



*Review of Nika Azikuri's Bachelor Thesis*

Azikuri's bachelor thesis titled "The Context of Russia's Passportization Policy in Georgia" successfully contextualizes and analyses the process by which the Russian Federation used this policy of handing out its passports to Georgian citizens of Abkhazian and South Ossetian ethnic origins; respectively in the break-way regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia especially between 2002 and 2004.

Azikuri does so by offering a clear thesis structure where he underscores two significant parts of his work; namely one that deals with the legal discussion in international law on granting of nationality and citizenship law in Georgia and Russia and the other part that provides a detailed historical account of the geopolitical relations between the two states in the context of how an almost absolute majority of the populations from these two regions came to have Russian instead of Georgian passports.

Azikuri's does great job in discussing the legal aspects of this process showing very convincingly how the Russian state – highlighting also the discussion within the Russian political and legal context of the controversy of pursuing such policy by the Putin's administration – in so doing acted illegally vis-à-vis the Georgian state. More poignantly, Azikuri's points to the possibilities that existed within the Georgian citizenship law at the early years of the Georgian statehood that would have allowed those citizens who did not want to have a Georgian citizenship to do so. And he provides evidence that very few Abkhazians and South Ossetians did. Then, he traces the moment that triggered this process, which was the Russian Citizenship Act 2002. He also discusses to some length the concept of statelessness in the context of Russian Citizenship law.

The other part of the thesis the contextualization of the historical and more recent relations between Russia and Georgia as to make sense of the motivations behind Russia's policy on passportization. Azikuri rightly links implementation of this with adverse relations between the two states that began from the onset of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, whereby Georgia sought to establish a nation-state outside of the dominance of the Russia, whereas the latter sought to extend "Pax Russica" over Georgia. I am not convinced though the concept used here as a theoretical framework, adversarial balance of power, describes the power relations between the two states. To be sure, these relations have been adversarial but it is not accurate to see these states in a position of balance of power vis-à-vis each other given the obvious the size and military might of the Russian state.

And while most of the text of the thesis reads smoothly, Azikuri uses the "this paper" instead of "this thesis", the introduction of the thesis and particularly the literature review part is schematic and not cohesive. More importantly, while it is possible to aggregate what his main argument is, namely that this policy "should be considered illegitimate from the perspective of international, Georgian and even Russia law" (p. 46), Azikuri does not state this – which is more of policy position rather than a thesis argument/or main finding – in his abstract, introduction and even in the conclusion (explicit that is). Finally, it is not clear why Azikuri does not discuss some of the recent developments on this policy in Georgia.



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Nonetheless, while the main argument of this work is not explicitly stated, this is a well-researched and well-structured bachelor thesis.

Grade: B

*Reviewer: Adrian Brisku, Assistant Professor (IMS)*