



**Eastern policy of the Democratic Republic of Georgia: Relations with
the North Caucasus (1918-1921)**

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Abstract

This scientific article investigates the relationship between the Democratic Republic of Georgia and the North Caucasus, focusing on its distinctive characteristics during the period from 1918 to 1921. It also delineates the core principles that shaped this relationship.

In 1918, Georgia regained its independence amidst significant international and domestic challenges. The Mountaineers Republic, which encompassed much of the North Caucasus, also declared its independence. The nascent states faced opposition from a common enemy, first in the form of White Russia and subsequently from Bolshevik Russia. Both states recognized the strategic importance of consolidating their positions in the Caucasus to succeed in their shared struggle.

The Democratic Republic of Georgia emerged against the backdrop of severe political crises and territorial claims from neighbouring states, compounded by anti-state actions from the Bolsheviks within its borders. Consequently, a substantial portion of the government's revenues was allocated to defence, creating significant

financial challenges that impeded gradual reforms and the comprehensive development of the nation. However, Georgia recognized that the freedom of the North Caucasus was vital, as it would establish a defensive barrier against Russia and bolster the independence of the entire region. As a result, throughout its existence, the Georgian government consistently supported the Mountaineers Republic, providing both political and material resources. The interests of the mountaineers became so closely aligned with those of Georgia that they expressed a desire to join the Republic with the right to autonomy.

This research outlines the nature of political cooperation between Georgia and the North Caucasus, grounded in mutual needs and interests. In the context of the country's challenging circumstances, the sustained and multifaceted support for the North Caucasus underscores the significance of the northern neighbours' freedom to the government of the First Republic of Georgia.

The article draws on archival documents, scholarly literature, and periodical press materials, with some sources and details being introduced in academic discourse for the first time.

Keywords: Democratic Republic of Georgia; Mountaineers Republic; Caucasus; Bolsheviks; Denikin; Confederation; Independence; Georgian Legion.

Introduction

The history of the Democratic Republic of Georgia encompasses many noteworthy yet lesser-known aspects. Sharing insights from this historical experience of state-building and navigating complex geopolitical dynamics holds practical relevance today. The distinctive features of the First Republic's regional policy and its relationships with neighbouring states remain pertinent in the contemporary context. This research focuses on analysing Georgia's relations with the North Caucasus, highlighting the unique approaches and principal objectives involved. For the First Republic, supporting the independence of the

North Caucasus was a crucial element of its regional policy, viewed as a vital component for ensuring the freedom and security of the entire region.

Several notable and thorough studies address this topic, particularly the works of Mairbek Vachagaev, Giorgi Mamulia, and Mikheil Bakhtadze. Vachagaev's 2022 study examines the history of the Georgian Legion's activities in Chechnya.⁷⁴ Mamulia's 2021 article analyses the relations between the Mountaineers Republic and the Entente.⁷⁵ Additionally, a collaborative work by Bakhtadze and Mamulia compiles significant documents related to the interactions between Georgia and the North Caucasus from 1917 to 1921, offering valuable insights into the source material.⁷⁶ However, our proposed article delves into the specific features of the Georgian government's approach, highlights the significance of the North Caucasus in the country's political landscape, and introduces new archival documents related to this issue into academic discourse.

Methods

The presented research is grounded in the emerging principles of historicism and objective reasoning. It utilizes a data collection method to gather various archival documents, periodical press materials, and relevant scientific or memoir literature. The article analyses this data, develops cause-and-effect reasoning, and summarizes the study's findings.

⁷⁴ Vachagaev, M. (2022). Georgian Legion in Chechnya. Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies, (in Georgian, English, and Russian). <https://gfsis.org/ge/publications/view/3205>.

⁷⁵ Mamulia, G. (2021). From the History of Relations between the Entente States and the Mountaineers Republic of the Northern Caucasus (1919). Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies, (in Georgian, English, and Russian). <https://gfsis.org/ge/publications/view/2912>.

⁷⁶ Bakhtadze, M., Mamulia, G. (2005). *masalebi sakartvelosa da chrdiloet k'avk'asiis urtiertobis ist'oriidan : 1917-1921* (The materials are about the history of relations between Georgia and the North Caucasus : 1917-1921). Tbilisi: "Artanuji" (in Georgian).

Results

The Democratic Republic of Georgia and the Mountaineers Republic of the Caucasus defended their independence in front of the same force. Concurrence of interests, needs, and the need to consolidate forces pushed the parties to a confederate union. The interests of the First Republic of Georgia included strengthening the freedom of the mountaineers, which led to continuous political and material support of the Mountaineers Republic. In 1919-1920, the Georgian Legion fought alongside the mountaineers in Chechnya, and the question of Caucasian cooperation played a significant role in Georgia's international affairs. Even though it was impossible to unite the Caucasus for common goals and gain international support, the mentioned issue remains a very noteworthy moment in the history of the Caucasus.

Discussion

The situation of the Democratic Republic of Georgia

The independence of the Democratic Republic of Georgia was declared on May 26, 1918, during the First World War (1914-1918), when the Caucasus was one of the epicentres of hostilities. In this context, the government emphasized in its declaration of independence that Georgia would adopt a position of permanent neutrality in international conflicts. The act stated that the republic aimed to establish good neighbourly relations with all political entities, particularly with neighbouring states and nations (Sharadze, 2001: 19-20). The republic's initial steps were overshadowed by territorial claims from the Ottoman Empire. While negotiations were ongoing, hostilities persisted, and in March 1918, the Ottomans occupied Adjara despite the resistance (Gogolishvili, Batsikadze, 2020: 17-18).

Despite its declared neutrality in the war, it was essential for Georgia to secure a powerful political ally. Germany, as an ally of the Ottomans, an opponent of Russia, and a key supporter of Georgia's independence, emerged as a logical international partner for the republic. On May 28, 1918, Germany and Georgia signed a temporary agreement in Poti, with Germany recognizing Georgia's independence

and establishing preliminary cooperative relations. As noted by Zurab Avalishvili, "Germany emerged as the godfather of Georgia's state independence" (Avalishvili, 1924 (1929): 59-60). Through this agreement, Germany expressed its commitment to protect Georgia's independence and oppose Russian encroachment. Military commissar von Nida urged the Ottoman side to acknowledge this agreement, warning that failure to do so would necessitate appropriate actions (CHAG 1864/1/34/folios 8-9).

However, Germany's defeat in World War I prompted a shift in Georgia's foreign policy. With England assuming the Germans' former positions, Georgia pivoted to a pro-Entente stance by late 1918, recognizing that this was the only viable path to maintain international recognition and freedom. In March 1919, the Georgian government presented a memorandum to the Paris Peace Conference, aiming to engage Western Europe's interest in the region and emphasizing the necessity of its independence (MS. Wardr. c. 23 (2,3), fol. 3-9).

After the conflict with the Ottomans, a full-scale war with Armenia erupted in December 1918, initiated by the invasion of Georgia by Armenian troops. The persistent revolts by the Bolsheviks further exacerbated the critical situation. In April-May 1918, the Bolsheviks invaded Abkhazia, prompting Georgia to separate some units of the Guard engaged in the war with Turkey to address the situation in Abkhazia under the command of Valiko Dzhugeli. This intervention temporarily stabilized the region (Jugheli, 1920: 8-19). However, in June, the Bolsheviks invaded Abkhazia a second time, coinciding with the deployment of an Ottoman landing force to Sukhumi. It took the entire summer to address the situation in Abkhazia (Mazniashvili, 1927: 59-79). At the turn of 1918-1919, shortly after the Armenian-Georgian war concluded, the Denikinians invaded Sochi, complicating the already tenuous situation and leading to a conflict that lasted several months.

Unrest began in the Tskhinvali region in January 1918, where armed groups dispersed the population, and the rebels seized Tsk-

hinvali in March. After order was restored, fleeing Bolsheviks participated in demonstrations organized in Sachkhere and Dusheti. Bolshevik uprisings occurred in Tskhinvali in the autumn of 1919 and in June 1920 (Silakadze, 2022: 11-40). Demonstrations orchestrated by the Bolsheviks also took place in Lechkhumi, Samtskhe, and Dusheti. While a small number of Georgian peasants participated in these demonstrations, they ultimately failed to achieve significant results (Kazemzadeh, 1951: 193). The ongoing chaos severely hindered the development of the newly established republic, which was forced to continuously repel both external and internal threats.

Given the existing reality, a substantial portion of the budget was naturally allocated to defence. In 1918-1919, defence expenditures accounted for 30.39% of the country's budget, totalling 201,021,373 manats. Although it was projected to be 31.50% in 1919-2020, the actual figure rose to 36.56%. Continuous warfare and logistical demands led to significant spending by the Ministry of Roads. Together, military and road expenditures consumed more than half of the budget (Project, 1920: V-VI). This occurred amidst an economic crisis accompanied by disrupted and sometimes suspended trade relations. Despite these enormous costs, military operations faced numerous challenges, including inadequate nutrition, a food crisis, and poorly equipped barracks (Silakadze, 2023: 107). There were instances where the population contributed meager funds to support national defence. For example, during the war with Armenia, the teachers' union in Gori decided to donate 5% of their salaries to the "front auxiliary committee" (*sakartvelos respublika* N7, 1919: 4). This situation was further marred by cases of mismanagement and the waste of substantial amounts of money within institutions (Kobakhidze..., 2020: 106-109).

In this challenging context, the relationship between the Democratic Republic of Georgia and the North Caucasus from 1918 to 1921 is significant and noteworthy, yet its specific character has not yet been fully explored.

Georgia's relations with the North Caucasus (1918-1921)

In the aftermath of the 1917 revolution, the quest for independent unity in the North Caucasus began amidst significant uncertainties regarding Georgia. While it remained unclear whether the mountaineers would stay part of post-revolutionary Russia or pursue independence, the United Mountaineers' Union of the North Caucasus recognized Abkhazia as part of its territory in November 1917. In December, at a session of the National Interparty Council of Georgia, Akaki Chkhenkeli stated that the government of the Mountainous Republic sought to establish a connection with the Georgians. However, this was hindered by border disorganization, particularly concerning Abkhazia's admission into the Union of the Peoples of the Northern Caucasus (CHAG 1836/1/3/11). As the mountaineers embarked on their path to independence, the situation evolved. The declaration of independence from the Mountaineers Republic on May 11, 1918, stated that the southern border would be determined through negotiations with the Transcaucasian government (*soiuz...*, 2013: 54, 76). It was evident that the independence of the mountaineers and their friendly relations with Georgia were closely intertwined.

The Mountaineers Republic, established in the North Caucasus, fought against both the Denikinites and the Bolsheviks, seeking international support to maintain its independence. The West initially viewed the Mountaineers Republic as a pro-Ottoman entity. However, by late 1918, its political orientation shifted firmly toward the pro-Entente direction, aligning with Georgia's course. Following a request from the British, Ottoman troops withdrew from the North Caucasus in December. In November, Haydar Bamat, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Mountaineers Republic, travelled to Switzerland to initiate diplomatic efforts aimed at securing support from England and France. He sought to convince European powers that, rather than supporting Denikin, recognizing the independence of nations oppressed by Russian imperialism would provide a solid foundation for tangible political and economic success against the Bolsheviks. Simu-

ltaneously, Bamat recognized that Western politics did not align with this perspective, concluding that the only viable path to independence for the Mountaineers Republic lay in a Caucasus confederation (Mamulia, 2021: 2, 6-9, 17).

As early as February 1918, before the declaration of independence, the mountaineers proposed exploring potential avenues for political and economic unification in Transcaucasia. To this end, the Union of North Caucasus and Dagestan Mountaineers established a special commission (Vachagaev, 2022: 1-3). On May 27, 1918, Georgia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Akaki Chkhenkeli, communicated to Haydar Bamat that Georgia would welcome the establishment of close ties with neighboring Caucasian nations and Dagestan based on confederation principles. Additionally, on May 31, he informed Chermoev that Georgia would safeguard the interests of the mountaineers in negotiations with Germany and support their efforts to strengthen independence (CHAG 1864/2/43/fol. 1-2).

It is significant to note that Georgia initially recognized the need to strengthen the independence of individual states for the creation of the confederation. In November 1918, the government secretly instructed its diplomatic representatives not to oppose the Transcaucasian Confederation, emphasizing that individual nations should first be solidified as independent states (CHAG 1861/3/4/fol. 7-8). This identical position would serve as the foundation for Georgia's political relations with the North. Consequently, Georgia actively promoted the independence of the mountaineers.

To facilitate this, the government established a special commission to conduct negotiations with the Republic of Terek. This commission included the Minister of Roads, Ivane Lortkipanidze; the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, Gerasime Makharadze; and the Chairman of the National Guard Staff, Valerian Jugheli (CHAG 1861/2/13/fol. 3).

The Georgian government was acutely aware of the significance of the ongoing developments in the North Caucasus and the necessity

of supporting the mountaineers for Georgia's own security. The independence of the North Caucasus was intrinsically linked to the interests of both Georgia and Azerbaijan, as the independence of these Caucasian nations would enhance mutual security and create a defensive barrier against Russia. However, achieving freedom for the mountaineers was impossible without their active support. In light of these interests, the government approached the matter with the necessary seriousness. For instance, in 1919, Georgia's government allocated one million manats from the military fund, by secret decree, specifically for intelligence operations in the North Caucasus (CHAG 1861/3/4/fol. 76). Throughout its existence, the government of the Democratic Republic consistently provided the Mountaineers Republic with moral, diplomatic, and, crucially, material support.

Beginning in early 1919, following the clash between the mountaineers and the Denikinites, the process of providing assistance became more active. The mountaineers appealed to Georgia for help, leading the government to instruct the Minister of Foreign Affairs to issue a corresponding protest note and allocate a credit of 3 million roubles to the Republic of the Mountain Union (CHAG 1861/2/13/fol. 5).

It was clear to all that the mountaineers' struggle against Denikin was not only their own fight but also one that impacted the entire Caucasus. The northerners sought to bolster support from the southerners by highlighting the dangers that would arise if the mountaineers were left to fend for themselves. Ossetian public figure Akhmed Tsalikov pointed out that both they and the Bolsheviks found themselves on the same side in the struggle against Denikin, which posed a risk of increasing sympathy for the Bolsheviks among the Caucasians. He asserted that only armed support from allies could halt the rising tide of Bolshevik sentiments (CHAG 1864/2/102). The Georgians were acutely aware of this, which drove the government to maintain material assistance for the mountaineers even amid severe financial challenges. Nonetheless, it was evident that Georgia's resources alone

could not address these threats, leading the government to seek international support.

In a clear protest note issued on March 5, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, Evgeni Gegechkori, condemned the White Guard's violation of the right to self-determination and the independence of the Mountaineers Republic, expressing Georgia's solidarity and sympathy with the mountaineers in their defence of sovereignty (*sak-artvelos respublika* N51, 1919:2). Although the protest note considered the recognition or rejection of independence to be a matter for the World Congress, Georgia nonetheless announced its position internationally, recognizing the independence of the Mountaineers Republic. At the same time, the note served as a warning to Denikin that his confrontation with the mountaineers could push them toward embracing the Bolshevik path.

At the same time, efforts to establish a common Caucasian foundation continued. In April, a conference of the Caucasian republics convened in Tbilisi, where several commissions were formed, including political, financial, and refugee committees. Representatives from the mountaineers included Murundin Penzulaev and Aslanbek Butaev, alongside Kantemir. The unification of the Caucasus was a key item on the political agenda. The four republics needed to recognize one another, delineate their borders, and develop a cohesive defence and foreign policy mechanism (CHAG 1864/1/131/fol. 1-3). However, dissonance emerged from the Armenian delegation during the conference, while the situation in Chechnya remained critical.

The Georgian command sought to maximize assistance from available state resources. In March 1919, following a report from Major-General Andronikashvili, the mountaineers received two airplanes as well as several trucks and cars. They also requested a radio station, sending G. Butaev to negotiate. In April, the government provided the mountaineers with a radio station valued at 280,000 roubles

and a new mast worth 40,000 roubles at no charge (CHAG 1861/2/13/fol. 7-17).⁷⁷

The government was preparing for a potential conflict with Denikin. In April 1919, the Dariali Gorge was closed, and measures were implemented to bolster border defences. Military and foreign agencies were tasked with assessing Azerbaijan's stance regarding the Denikinites during the anticipated conflict. It was categorically declared that if Azerbaijan did not resist Denikin, Georgia would occupy all strategic border points (CHAG 1861/3/4/fol. 26). This message illustrates the government's acute awareness of the critical importance of the ongoing battles in the Caucasus. As Russian forces advanced, the mountain government was forced to evacuate the North Caucasus. In August, the mountaineers established a military committee in Tbilisi and invited a representative from the Georgian Military Ministry to join (CHAG 1864/1/34/fol. 16).

It is not surprising that Denikin attributed the strength of the opposition against him to external factors, particularly Georgia. Allegedly, in August-September 1919, 60 Georgian officers arrived in Chechnya from Tbilisi, and Uzun Khaji received eighty machine guns and up to 2 million cartridges from Georgia. Georgian military advisers, led by General Kereselidze, were present at Uzun Khaji's camp (Marshall, 2010: 127). Denikin's information was rooted in reality. In July 1919, the Minister of Defence summoned Colonel Leo Kereselidze and instructed him to form a detachment of 30-40 officers and 100-200 soldiers, allowing him to choose between deployment to Chechnya or Dagestan. Kereselidze opted for Chechnya, assembling 36 officers and 100 instructors to assist Chechen fighters. He was provided with 500 rifles, several hundred thousand cartridges, 12 machine guns, and 250,000 roubles (CHAG 1969/4/6/fol. 67). In August, the Georgian Legion arrived in Chechnya, receiving additional supplies that included two machine guns, 50 rifles, four horses, two carts, and 40 sheep (CHAG 1969/2/34/fol. 1). Kereselidze was appointed comm-

⁷⁷ See also: CHAG 1861/2/31/folios 1-8.

ander-in-chief of the Mountaineers Republic's forces. His deployment to assist the mountaineers was not coincidental; he had previously fought against the Russian Empire with the Georgian Legion, which was formed in the Ottoman Empire during World War I.

Another significant circumstance was the lack of internal consolidation within the North Caucasus. It appears that various factions disagreed with the republic's government on several issues. One memorandum sent by the mountaineers to the Paris Conference in May 1919 laid claim to territories in Georgia, including Abkhazia, Zakatala, and Samachablo (*grazhdanskaia voina...*, 2014: 752-753). A letter from Alikhan Kantemir to the Paris delegation on May 23, 1919, indicated existing disunity. The letter noted that after negotiations with Denikin broke down and the volunteer army was deployed to Chechnya, a specific group-including General Aliyev and Ibrahim Chulikov-independently reached an agreement with Denikin on behalf of the Chechens. This group believed Chechnya could achieve self-governance within Russia, while similar agreements were made by the Ingush general Malsagov, Ossetian colonel Khabaev, and Kabardian Bekovich-Cherkasky (CHAG 1864/1/131/fol. 4). Given this context, the support of the current government of the Mountaineers Republic was particularly important to Georgia, as it aligned with Georgia's regional interests amid the prevailing chaos.

In addition to direct assistance, the Georgian government allocated 500,000 manats from the military fund to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to support the Committee of the North Caucasus Mountaineers and address the needs of the mountaineers more broadly (CHAG 1861/3/4/fol. 59). This allocation created a reserve for further assistance. Meanwhile, the mountaineers continued their diplomatic efforts, striving to establish a union council and promote Caucasian unity. A conference was scheduled in Tbilisi on August 27, 1919, organized by the Committee of Mountaineers (CHAG 1969/4/6/fol. 3-6). At this conference, Georgian representative Valiko Jugeli emphasized that unifying the Caucasus was essential for defeating Denikin.

He stated that Georgia was prepared to offer maximum support for this cause, not merely out of goodwill, but because it represented a shared struggle and mutual interest against Denikin (CHAG 1969/4/6/ fol. 8). The government's pragmatic approach reflected the critical importance of the situation.

Diplomatic processes progressed slowly while the White Guard advanced, managing to occupy a significant portion of the North Caucasus. The Georgian authorities observed the Denikin advance with growing concern. On October 2, 1919, the Foreign Ministry sent a note to the representatives of Great Britain, France, Italy, and Greece in the Caucasus, urging intervention in the conflict to resolve it peacefully, as failure to do so would pose a serious threat to Georgia and the region (*sakartvelos respublika* N223, 1919: 1-2).

By 1920, the situation had become even more critical. After the defeat of the mountaineers, the Georgian Legion could no longer alter the course of events and was preparing to return to Georgia. Nuri Pasha, representing Azerbaijan, seized the arms intended for the Georgian Legion that had been sent in January. This prompted a swift response from Georgia, sending two officers to Azerbaijan to retrieve the weapons belonging to Kereselidze's detachment (CHAG 1861/3/25/fol. 1, 9-13). In February, Kereselidze informed Jordania of the dire condition of the soldiers, requesting a commission and necessary funds for the detachment's disbandment (CHAG 1861/2 /13/fol. 27). By early 1920, active military assistance to the mountaineers had slowed, as hopes for success diminished. However, financial and diplomatic support continued. A special commission established by the government assisted the mountaineers in organizing financial reporting and requested a two-person delegation from them to allocate up to 3 million rubles issued by the government for the payment of military personnel and other expenses (CHAG 1861/2/13/fol. 18).

The influx of refugees further strained the situation. The potential dangers had been recognized as early as June 1919, leading to a recommendation to close the border (CHAG 1861/1/268/fol. 1). In the

spring of 1920, harried mountain refugees entered Georgia, and on April 22, they were permitted to return with their belongings (CHAG 1861/2/172/fol. 3).

The attitude of the Georgian government toward the Kuban Republic is significant. The North-West Caucasus, influenced by the White Guard, sought independence. In April 1920, representatives of the Kuban Republic, Tymoshenko and Drobashev, conveyed to the Transcaucasian countries their lack of trust in both the White Guards and the Bolsheviks, expressing a desire for independence and recognition of the sovereignty of the newly formed Caucasian states (CHAG 1869/1/4/fol. 58-59). The Georgian government quickly responded, granting a loan of 15 million manats to the Kuban government on April 20 (CHAG 1861/3/25/fol. 5).

Georgia's approach highlights two key points: first, the government viewed the independence of the North Caucasus as vital for its own security, demonstrating a willingness to provide substantial assistance even amid its own challenges. Second, it regarded both the White Guard and Bolshevik Russia as equivalent threats.

However, due to the political landscape, the prospect of overt assistance was constrained. The Treaty of Moscow, signed with Soviet Russia on May 7, 1920, stipulated that both parties would maintain strict neutrality and refrain from allowing any forces or organizations in their territories that could jeopardize their independence and territorial integrity (*sakartvelos respublika* N125, 1920: 2). This agreement served as a temporary reprieve for Russia, following an unsuccessful invasion of Georgia by the Red Army shortly before, and was quickly overshadowed by the Bolshevik uprising in Samachablo, where local Bolshevik groups were actively engaged in anti-state activities.

Georgian officials recognized this context, and the government did not adopt a pacifist stance, as evidenced by its commitment to support the Caucasus. In the fall of 1920, after a brief anti-Bolshevik uprising in Dagestan, Jordania and Ramishvili pledged their support to the movement's leader, Gotsinsky. This commitment materialized with the

provision of 2,400 rifles, four machine guns, and ammunition (Marshall, 2010: 134). Following the rebellion's defeat, General Secretary Kilic Girey, who was in hiding, received some assistance from General Mdivani. Additionally, General Gedevanishvili expressed willingness to help, but due to political circumstances, he suggested hiding weapons in wheat shipments from the port for delivery (CHAG 1861/2/13/fol. 29).

After the Sovietization of Azerbaijan, the prospect of full independence for the mountaineers became increasingly difficult to envision. The anti-Bolshevik stance adopted by the Georgian government from the outset not only aligned with the sentiments of the mountaineers but also framed joining Georgia as the only viable option to preserve the idea of independence. On June 2, 1920, Kaitmaz Alikhanov, the commander of the Avarya (Dagestan), sent a compelling letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, expressing that the hopes of the Avarya were directed toward Georgia and proposing that the Avarya join Georgia with autonomy rights (CHAG 1864/1/25/fol. 62-65).⁷⁸ However, Soviet Russia's expansion in the Caucasus posed a significant threat to Georgia's own independence, prompting the country to adopt a more proactive defence posture.

Following the suppression of the rebellion, diplomacy became the sole avenue for the émigré government of the mountaineers to sustain their dwindling struggle. After the Sovietization of Georgia in February 1921, the emigrated Georgian government joined forces with them. In June 1921, the governments of the four Caucasian republics in exile issued a joint declaration in support of each other's independence and outlined mutual principles for future cooperation, aimed at strengthening the restored independence of the Caucasian states (CHAG 1861/3/18/fol.1-4).⁷⁹ However, this step could not alter the

⁷⁸ The same document is kept in the next file: CHAG 1864/1/101/folios 1-5.

⁷⁹ Declaration published in French see: CHAG 1861/3/ 56. Signed by Akaki Chkhenkeli, Abdul Mejid (Tapa) Chermoev, Alimardan Bek Topchibashev and Avetis Aharonyan.

practical realities in the Caucasus and served merely as a diplomatic gesture reflecting a delayed effort at Caucasian cooperation.

Conclusion

The creation and establishment of the first Republic of Georgia unfolded amidst intense geopolitical conflicts and significant internal crises; a situation mirrored in the Mountaineers Republic of the North Caucasus. The primary threats to its independence came first from the White Guard and then from the Bolsheviks, forces that opposed not only the mountaineers but also the independence of any Caucasian state. As a result, Georgia found itself in a direct and continuous struggle against these adversaries. The interests of the Georgians and the mountaineers aligned in their shared need to defend their sovereignty from a common foe.

Following the Entente's victory in World War I, both Georgia and the mountaineers shifted their political orientations from Germany and the Ottoman Empire to the Entente, which broadened their scope for cooperation. The fate of independence for the North Caucasus was increasingly tied to the situation in Transcaucasia, particularly regarding Azerbaijan and Georgia, especially after the Entente's unsuccessful support for their aspirations became apparent. Both nations recognized the necessity of Caucasian unity for preserving their freedom, though achieving tangible unity proved elusive.

After Azerbaijan's Sovietization in April 1920, Georgia emerged as the last hope for the dispersed mountaineers, leading to requests for integration with Georgia under conditions of autonomy. Throughout its existence, the Democratic Republic of Georgia provided consistent political, material, and financial support to the Mountaineers Republic. This approach was not merely rooted in political camaraderie but was driven by mutual necessity; the mountaineers' independence was crucial to Georgia's own security and the broader quest for freedom in the Caucasus. Thus, the Georgian government regarded the struggles of the mountaineers as its own, offering as much material support as possible, even in the face of significant financial constraints.

Geographically and politically, Georgia served as a lifeline for the Republic of the Mountaineers, with its emigrated government continuing to operate from Tbilisi. Efforts to foster Caucasian unity persisted, representing a notable historical moment in the region's modern history, even though these initiatives did not yield the desired outcomes.

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