the media, and political institutions.

Geopolitical Context: Cold War Realities and Expectations of Western Support

The 1952–1953 conferences held in Paris by the Caucasian political émigrés took place during the height of the Cold War, when the United States and the Soviet Union were competing for global influence. During this period, the Caucasus region became strategically important to the West as a potential containment zone for Soviet influence.

The US National Security Council documents of 1952–1954 emphasized that the Soviet Union would continue its political warfare and domestic communist armed activities, which posed a serious threat to the West. In this context, US policy aimed to strengthen the free world and exploit the weaknesses of the Soviet system.

Representatives of the Caucasian political emigration, such as Yevgeny Gegechkori and Konstantine Gvarjaladze, actively sought Western support. Documents adopted at the 1952 Paris Conference indicate that the formation of a united front coincided with the hope that American committees (ACEN and others) would support regional anti-Bolshevik forces.

The United States, for its part, actively used propaganda tools such as Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty to provide alternative information to the peoples living inside the Soviet Union and to increase anti-Soviet sentiment. In 1953, Radio Liberty began broadcasting in Russian, which was an important step towards breaking the Soviet information blockade.

In addition, US policy included providing economic and military assistance to countries that were resisting Soviet influence. For example, Turkey joined NATO in 1952, which was an important step in containing Soviet expansion in the region.

Representatives of the Caucasian political emigration hoped that the West would provide not only moral but also practical support to their movement. However, despite some support, Western countries were wary of direct intervention, so as not to aggravate relations with the Soviet Union.

The Paris Conferences of 1952–1953 were an important stage for the Caucasian political emigration, where they sought to gain Western support in the fight against the Soviet regime. The geopolitical context of the Cold War and the West's strategic interests in the Caucasus created opportunities, but also limited direct intervention. In these conditions, representatives of the Caucasian political emigration managed to attract international attention and include the anti-Bolshevik movement in the global discourse.

In the early 1950s, the Caucasian political emigration actively sought to develop strategies to fight against the Soviet Union and influence regional politics. The primary objective of these strategies was to restore the independence of the Caucasus region and to promote democratic values. A key component of this effort involved securing international support, as the Caucasian political émigré community actively sought the backing of Western states.

The primary objective of these strategies was to restore the independence of the Caucasus region and to promote democratic values. A key component of this effort involved securing international support, as the Caucasian political émigré community actively sought the backing of Western states. At the same time, the information and analyses disseminated by representatives of the emigration helped Western states to better understand regional politics and develop appropriate strategies.

The legacy of the Caucasus political emigration has had a significant impact on the region's contemporary foreign policy. The ideas, strategies, and organizational structures developed by representatives of the emigration still shape the foreign policy choices of the Caucasus countries, especially in the direction of integration with the West and regional cooperation.

The strategic orientation of the Caucasian political emigration towards the West was not only a response to tactical necessity, but also a profound ideological choice. The leaders of the emigration, especially the participants in the 1952 Paris Conference, clearly expressed the position that the political and cultural identity of the Caucasian nations was impossible in the Soviet or post-imperial space - if there was no value identification with the Western democratic world.

As one of the main documents clearly states - "The future security, development and freedom of the peoples of the Caucasus can only be ensured under conditions when they fight together with free nations for the defeat of Bolshevism and for integration into the democratic world" (ibid., p. 52). The basis of this strategy was three main dimensions.

Strategic documents on emigration frequently call for closer cooperation with international institutions, from the Crusade for Freedom to the support of the Council of Europe. These platforms were seen as diplomatic tracks through which the Caucasian states would eventually return to full membership in the "international legal space" (Crusade for Freedom, 1953).

Another task of the Caucasian political emigration was to mobilize public opinion in the West in support of the Caucasus. That is why informational and cultural tools were actively used - articles, lectures, analyzes published in political journals. This approach appeared much earlier than modern so-called "soft power" practices.

Today, in the reality of the 21st century, this line of integration with the West still dominates Georgia's foreign policy. Documents such as the Georgian Foreign Policy Strategy 2021–2024 directly reflect the principles formulated in the era of emigration: Euro-Atlantic integration, Western guarantees of regional security, and the establishment of a pro-European identity in foreign policy rhetoric.

One of the fundamental issues raised at the Paris conferences of 1952 was the institutional and ideological consolidation of political cooperation among the peoples of the Caucasus. The conference participants realized that the fight against the Soviet empire went beyond individual efforts and required the development of a collective, regionally coordinated strategy. On this basis, the main provisions of pan-Caucasian cooperation were formulated, among which the collective understanding of security stands out first and foremost.

One of the important provisions reflected in the Paris Agreement states that "the All-Caucasian Political Center shall operate on the basis of a common consensus, and without it, no group shall act on behalf of the entire Caucasus on any issue."

The conference participants consistently emphasized that the ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity of the Caucasus region should serve not as a source of rivalry or conflict, but as a foundation for cooperation. This marked a significant step forward, as during the 1930s and 1940s, national organizations often regarded one another with suspicion, hindering the formation of a unified front.

The model of regional cooperation put forward by the emigration in the 1950s should not be evaluated only as an anti-Bolshevik strategy. It was also a unique historical attempt to create an integrative and egalitarian Caucasian unity, despite the spiritual conditions of the era. Although the Soviet regime thwarted the realization of this project, it later became a source of both institutional and ideological inspiration.

The anti-Bolshevik and anti-historical position of the Caucasian political emigration, clearly formulated in the Paris documents of 1952–1953, unequivocally rejected not only the communist regime, but also the legitimacy of the Russian imperial order itself. The strategic concept of emigration was not only a protest against Soviet rule, but also included criticism of Russia's historical imperialist aspirations, both during their reign and during the Bolshevik regime.

The documents emphasize that the preservation of the Russian Empire — “using the resources of other peoples” — means the continuation of an instrument of power that “continues the imperialist policy of the tsarist and Bolshevik governments.” 1952-Georgian. This quote directly indicates the continuity of Russia's imperial logic, and not just the presentation of Bolshevism as a privatized problem.

Distancing from Russian emigration - The Caucasian political emigration was essentially different from the Russian emigration. The latter, despite its anti-communist rhetoric, was still in favor of the territorial integrity of the Russian state. The Russian emigration aimed only at changing the regime in the Soviet Union, although it wanted to preserve the unity of the Russian Empire at all costs. Such a position contradicted the aspirations of non-Russian peoples for national freedom. Against this background, the Caucasian delegates warned Western governments that it was impossible to unite both national liberation movements and the rehabilitators of the imperial-Russian project under a united anti-Bolshevik front.

The distance and ideological internationalism of anti-Russian chauvinism were also manifested in the fact that, despite the severity of the criticism, the rhetoric of the Caucasian emigration did not carry ethnic or racial Russophobia. On the contrary, as one analytical note states, the majority of ordinary Russian citizens in the Soviet Union understand that Russia's imperialist policy prevents the Russian people themselves from developing their national culture and economic life.

Thus, the emigration position distinguished between the "Russian people" and the "imperial structure of the Russian state," which is a very understandable and accepted argument even for Western society.

Today, when Russia took aggressive actions against neighboring states in 2008 and 2014 (occupation of Georgian territory, annexation of Crimea), the issues raised by the Caucasian political emigration have been resurrected in a completely new context. Their vision of Russia's long-term expansionism and energy-diplomatic influence coincides with the contemporary conclusions of Western political analysts (e.g. Lucas, 2008; Applebaum, 2021).

Thus, the arguments for political emigration are considered not only from a historical perspective, but also as a strategic prophecy that Western countries failed to properly assess after the end of the Cold War.

The strategy of reducing Russian influence was seen in the émigré discourse not only as a political doctrine but also as a necessary condition for regional security. In their view, a free, independent, and democratic Caucasus could only exist if the imperialist power around it could not reproduce the instruments of intimidation and control.

The geopolitical vision of the Caucasus political emigration and its transformation into modern foreign policy- The vision of the Caucasus political emigration, formulated in 1952–1955, which formed the basis of the Paris Conferences and subsequent strategic documents, is no longer considered merely a historical precedent. It was a deeply conceived geopolitical project that included integration with the West, regional federal cooperation, and the systematic rejection of Russian imperial influence.

First of all, integration with the West was the axis of the emigrant policy not only for security reasons, but also on the basis of value identity. Political documents clearly state that “the future of a peaceful and free Caucasus can only be imagined together with the democratic world” (docx, p. 52). This vision has been realized in today's foreign policy doctrines: the association processes with the European Union, cooperation with NATO, and structural access to Western institutions are based on these historical foundations.

The second — regional cooperation — was an institutional model proposed by the emigration, responding to the disintegration tendencies of the previous years and aiming at Caucasian unity based on the “principles of equality and consensus.” This was not just political coordination, but the construction of a new civilizational project that was to replace Russian or Ottoman domination. Today, we see this vision in the Black Sea regional cooperation, in trilateral formats (Georgia-Turkey-Azerbaijan), and in initiatives coordinated within the framework of the OSCE or the UN.

A tactical view, but rather a systemic view, that the real independence of the Caucasus region is impossible as long as the geopolitical space is dominated by imperial claims. The émigré discourse clearly distinguished between the Russian people and the imperial apparatus of the Russian state. This approach was translated into a moral plane — the émigré movement condemned not only Bolshevism, but also the Russian state model itself, as historically disastrous for multinational regions. Today, against the backdrop of Russian military interventions (2008, 2014, 2022), this view resonates sharply with modern analytical assessments (Lucas, 2008; Applebaum, 2021).

Thus, the three strategic pillars of the Caucasian political emigration—value-based Westernization, integrative regionalism, and anti-imperialism—did not remain merely the intellectual legacy of the emigration period. They were actively reintegrated into the construction of post-Soviet statehood and still constitute a contextual pillar of the Caucasian foreign policy identity.

This immigrant experience is not only a historical lesson, but also a working model — how small nations can achieve security, stability, and international subjectivity in a context where the geopolitical landscape is still governed by imperial mechanisms.

Conclusions

The transnational initiative of the Caucasian political emigration of 1952–1955 represents a rare political decision that managed to bring together the political subjects of the historically protracted and discordant Caucasus region on a single platform. The ideological framework, institutional structure and foreign strategy formed as a result of the Paris conferences were not only a temporary political manifestation, but also represent a full-fledged geopolitical vision.

A unique feature of the Caucasian political emigration is its non-revanchist and non-chauvinistic character. Although the movement strongly opposed Soviet and Russian political domination, its rhetoric did not reject any nation or culture, but aimed at dismantling the imperial model and establishing a legally balanced alternative of multinational coexistence. Its ideological framework ensured sympathy in Western society — emigration was interpreted not as an alienated diaspora, but as a living vehicle of the democratic movement.

The legacy of the Caucasian political emigration in the context of today's historical and political analysis shows that the values and strategic principles put forward in the mid-20th century have not only survived, but have also become the basis of the foreign policy orientation of states. The Western-oriented diplomacy of modern Georgia and other countries in the region, as well as multi-platform formats of regional cooperation, are a practical continuation of these emigrant ideas.

Thus, the Caucasian transnational political movement of 1952–1955 should be assessed as a historical phenomenon that emerged without time. Understanding it is especially important in the conditions when the region still faces the challenge of strengthening security, sovereignty, and civilizational identity.

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