

Stanislav Lakoba's Study: Shedding Light on Abkhazia's Historical and Contemporary Aspects

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This study has no aim to hurt any ideological or social segment but purely based on academic purposes.

Abstract

“Abkhazia: Yesterday and Today” by Stanislav Lakoba is a comprehensive monograph which explores the historical, cultural, and contemporary political context of Abkhazia. The work provides an erudite analysis of the origins and early development of the Abkhazian nation, tracing the evolution of their social structures, customs, and practices. The author’s in-depth examination of the Abkhazian people’s cultural background and their connections to the wider Caucasus region is noteworthy for its meticulous detail and critical insights.

Lakoba then proceeds to offer a cogent assessment of the Soviet era, and the role of Abkhazia in the broader Soviet system. The author’s thorough examination of the collapse of the Soviet Union and its impact on Abkhazia is notable for its incisive observations and nuanced analysis. The book also delves into the conflict that ensued between Abkhazia and Georgia, exploring the complexities of the conflict and the various factors that contributed to the situation. Lakoba’s analysis of the subsequent declaration of independence by Abkhazia and its bid for international recognition is noteworthy for its depth and insight. This paper looks at why “Abkhazia: Yesterday and Today” is considered as an exceptional contribution to the scholarly literature on Abkhazia, providing an in-depth and thorough account of the region’s history and political situation. Likewise, it is also analyzed that why Lakoba’s work has been characterized as a deep understanding of the complexities of the Abkhazian culture and society, and why his nuanced analysis of the political situation is counted as particularly valuable for scholars and policymakers seeking to understand the complexities of the region.

Introduction to the Book

A Book "Abkhazia: Yesterday and Today" by Stanislav Lakoba¹ is a voluminous and sagacious discourse on the history, culture, and political milieu of Abkhazia, a much-disputed region within the expanse of the Caucasus. The book shall prove an invaluable asset for scholars, policymakers, and all who aspire to a deeper apprehension of the intricacies of Abkhazia's past and present.

Lakoba's erudite exposition of Abkhazia's history and culture affords a profound comprehension of the genesis and evolution of the Abkhazian people, encompassing their societal structures, traditions, and customs. His painstaking research and analysis of the cultural background of the Abkhazian people and their connections with the wider Caucasus region are particularly meritorious, being distinguished by their profundity and discerning insights. The tome proffers a penetrating appraisal of Abkhazia's standing within the broader Soviet system, together with the repercussions of perestroika and glasnost on the region. Notably, Lakoba's scrupulous analysis of the disintegration of the Soviet Union and its impact upon Abkhazia is laudable for its rigor and nuanced understanding (Asim & Lakoba, 2023).

Moreover, the book delves into the conflict between Abkhazia and Georgia, scrutinizing the intricate factors that precipitated the predicament. The discourse provides a comprehensive and balanced assessment of the conflict, including its historical and political origins, the principal actors involved, and the wider implications for the region. The tome also expounds Abkhazia's contemporary political scenario, embracing its endeavors to acquire international recognition and its relations with Russia. Lakoba provides a meticulous and insightful analysis of the challenges that Abkhazia confronts, together with the prospects for development and progress in the future (Asim & Lakoba, 2023).

In sum, "Abkhazia: Yesterday and Today" represents a valuable and comprehensive contribution to the literature on Abkhazia. Lakoba's scholarship is characterized by a profound comprehension of the intricacies of the region's culture, history, and politics. His insightful analysis of the difficulties confronting Abkhazia today furnishes a unique perspective on this much-disputed and frequently misunderstood region.

¹ Stanislav Lakoba is a renowned scholar and former Vice President of Abkhazia, a disputed region in the Caucasus. He has published extensively on the history and politics of Abkhazia and has played a significant role in shaping its political landscape. One of his most influential works is the book "Abkhazia: Yesterday and Today," which provides a comprehensive analysis of the historical, political, and cultural factors that have shaped the current situation in Abkhazia (Asim & Lakoba, 2023).

Lakoba's interest in Abkhazia's history and politics stems from his personal experiences and background. He was born in Abkhazia and grew up during the Soviet era, which had a profound impact on his worldview. He later became involved in the Abkhazian independence movement and played a key role in its success. His involvement in the political and social life of Abkhazia has given him a unique perspective on the challenges facing the region (Asim & Lakoba, 2023).

The book "Abkhazia: Yesterday and Today" was written to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Abkhazian conflict and its complexities. Lakoba uses his extensive knowledge of Abkhazian history and politics, as well as his expertise in social sciences theories, to analyze the roots of the conflict and its possible resolution. The book is intended for scholars, policymakers, and anyone interested in the Caucasus region and conflict resolution (Asim & Lakoba, 2023).

Abkhazia during Soviet times

The annals of Abkhazia during the Soviet epoch were multifarious, characterized by both advancement and tribulations. The Soviet Union played an indispensable role in shaping the political, economic, and cultural terrain of the region. This dissertation endeavors to scrutinize Abkhazia's past and culture during the Soviet period, highlighting the salient episodes and tendencies that molded the region's evolution (Toft, 2023).

Soviet hegemony over Abkhazia commenced in the 1920s when it was subsumed into the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic. During Soviet rule, Abkhazia's economic and social systems underwent momentous transformations, such as the collectivization of agriculture and industrialization. The Soviet government channeled colossal funds into infrastructure development, including the construction of roads, schools, hospitals, and housing (Toft, 2023).

Despite these endeavors, the Soviet epoch also proffered setbacks and obstacles to Abkhazia. Soviet policies often disregarded the region's unique cultural heritage, and the Georgian authorities sought to assimilate the Abkhazian people into Georgian culture. The repression of Abkhazian language and culture during the Soviet era engendered a decline in the usage of the Abkhazian language, which had been the primary dialect spoken in the region for centuries (Toft, 2023).

In the 1980s, the perestroika and glasnost policies inaugurated a new era of transparency and political reforms in the Soviet Union. These reforms instigated an increase in political activism and national consciousness in Abkhazia, as people began to demand greater autonomy and recognition of their cultural identity (Toft, 2023).

The disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 brought significant transformations to Abkhazia, resulting in a conflict with Georgia that culminated in a violent and protracted war. The conflict originated from disagreements over Abkhazia's status within Georgia and promptly escalated into an armed confrontation between Abkhazian separatists and Georgian forces (Toft, 2023). During the war, the Abkhazian people faced substantial hardships, including displacement and loss of life. The conflict also wrought havoc on the region's cultural heritage, with many historic monuments and cultural sites damaged or destroyed during the hostilities (Toft, 2023).

In fact, Abkhazia's history and culture during Soviet times were characterized by both progress and difficulties. The Soviet government invested heavily in the region's infrastructure and development but also disregarded the region's distinct cultural heritage. The collapse of the Soviet Union precipitated momentous changes in Abkhazia, leading to a conflict with Georgia that had a significant impact on the region's cultural heritage. Despite these trials, Abkhazia's culture and identity have persevered, and the region remains a singular and distinctive part of the Caucasus region (Toft, 2023).

Abkhazia as an Administrative Part of Georgia

Undoubtedly, between the years of 1991 and 2008, Abkhazia, a region under the administrative control of Georgia, underwent substantial political and social transformations. Its history and population makeup made it an arduous area to govern effectively, while its status as a breakaway region and its conflict with Georgia further complicated matters. This essay endeavors to examine the political and cultural milieu of Abkhazia during its administrative period within Georgia (Sonmez, 2022).

Upon Georgia's liberation from the Soviet Union in 1991, Abkhazia experienced much political and social turbulence. President Zviad Gamsakhurdia's government implemented policies that favored the ethnic Georgian majority residing in the region. This decision led to tensions between the Abkhaz and Georgian communities. Consequently, the Abkhaz demanded greater autonomy and recognition of their unique culture and language. Nevertheless, the Georgian government opposed such demands, seeking to retain authority over the region (Sonmez, 2022).

The conflict between the Abkhaz and Georgian communities escalated into a full-blown war in 1992. The Abkhazian forces, aided by Russia, emerged victorious and declared independence in 1993. Georgia rejected Abkhazia's independence and continued to assert its authority over the region. The situation remained tenuous throughout the 1990s, with occasional eruptions of violence (Sonmez, 2022).

In 2004, President Mikheil Saakashvili's government ascended to power in Georgia, vowing to reestablish territorial integrity and end the conflict with Abkhazia. Nonetheless, these efforts were futile, and tensions between the two sides persisted. The situation came to a head in 2008 when Georgia launched a military offensive to regain control of Abkhazia. In response, Russia dispatched troops into the region, resulting in a brief war. Russia recognized Abkhazia's independence, while Georgia severed diplomatic ties with Russia (Sonmez, 2022).

During its administrative period within Georgia, Abkhazia struggled to assert its cultural identity and political autonomy. The Georgian government's policies and actions favored the ethnic Georgian majority, leading to tensions and conflict with the Abkhaz community. The situation ultimately culminated in a war and Abkhazia's declaration of independence. The region's complex history and demographic makeup continue to pose challenges for its future stability and development (Sonmez, 2022).

Factors that Coerced Abkhazia to Seek Independence from Georgia

Abkhazia's quest for independence from Georgia is rooted in a complex array of historical, cultural, and political factors. One of the key factors is the demographic makeup of the region. Abkhazia has a significant Abkhaz population, as well as sizable minorities of Georgians and other ethnic groups. The Abkhaz have their distinct language and culture, and they have long sought greater autonomy and recognition of their identity (Gachechiladze, 1995).

Another factor is the history of the region. Abkhazia was an autonomous republic within the Soviet Union, and it enjoyed a significant degree of autonomy during that time. However, following Georgia's independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, the Abkhaz found themselves under Georgian rule. This led to tensions between the Abkhaz and Georgian communities, and the Abkhaz demanded greater autonomy and recognition of their distinct cultural identity (Gachechiladze, 1995).

The Georgian government's policies and actions also played a significant role in Abkhazia's push for independence. Under President Zviad Gamsakhurdia, the Georgian government implemented policies that favored the ethnic Georgian majority in the region. This move sparked tensions between the Abkhaz and Georgian communities and led to demands for greater autonomy and recognition of Abkhaz culture and language (Gachechiladze, 1995).

The conflict between Abkhazia and Georgia escalated in 1992, leading to a full-blown war. The Abkhazian forces, backed by Russia, emerged victorious and declared independence in 1993. Georgia refused to

recognize Abkhazia's independence and continued to assert its authority over the region. The situation remained tense throughout the 1990s, with sporadic outbreaks of violence (Gachechiladze, 1995).

In 2008, Georgia launched a military offensive to retake control of Abkhazia, which led to a brief war with Russia. Russia recognized Abkhazia's independence, and Georgia severed diplomatic ties with Russia. Since then, Abkhazia has been seeking recognition as an independent state, but its status remains contested. The complex historical, cultural, and political factors that led to Abkhazia's push for independence continue to shape the region's future and its relationship with Georgia (Sonmez, 2022).

Abkhazia since Self-Claimed or Russian Recognized Sovereignty

In 2008, Russia's recognition of Abkhazia as a sovereign state was a significant turning point in its history. Despite facing limited international recognition, Abkhazia had been developing as a de facto independent state since its declaration of independence from Georgia in 1993 (Samkharadze, 2021).

During this period, the Abkhazian government focused on promoting the region's cultural identity, language, and traditional practices, which had been suppressed during the Soviet era and under Georgian rule. The official declaration of the Abkhaz language as the state's language and efforts to revive cultural practices were notable achievements. However, Abkhazia's economic development remained a significant challenge due to limited international recognition and its dependence on Russia for trade and support. The region's natural resources had been heavily exploited during the Soviet era, and sustainable resource management was necessary for long-term development (Samkharadze, 2021).

Russia's recognition of Abkhazia allowed the region to establish diplomatic relations with other countries such as Syria, Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Nauru. Despite this, most countries, including the United States and European Union, continue to view Abkhazia as part of Georgia and do not recognize its independence (Samkharadze, 2021).

Since Russian recognition, Abkhazia has continued to face challenges related to its disputed status and economic development. The region remains heavily dependent on Russia for trade and support, raising concerns about Russian influence and control. Therefore, analysts argue that the Abkhazia's history and culture since independence have been shaped by its efforts to establish itself as a sovereign state while facing challenges related to limited international recognition and economic development. The recognition of Abkhazia by Russia has played a significant role in its history and international standing, but ongoing challenges remain for its future development and stability (Samkharadze, 2021).

Assistance of Abkhazia's Foreign Relations with Syria, Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Nauru in promoting Abkhazian Culture across the Globe

Certainly, the recognition of Abkhazia by Russia in 2008 facilitated its foreign relations with countries like Syria, Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Nauru. By recognizing Abkhazia's sovereignty, these countries established diplomatic relations with the region, which allowed Abkhazia to partake in international forums and exhibit its culture and traditions (Doyle & Newman, 2019).

For instance, in the year 2016, Abkhazia participated in the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, where it demonstrated its economic potential and investment opportunities. Additionally, the Abkhazian delegation presented the region's traditional cultural practices, like dance, music, and handicrafts, which augmented awareness of Abkhazia's cultural heritage. Furthermore, Abkhazia has engaged in cultural

exchanges with other countries such as Russia and Armenia, which helped to promote its culture and traditions on the international stage. The International Festival of National Cultures held in 2019, hosted by Abkhazia, united performers and artists from different countries to exhibit their traditional music, dance, and crafts (Doyle & Newman, 2019).

Nonetheless, Abkhazia's limited international recognition and its disputed status pose challenges for its foreign relations and cultural diplomacy endeavors. Several countries, including the United States and European Union, do not recognize Abkhazia's sovereignty and do not have diplomatic relations with the region. This impedes Abkhazia's ability to engage in cultural diplomacy and participate in international forums with these countries. All in all, Abkhazia's foreign relations with countries such as Syria, Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Nauru have aided in promoting its culture and traditions on the international stage. However, its limited international recognition and disputed status remain challenging for its cultural diplomacy efforts (Doyle & Newman, 2019).

Abkhazia's Expected Amalgamation with Russian Federation?

There are several scholars who have suggested that Abkhazia may eventually become part of the Russian Federation. One such scholar is Sergei Markedonov, a Russian political analyst and Caucasus expert, who has argued that Abkhazia's economic and security ties with Russia make it likely that the region will eventually become part of the Russian Federation (Reuters-Staff, 2008).

Another scholar who has discussed the possibility of Abkhazia joining Russia is Sergey Kapanadze, a Georgian political analyst and former deputy foreign minister of Georgia. Kapanadze has suggested that the lack of economic development and limited international recognition may push Abkhazia towards closer ties with Russia, which could eventually lead to annexation (Reuters-Staff, 2008).

Georgian Efforts to Regain Abkhazia

Georgia is still trying to negotiate with Abkhazia for regaining the territory. However, the negotiations have been stalled for several years due to the different positions of the parties involved. The Georgian government has been calling for the return of Abkhazia to Georgian control, while the Abkhazian government and its Russian backers have been advocating for the recognition of Abkhazia's independence (Wesolowsky, 2022).

In recent years, there have been some small steps towards dialogue between Georgia and Abkhazia. In 2018, a new peace initiative was proposed by the Georgian government, which included proposals for confidence-building measures and increased economic cooperation between the two sides. However, the Abkhazian government rejected the proposal, stating that it did not address the issue of Abkhazian independence (Wesolowsky, 2022).

Despite the lack of progress in negotiations, some observers remain optimistic that a peaceful resolution to the conflict can be found. They argue that the parties involved need to focus on building trust and promoting dialogue, and that regional actors such as Russia and the European Union can play a constructive role in facilitating negotiations (Wesolowsky, 2022).

Conclusion

It has been investigated that the book “Abkhazia: Yesterday and Today” penned by Stanislav Lakoba doth furnish a thorough examination of the historic, political, and cultural factors that hath molded the present state of affairs in Abkhazia. The book is anchored in theories from social sciences, such as nationalism², identity politics³, and conflict resolution⁴, which do assist in explicating the intricacies of the Abkhazian conflict. Moreover, Lakoba’s work contendeth that the Abkhazian conflict is not just a dispute over territory but also a matter of ethnic identity and nationalism. The author doth scrutinize the role of historical narratives, cultural traditions, and political ideologies in shaping the attitudes and conduct of Abkhazians and Georgians towards each other. Lakoba also delves into the impact of external players, like Russia and the United Nations, on the process of conflict resolution.

The author’s utilization of theories from social sciences doth aid in providing a more profound insight into the Abkhazian conflict and the difficulties of attaining a sustainable solution. He doth acknowledge the challenges of addressing the complex issues of identity, nationalism, and historical grievances but proposes that a combination of dialogue, compromise, and institutional reform could pave the way for progress. In fact, “Abkhazia: Yesterday and Today” contributeth significantly to the literature on the Abkhazian conflict and doth emphasize the significance of comprehending the role of social sciences theories in the analysis and resolution of conflicts. It doth furnish insights that could be of service not only

² Stanislav Lakoba defines nationalism as a political ideology that emphasizes the importance of belonging to a particular nation or ethnic group and seeks to promote and protect the interests of that group. Within the context of the Abkhazia-Georgia conflict, Lakoba argues that nationalism has played a significant role in shaping the attitudes and actions of Abkhazians and Georgians towards each other. He suggests that the conflict is not just about territorial disputes but also about ethnic identity and nationalism. Abkhazians see themselves as a distinct ethnic group with their own language and culture, and they have sought to protect their identity and autonomy through nationalism. Georgians, on the other hand, see Abkhazia as an integral part of Georgia and have sought to assert their authority over the region through their own nationalist discourse. According to Lakoba, nationalism has fueled the conflict between the two groups and made it difficult to find a sustainable solution.

³ Stanislav Lakoba defines identity politics as the mobilization of groups based on their collective identities, such as ethnicity, religion, or language, to pursue their interests and rights. In the context of the Abkhazia-Georgia conflict, Lakoba argues that identity politics plays a significant role in shaping the attitudes and actions of Abkhazians and Georgians towards each other (Asim & Lakoba, 2023).

Lakoba suggests that the conflict between Abkhazia and Georgia is not only a territorial dispute but also an ethnic conflict driven by identity politics. He examines how the Abkhazians and Georgians have constructed their identities in opposition to each other and how these identities have shaped their political aspirations and actions.

Lakoba also points out how external actors, such as Russia and the United Nations, have contributed to the use of identity politics in the conflict resolution process. For example, Russia has supported Abkhazian claims for self-determination based on their ethnic identity, while the United Nations has emphasized the importance of respecting Georgia's territorial integrity (Asim & Lakoba, 2023).

⁴ Stanislav Lakoba defines conflict resolution as a process that aims to address the underlying causes of a conflict and find a sustainable solution to it. In the context of the Abkhazia-Georgia conflict, he argues that conflict resolution requires addressing the complex issues of identity, nationalism, and historical grievances that underlie the conflict. Lakoba suggests that conflict resolution in Abkhazia requires a combination of dialogue, compromise, and institutional reform. He emphasizes the importance of engaging all parties in the conflict, including Abkhazians, Georgians, and external actors such as Russia and the United Nations, in the resolution process (Asim & Lakoba, 2023).

Furthermore, Lakoba believes that a successful conflict resolution process must take into account the needs and interests of all parties involved, and must be based on principles of justice, human rights, and respect for cultural diversity. He argues that by addressing the underlying causes of the conflict and promoting a just and sustainable solution, conflict resolution can contribute to peace, stability, and prosperity in Abkhazia and the wider region (Asim & Lakoba, 2023).

to scholars and policymakers interested in Abkhazia but also to those engaged in other conflict resolution processes worldwide.

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