The Political Landscape of Georgia

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Political Parties: Achievements, Challenges and Prospects

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FOREWORD

A functioning multiparty system is a *sine qua non* for a modern democracy. It is an empirical observation that a democracy remains an empty shell if there is no political competition and interaction between the various political parties. Even in this age when the civil society seems to be more vibrant than political society, and when we can see a general discontent with politics among citizens all over the OSCE region, political parties remain indispensable for the functioning of representative democracies.

Indeed, as early as the Copenhagen Document of 1990, the OSCE Participating States recognized "the importance of pluralism with regard to political organizations". As such, the governments of these participating states committed themselves to "respect the right of individuals and groups to establish, in full freedom, their own political parties or other political organizations and provide such political parties and organizations with the necessary legal guarantees to enable them to compete with each other on a basis of equal treatment before the law and by the authorities." Therefore, assisting the development of multiparty systems is a field for which the OSCE is well positioned. The other partner in the work done in Georgia and of which this book is its testimony, the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (IMD), was established especially to help develop these systems and the democratic political parties that are part of them.

In its governance work the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) stresses the importance of governments being representative, responsive and responsible. Assistance to political parties – both in and out of government – seeks to promote these goals among actors across the entire political spectrum. The IMD shares that mission. The three main principles on which our work rests are:

Responsiveness, which means that governments are able to react to the demands and needs of society at large, are open to effective interaction with civil society and various interest groups and are able to consider various views and interests in policy- and law-making processes. In this respect, transparency in the work of governments is crucial to making them responsive. The ODIHR and the IMD are prepared to lend assistance to political parties in their attempt to be responsive to their membership, thereby also enhancing the responsiveness of governments.

Responsibility, which means that governments can be held accountable by their own societies. While this is most visible at the time of elections, democracy in a democratically governed country actually functions between elections as "a daily plebiscite". Responsible governments govern in accor-

dance with the rule of law, where laws are open, well-known and apply equally to all. Procedures ensure that political minorities can contribute effectively to inclusive law-making processes and that a culture of boycotts and non-participation is avoided. And promoting multi-party systems where parties are accustomed to interacting directly contributes to achieving this goal.

Representativeness, which means that, while governments are responsive to public needs, they also represent distinct political interests, values, ideas and programmes, not only during election periods, but also between elections. Representative governments work on institutionalizing political life and public political participation through legitimate institutions such as political parties, thus simplifying and clarifying political choices faced by individual citizens. In our work on promoting multiparty democracy, The ODIHR and the IMD assist parties in developing and clarifying their platforms so as to make clear to the public what ideas and values the various parties represent.

In recognition of the fact that political parties are unique institutions of governance and that it is the parties that can make a valuable contribution to creating an environment where government is responsive, responsible and representative, the ODIHR has entered the field of assistance to political parties. This is done strictly on an impartial, inclusive multiparty basis in a project to promote ownership of democratic processes by all political forces.

It is fitting that this type of a project was first tested in the OSCE region in Georgia, following the Rose Revolution, which brought about changes in the political landscape. This is why the ODIHR and the IMD started to work on political party development through the innovative methodology of an interactive assessment. A knowledgeable local partner -- the Caucasus Institute for Peace, Development and Democracy (CIPDD), was the third partner in making the project a success.

We hope that this programme has enhanced the parties' understanding of their own and each others' strengths and weaknesses and made the field of political competition more transparent. We also hope to have identified a way forward that involves strengthening the internal democratic organization of the parties, enhancing women's political activity within parties and decision-making processes, increasing international contacts and improving the way the parties identify themselves at the local level. The OSCE/ODIHR would like to maintain this momentum by continuing the engagement in democratic political party development in the spirit of OSCE's emphasis on democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The IMD is committed to remain a strong partner in that endeavour.

The ODIHR would like to thank the governments of Canada and the United States for funding this project: truly an international effort in the political sense, but strictly a non-partisan effort to assist Georgia to further enhance its young democracy.

Vladimir Shkolnikov
Head of the ODIHR Democratization Department

Jos van Kemenade
Chairman of the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy

Map of the South Caucasus



Map 1. South Caucasus

Introduction

Democracy in Georgia is a matter of international interest. That has been said repeteadly by Western leaders during the last 15 years. When the assessment that led to this book was going on in 2005, US President George Bush visited the country and, to a multitude at the central square in the capital Tbilisi, he openly declared the interest of the world in having democracy succeed in Georgia. Other Western politicians and leaders of bordering countries like Turkey have also shown that interest. On its part, Georgia is promising to do all it can to join the club of democratic countries and the European and transatlantic organizations linked to them. At the same time it is seeking to improve its relations with the partners in the direct and unstable region of the Caucasus. In other words, the Georgian political class faces real major challenges.

Good and democratic political institutions are indispensable to a sustainable democracy. In countries coming from authoritarianism or where democracy is relatively young, those kinds of institutions and the democratic political culture upon which they rest are not available and have to be constructed. But it is first necessary to understand how they work. A good analysis of the existing political culture and organizations must be seen as a crucial part of a successful democratization process. Political parties in particular should be analyzed to help us understand how and why they work as they do. A well functioning political party system is evidently an important condition for a well functioning representative democracy.

Georgia is such a country. Since the last decade of the twentieth century it has been struggling with the construction of its democratic architecture. Step by step, achievements have been reached and new challenges addressed. But what are the prospects for the future? What is the current situation of the political party system and how can it be improved so that it can contribute to a sustainable democracy? To answer those questions we have carried out an interactive assessment in which Georgian political parties have been actively involved and have worked very closely with a team of researchers from the Netherlands Institute for Multiparty Democracy (IMD), the Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development (CIPDD), and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE/ODIHR). The assessment was carried out as an interactive process between the different actors whereby the political parties themselves delivered the different fragments of the picture and the diagnoses of their organizations. The process has provided the analytical foundation upon which future practical co-operation with and technical assistance programmes for these parties can be built. This book presents a report of the assessment process and the outcome.

The assessment was a joint-venture coordinated by IMD, who also contributed the methodology to assess the political party system. Together with the CIPDD, IMD organized the workshops, analyzed the outcome and helped to edit this document. The CIPDD was responsible for adapting the asssessment to the Georgian context. It carried out the fieldwork and the study of the institutional political framework, and it prepared the drafts for the different chapters of this report.

The representatives of the various political parties organized the workshops, fine-tuned the questions to be asked and the areas to be covered and drew up the conclusions and recommendations. Their active participation was crucial. The whole process was assisted by the OSCE-ODIHR and an Advisory Group that included prominent members of Georgia's civil society.

The first step in the research was to select the participating parties. The criterion for selection was the party's influence on the current political process. Parties were selected from those which are represented by more than one deputy in the acting Georgian Parliament, and/or acting Tbilisi City Council, the largest and most important elected political bodies in Georgia. Based on this criterion, a choice of the following six parties was made: the Conservative Party of Georgia, Industry Will Save Georgia, the Labour (*Shormis*) Party of Georgia, the New Conservative Party, the Republican Party and the United National Movement. Designated representatives from each political party worked in close cooperation with the research team.

The second step was to discuss and identify the specific topics to address in the research. That was done in a workshop in The Hague attended by the Georgian partners and experts from the Netherlands. The research itself was conducted in 24 workshops with political party representatives, four with each of the six selected parties.

Half of these workshops (or two with each party) were held in the capital of Georgia and the other half in organizations outside the capital. Each of the four workshops with each of the political parties was dedicated to one of the following specific topics:

- **Ideological identity of the party and its policy-making;**
- **Organizational structure/Human and financial resources;**
- **Internal democracy;**
- **Public relations and election campaigning.**

Usually, more than ten party members participated in each of these workshops, including party leaders, mid-level activists and members of grassroots organizations. The atmosphere during the discussions was very open, and party representatives were willing to discuss very sensitive issues. The workshops were conducted in June-September 2005 and delivered the data

for the analysis presented here in the chapters dealing with the institutional development of political parties.

A multi-party conference held on 31 May 2005 in Tbilisi and attended by representatives of all six participating parties was another important source of information. The discussions during this conference are reflected in the chapters of this document dealing with relations between the political parties and the State, and the role of women in Georgian political parties. In addition, several face-to-face interviews were held with representatives of each party in order to specify particular issues relevant for research. The final draft of this document was discussed at a second multi-party conference held in March 2006 and attended by high-ranking representatives from all parties, civil society and the international community.

In addition to all of the above contacts with political parties, the assessment team gathered further information from such sources as the general literature on political parties, analytical papers by Georgian experts on the Georgian political party scene as well as other aspects of Georgian political development, the results of public opinion polls conducted by different organizations and reports by international organizations on assessing different political events in Georgia.

The meetings with the political parties gave rise to distinct pictures of the current condition of each party, the inter-party relations and the relation between each party and the rest of Georgian society. This document contains those pictures and aims to provide guidance and orientation to politicians, policymakers, organizations and international actors interested in the further development of democratic institutions and politics in Georgia.

For their contribution to this work we would like to thank the members of the Advisory Group: Ana Dolidze, Eka Kvesitatdze, Lela Khomeriki, Giorgi Gogia, Giorgi Khelashvili, Gocha Tskitishvili, David Paichatdze, Devi Khechinashvili; the representatives from the Georgian political parties: Giorgi Mosidze, Irakli Kavtaradze, Vladimer Kokhreidze, Kakha Kukava, David Tsagareishvili, David Usupashvili, Levan Bodzashvili, Marina Tsulukidze; from OSCE/ODHIR: Tiina Ilsen, Childerik Schaapveld, Vladimir Shkolnikov; from the Netherlands: André Gerrits, Ruud Koole, Petr Kopecky, Gerrit Voerman, Ruben Verheul, André Krouwel; CIPDD´s team members Lia Sanikidze, George Gotua, Zurab Tatishvili and IMD´s team members Wiebe de Jager and Pepijn Gerrits. We owe all of them our sincere appreciation and gratitude.

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1. Democratic Transitions and Political Institutions

This book begins by outlining the development of the new state, democracy and the democratic institutions in Georgia since the collapse of Communism in 1990. Political parties function in a given context, which, in turn, influences them; conversely, the development of political parties is one of the principal factors in – as well as indicators of – the consolidation of a stable democratic system in a country.

This context is defined by a number of factors, two being **the political society and its different institutions**. Georgia has been a country notorious for its political instability and this has expressed itself through **multiple transitions to democracy**. Part of this chapter recapitulates the history of these transitions and tries to derive lessons from them. Two of these attempted transitions were never consolidated and led to the establishment of weak state institutions and semi-authoritarian political regimes, in which a large part of the public was effectively excluded from political participation. The Rose Revolution of November 2003 marked a new attempt at democratic transition in Georgia, and the overarching goal of Georgian political and societal actors is to **consolidate** this transition, that is, to create a sustainable political regime ensuring effective, limited and accountable government, broad citizen participation, and fair conditions for political competition.

What Georgians Want to Achieve

To create stable democratic state institutions able to serve citizens effectively;

To overcome territorial fragmentation of the country through peaceful means;

To create a robust and inclusive civil society as an avenue for broad participation;

To overcome poverty, achieve prosperity for all citizens;

To join European and Euro-Atlantic institutions.

This last point is directly linked to the relations between the state and the political parties, which is mainly expressed in the **legal environment** in which Georgian political parties operate. The Georgian Constitution and other legislation respect citizens' rights to create political parties and to be active in the public sphere. In practice, legislation has not restricted political parties, with the notable exception of the ban on parties that are regionally based. However, the electoral legislation has been extremely unstable as it has been renegotiated in the run-offs to all major elections. This has been confusing to the voters and has not contributed to the development of a vi-

able political party system. One of the important goals of Georgian democracy is to agree on fair rules of political competition that fairly represent citizens' interests but also ensure a robust and stable system of political parties.

Political parties also function in a **social context**. They respond to and express citizens' demands and concerns. In a number of cases – the Rose Revolution was the last of them - Georgian citizens have sent a strong message to their political elites that they will not tolerate authoritarian rule. No political groups espousing openly anti-democratic or anti-liberal ideas have been successful in attracting significant support from voters. However, save for revolutionary moments, most Georgian citizens have not actively participated in civic and political life. Civil society organizations, other than those based on relatively narrow elites, are weakly developed and do not provide an effective mechanism for broad civic participation. Political parties should always be closely connected to civil society and its non-governmental organizations, trade unions, professional associations, and faith- or community-based organizations. Their development will make the democratic system more inclusive and accountable.

Political parties and other political actors and institutions function more and more in an **international environment**. This is true for all countries and certainly for Georgia's new democracy. During the last fifteen years, developments in Georgia have been influenced by a number of international actors. While relations with Russia, Georgia's closest and most powerful neighbour, have been central to Georgia's security, politics and chances for economic development, a wide variety of other actors, usually described as "the international community" and including major international organizations, the governments of the US and of a number of European countries, as well as some private foundations, have had a considerable impact on the development of Georgian political and civil society institutions. Orientation toward European and Euro-Atlantic integration has been one of the notable points of consensus in mainstream Georgian politics, and the likelihood of consolidating democratic institutions is closely linked in the minds of many Georgians to the prospects of integrating into NATO and the European Union. This is also true of Georgian political parties, who are looking for opportunities to establish close contacts with like-minded parties in the West. While there have been some programmes of international assistance to Georgian political parties, this has never been a real priority of the international assistance programmes in Georgia.

This book argues that the international community can and should do much more to help Georgian political parties to become robust democratic institutions capable of effectively representing the interests of the citizens of Georgia. Each of the book's chapters opens with a box containing the main recommendations in terms of policy options. The first section will focus on the national and international context in which the new Georgian democracy has developed during the last 15 years.

1.1 Georgia's New State and Democratic Transitions

Georgia's democratic challenge is to make sure that November 2003 goes down in Georgian history textbooks as a "revolution to end all revolutions". This means that democratic institutions do indeed consolidate and allow routine constitutional transfers of power. For this, the government must learn to deliver the services needed by the public, and enter into a constructive dialogue with the opposition parties. It is crucial that citizens actively participate in governance through developing robust civil society institutions rather than only taking part in elections and sporadic protest rallies. Building sustainable political parties that effectively represent citizens' interests is essential in realizing this participation.

The Georgian state is very young and very old at the same time. Being an ancient nation may be one of the most important facts ingrained in the Georgian psyche. Georgian schoolchildren read stories about Georgia's relations with ancient Greece and Rome, and every Georgian remembers that this country was among the first in the world to adopt Christianity as its state religion[1], or that it had its Golden Age in the 11th-12th centuries. However, the country became fragmented after this period, and the first political umbrella under which the lands of contemporary Georgia were reunited was that of the Russian Empire. A brief interlude of independence in 1918-21 left behind a strong normative idea that having an independent State is the only acceptable political option for Georgians. But this normative idea was not underpinned by relevant political or institutional traditions.

Therefore, for all practical purposes, Georgia as a modern state is less than fifteen years old. Its new political institutions started to emerge in the late 1980s, in the twilight of the weakened Soviet Union. This was when the first political parties, independent media, and genuine public associations (nobody as yet used the term "NGO") were created. The first multiparty elections were held in October 1990; Georgia declared independence in April 1991: this is when its new state institutions started to take shape, although they were built on the basis of the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic, a part of the Soviet Union. Because the road that the country followed during this decade and a half was particularly bumpy, Georgia's record is probably more dramatic than that of any other post-Soviet State.

[1] This happened in the 4th century.

For all practical purposes, Georgia as a modern state is less than fifteen years old

In this chapter, we briefly analyse the major landmarks on the road that Georgia travelled before reaching its current condition. The chapter gives an overview of the current state of its political institutions, discusses its place in the region and in the world and describes the relations between the Georgian state and its major political parties.

Nation-Building and Democratic Transition(s): the Story of Three Revolutions

The inception and coming to power of the national-liberation movement

The new Georgia starts with the period of *perestroika* and *glasnost*, a fateful attempt to liberalize the Soviet political regime undertaken by the last Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev from 1985 on. Georgians used the opportunities provided by the new liberties to launch the national independence movement, which mobilized the public around the slogan of independence from the Soviet Union. The inevitable tensions with the Communist authorities came tragically to a head in the early morning of 9 April, 1989, when the Soviet army dispersed a huge pro-independence rally, leaving twenty people, mostly young women, dead.

This tragic event represented the moral death of the Communist regime in Georgia: its legitimacy was fatally injured and never recovered. Even though the Communist authorities were formally in charge for another year and a half, they were never able to implement any policies on their own. The controlling hand of the Kremlin was gradually losing its grip as well. In October 1990, the first multiparty elections led to the victory of the nationalist and anti-Communist Round Table coalition led by the charismatic Zviad Gamsakhurdia with 54 per cent of the vote.[2] This event was branded the "peaceful revolution" – the first and the most constitutional change of government in Georgian history until then. The electoral victory was consolidated in May 1991, when Zviad Gamsakhurdia was elected president with 86 per cent of the vote.

This period defined Georgia's political agenda, its public discourse and the character of its political institutions. The agenda was dominated by two ideas: nationalism and democracy. Georgia had to be an independent state

[2] To be more precise, the elections were concluded in November when the run-off elections were held in those single-mandate constituencies where none of the candidates had received more than fifty per cent of the vote in the first round.

within the borders of the former Soviet Georgia; it also looked towards Europe, which meant that it had to become democratic. There were virtually no alternative political programmes then being publicly promoted by the different political groups. Political debates focused only on issues of strategy and how to reach the widely shared twofold objective.

These years were marked by serious challenges to the creation of stable political institutions. The challenges had especially to do with the failure of the different political groups and ethnic communities in the country to reach a consensus beyond the twofold objective. Having a commonly shared agenda proved insufficient. The opposition against the Communists was internally divided into different factions that fought each other as fiercely as they opposed the Communist authorities. On the surface, disagreements were about tactics, but in essence the divisions were about the personalities and ambitions of the different leaders. Zviad Gamsakhurdia had emerged as the most charismatic among them and had been rewarded with resounding electoral victories. But other leaders in the resistance against the Communists did not accept his pre-eminence as legitimate. The Georgian political factions clearly failed to reach a consensus about the basic rules of the game and considered each other enemies rather than competitors.

Gamsakhurdia's rule embodied a paradox typical of many young and immature democracies: it had a strong popular mandate but was very soon denounced as authoritarian. These charges were justified at least in part since the government tended to interpret its popular mandate as the right to dismiss the opposition as irrelevant and to brand it as hostile to the state rather than to the government. The media was under strong pressure and only two independent publications were allowed to remain active while others were closed down.

Gamsakhurdia's rule had a strong popular mandate but was very soon denounced as authoritarian

Ethnic-territorial conflicts

Adding to the difficulties in achieving political pluralism was the problem of ethnic pluralism. The emergence of Georgian nationalism was paralleled by the development of counter-nationalist programmes in the autonomous regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The Abkhaz and the Ossetes formed their own nationalist movements and demanded secession from Georgia. As in many other multi-ethnic countries, an attempt at democratic transition created challenges to the unity of the country.

The emergence of Georgian nationalism was paralleled by development of counter-nationalist programmes in the autonomous regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia

According to the census of 1989, ethnic minorities comprised somewhat under thirty per cent of the population of Georgia, with Armenians, Russians and Azeris making up the largest groups (see table 6 on p. 67). However, the most serious problems arose not in relation with these groups but with the Abkhaz and Ossetes, who had enjoyed the status of territorial-administrative autonomous units under the Soviet nationality system. This had helped them to create their own bureaucratic elites and cultural and educational institutions, which later served as the basis for the secessionist movements. The third autonomous republic, Achara, was based on confessional rather than ethnic principles (most Acharans are Muslims but they consider themselves ethnic Georgians). Acharans have challenged Georgia's nation-building as well, but they have never demanded secession, and relations with the centre never reached anything close to an open conflict, at least not until the spring of 2004.

There is an important demographic difference between the two secessionist regions. Ethnic Ossetians comprise more than a two-thirds majority within their respective autonomous unit; therefore, they could base their claim to self-determination on democratic procedures. At the time in question, ethnic Abkhazs comprised only 17 per cent of the population of Abkhazia, with ethnic Georgians making up 45.6 per cent. Nonetheless, as a "titular" group the Abkhaz enjoyed preferential treatment with privileges in terms of high fixed quotas for jobs in the bureaucratic and economic-managerial offices. The principle of democratic majority would have endangered these privileges, so the Abkhazs had problems not just with Tbilisi, but also and especially within Abkhazia.

The Georgian national liberation movement lacked a clear idea about how to deal with the issues of the autonomies. The agenda for independence revolved around the struggle with the central government in Moscow, and the minorities' problems were considered only in the context of that struggle. The Georgian nationalists detected a Moscow-made conspiracy behind any minority claim, and attempts to establish a dialogue with minority representatives were only incidental. But it would probably not have been easy anyway to reach a compromise, even if the new Georgian elites had displayed more goodwill or political skills. Radicalism and aversion to compromise were as widespread among the Abkhaz and Ossetian nationalists as among their Georgian counterparts. Moreover, the Soviet authorities, concerned with a rising nationalist movement for an independent Georgia, had a vested inter-

est in encouraging and supporting anti-Tbilisi movements with a weakening effect within Georgia.

However, the fact that Zviad Gamsakhurdia was a strong ethnic nationalist who openly called most ethnic minorities in Georgia active or potential traitors to the nation greatly fuelled the tensions. The conflict first reached a critical phase in the Ossetian case. On 9 December, 1990, the newly elected Ossetian Supreme Council proclaimed the South Ossetian Republic, which could well be interpreted as secession from Georgia, or at least a step in that direction. Gamsakhurdia's Supreme Council responded by unanimously voting to abolish South Ossetian autonomy. The subsequent attempt by Georgia to establish control over the region by military means was unsuccessful and degenerated into a low-scale war that continued for several years. In the fall of 1991, Gamsakhurdia, having learned a lesson from the Ossetian debacle, reached a power-sharing compromise with the Abkhazians. This compromise did not last as it would soon be unravelled by the second Georgian revolution.

The Christmas coup and its aftermath

Gamsakhurdia's greatest problem lay not in his relations with the Communist Government in Moscow or with the ethnic separatists, but rather with his internal opposition. His radical opponents never recognized his legitimacy and were ready to challenge his rule. Accusations of authoritarianism were shared by an increasing section of society. His erratic style of governance alienated some of his closest lieutenants, while his fiery ethnic nationalism gained him notoriety in the West. In August 1991, most of the National Guard, which in fact is the Georgian army in a nutshell, defected together with its leader Tengiz Kitovani and the Prime Minister, Tengiz Sigua. After several months of uncertainty and failed negotiations, the rebels attacked the Parliament building on 22 December. Two weeks later, on 6 January, Gamsakhurdia and his supporters were forced to leave the building. More than one hundred people died during the hostilities, but the worst was still to come.

Many people perceived Gamsakhurdia’s removal as a fresh start for democracy in Georgia

However one assesses the leaders of the Christmas coup, as this event is sometimes called, or their motivations, the whole event was branded by its supporters as a popular rebellion against tyranny. Many people perceived Gamsakhurdia’s removal as a fresh start for democracy in Georgia. In March of the same year, the leaders of the rebellion summoned Eduard Shevardnadze to seize the reins of power. Although he was the former Communist

leader of Georgia, he also had some credentials with the Georgian liberals and the international community for his benevolent stance in allowing the 1989 velvet revolutions in Eastern/Central Europe and the reunification of Germany. In October 1992, fairly democratic parliamentary elections were held. Shevardnadze was overwhelmingly elected through parallel direct ballot to the position of Chairman of Parliament and Head of State. Parliament was extremely fragmented, but the majority supported Shevardnadze.

In one sense did the removal of Gamsakhurdia indeed give a new impetus to democratic transition. Aggressive rhetoric against ethnic minorities ceased or softened, the political discourse became much more tolerant towards all kinds of differences, the independent media proliferated, criticism of Shevardnadze was more open and accepted and political parties were mainly free to act as long as they recognized the legitimacy of the new government. Even so, the overall situation in the country was one of disorder verging on anarchy. Supporters of Gamsakhurdia did not give up and took control of Megrelia, the home region of the deposed president in western Georgia; the victorious militias did not want to concede the levers of power to Shevardnadze's civilian administration but did not have the internal coherence and discipline to exercise effective control either. Military attempts to restore control in the rebellious Megrelia were unsuccessful and only further disaffected the local population. The country was in fact divided between local warlords and criminal chiefs. This was an embodiment of the "failed state".

The country was in fact divided between local warlords and criminal chiefs. This was a "failed state" embodied

Escalation of ethnic-territorial conflicts made the situation even more critical. In July 1992, the Russia-brokered peace deal ended hostilities in South Ossetia, creating the first zone of "frozen conflict" in Georgia: most of South Ossetia remained under control of the separatist Government, and the ceasefire was monitored by the tripartite Georgian-Russian-Ossetian peacekeeping forces. However, on 14 August, 1992 hostilities broke out in Abkhazia after Georgian troops entered the region ostensibly to guard the railways and highways. At stake was not only Abkhazia but neighbouring Megrelia, which was under control of the Zviadists, with both enemies of the new Tbilisi Government having a vested interest in coordinating their activities. The Abkhaz militia offered military resistance, supported by armed volunteer groups from the North Caucasus and, at least as the Georgian side alleged, by the Russian military. This was a bloodier war than that in South Ossetia, ending in September 1993 in defeat for the Georgian government. The whole ethnic Georgian community of Abkhazia (about 300,000) fled the region. In April 1994, Russia brokered a ceasefire agreement to be upheld by

peace-keepers of the Commonwealth of Independent States, in fact represented by Russian troops. The peace-keeping operation was monitored by the UN observers mission UNOMIG.

Since then, these two regions have often been called "zones of frozen conflict": there is no final settlement, and a precarious peace is occasionally interrupted by episodes of low-key violence (as happened in May 1998 in Abkhazia and in July-August 2004 in South Ossetia). Although almost all ethnic Georgians fled Abkhazia and many of them South Ossetia, these territories still have mixed populations (tens of thousands of Georgians returned to the Gali district of Abkhazia which had been almost homogeneously Georgian before the war). Some institutions are reasonably consolidated in these separatist entities, but they are not considered legitimate by any other recognized state. The perpetuation of these "frozen conflicts" with uncertain prospects for the future constitutes a human tragedy for the people who live there or who were forced to flee and is the single most important obstacle to the development of the Georgian state.

The perpetuation of "frozen conflicts" is still the single most important obstacle to the development of the Georgian state

The Shevardnadze stabilization

Defeat in Abkhazia was followed by an escalation of the conflict between Tbilisi and the Zviadist rebels. In October 1993, the latter started an armed offensive but were defeated relatively easily . This marked a turning point after which the Georgian Government led by Eduard Shevardnadze started to consolidate its power over the whole territory of the country save for separatist or semi-separatist zones (the latter taking in Achara).

Shevardnadze's greatest success was to neutralize the National Guard and the Mkhedrioni, paramilitary groups led by Tengiz Kitovani and Jaba Ioseliani respectively, through a series of successful manoeuvres. The task was completed by the summer and autumn of 1995. In August 1995, the new Constitution was adopted, largely modelled on the American system. In the elections held that same autumn, Shevardnadze was elected President by a wide margin, while the party he created in 1993, the Citizens' Union of Georgia (CUG), gained a majority in the new Parliament (in a coalition with a group of independent MPs). The two other parties that made it to Parliament, the Union of Revival and the National-Democratic Party, could hardly be considered the opposition in the proper sense.

As a result of his victory, Shevardnadze created a hybrid political regime that allowed a certain space for civic and political freedoms but few conditions for genuine political competition and participation. Real power was concentrated in a fairly narrow power elite. The CUG, the government party,

served as a formal umbrella for this elite, but was very weakly institutionalized. The fact that it was dissolved as soon as Eduard Shevardnadze exited from power, was the final confirmation of its institutional weakness.
The power elite could be described as a network of clientelistic networks centred around the personality of the president. Shevardnadze created a hybrid political regime that allowed space for civic and political freedoms but few conditions for genuine political competition and participation. Having been summoned to bring stability to a chaotic and fragmented Georgia where an extremely confrontational style of political competition prevailed, Shevardnadze's main method of rule was to co-opt representatives of different interest groups into the power elite and maintain a balance between them. This made him an inherently weak but at the same time indispensable leader. The political system maintained itself, but its ability to act for the public good was rather limited.

The team of "young reformers" headed by Zurab Zhvania constituted one of the most important centres of power within the Shevardnadze system of balance. This was a group of young people, most of whom had come to politics through a moderate wing of the national liberation movement. In 1995 Zurab Zhvania became the Speaker of the Georgian Parliament, and his team also controlled the apparatus of the CUG[3]. That made him the second most powerful leader in Georgia, and some observers (especially Westerners) considered him Shevardnadze's heir. He and Shevardnadze were also perceived to have informally divided responsibilities between them: Shevardnadze ensured stability, Zhvania's team pushed for reforms. To strengthen his reform agenda, Zhvania tried to attract into government Georgians who were working or studying in the West. One of them was Mikheil Saakashvili, the future President of Georgia, then a young lawyer who was elected to Parliament while he was still a doctoral student at George Washington University in the US, and who was immediately appointed chairman of the key Parliamentary committee responsible for the legal reform agenda.[4] His deputy was another young lawyer educated in an elite Russian university, Nino Burjanadze, the future Speaker of the Georgian Parliament.

[3] Zhvania was the first Secretary General of the CUG.
[4] This was the Committee of Constitutional, Legal Issues and the Rule of Law.

Year	The winning party and percentage of votes in proportionate vote	% of seats	Other parties and percentage of votes	Electoral barrier
1990	The Round Table bloc, 54	62	Communist Party – 29.6	4%
1992	Peace bloc, 20.8	16	Bloc October 11th – 10.7, National Democratic Party – 8.2	
1995	Citizens' Union of Georgia, 23.7	46	National Democratic Party – 8, Revival Union – 6.8	5%
1999	Citizens' Union of Georgia, 41.8	56	Bloc Revival of Georgia – 25.2, Industry Will Save Georgia – 7.1	7%
2003/4	United National Movement, 66.2	68	Bloc "Rightist Opposition" – 7.6	7%

Table 1. Results of Parliamentary elections in independent Georgia

In the second half of the 1990s, the Georgian Parliament adopted important new legislation, mainly following Western models and advice: the civil code, civil proceedings code, criminal proceedings code, tax code, general administrative code, etc. Some aspects of this legislation could be criticized, but overall these reforms brought Georgia closer to European standards.

The young reformers pushed for drastic reform in the judiciary, which led to the introduction of new meritocratic criteria in appointing judges and replacing most of the Soviet-era judges. In 1999, Georgia was the first country in the South Caucasus to be admitted to the Council of Europe. This was considered not only a great victory for the country led by Shevardnadze, but also recognition of the efforts of the "reformers" led by Zhvania.

Another achievement of this period was the development of civil society institutions such as independent media and non-governmental organizations. That was an important manifestation of democratic progress since their existence ensured fairly lively public debate on policy issues and some level of public oversight of the government's activities. The Rustavi-2 TV company soon gained prominence and popularity as the flagship organization of the independent media. Development of these civil society institutions gradually made the public and the government used to the idea, that citizens can question the actions of the government and that free debate is a normal condition of society. However, only a small fraction of society actually took part in this civic area; the vast majority of citizens remained spectators only. NGOs mostly represented the young urban educated elite, and the circle of the publicly active organizations was rather narrow. The new civil society organizations were broadly considered allies of the "young reformers" in Parliament.

The administration of Shevardnadze and Zhvania could not be called democratic in a proper sense, but it certainly brought the spirit of pluralism into Georgian society. But achievements in the area of democracy development were restricted to the relatively small elite, and the majority of the people was excluded from effective participation in political processes. The political regime worked very much along the lines of what has been called *"competitive authoritarianism"*[5]: competition and pluralism were allowed but within a limited scope, and the real levers of power remained in the hands of a small elite that did not allow other groups to enjoy effective means of political competition.

From stability to stagnation: election fraud, corruption, and state failure

Two main traits of the Georgian political system could be regarded as reflecting the undemocratic character of Shevardnadze's regime: fraudulent elections and corruption understood as "state capture". International assessments of the Georgian parliamentary and presidential elections were mainly positive though increasingly critical; domestic observers and the Georgian media, however, assessed the electoral process in a much more critical vein. It is now impossible to evaluate exactly the degree of electoral fraud in Georgia in the period 1992-2001[6], but there is a near- consensus in Georgian society that the quality and fairness of the electoral processes were in decline throughout that decade. However, until 2003 one could not convincingly argue that electoral fraud was serious enough to change the winners. Typical electoral violations included multiple voting, stuffing of ballot boxes, pressuring voters, and the fraudulent tabulation of election results by electoral commissions on different levels. The general perception among the population was that the government was prepared to allow the opposition to compete as long as it did not claim the right to actually defeat the government party or presidential candidate.

There was a near consensus in Georgian society that the quality and fairness of the electoral processes were in decline throughout the decade

"State capture" as a mechanism through which decision-making processes in a state mainly serve the private or group benefits of the narrow power-

[5] On this concept see Stephen Levitsky, Lucan A. Way, "The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism", *Journal of Democracy*, 13-2 4/02: pp. 51-65.
[6] See more on this in David Usupashvili and Ghia Nodia, *Electoral Processes in Georgia*, in: International IDEA, *Building Democracy in Georgia*, Discussion Paper 4: "Electoral Processes in Georgia", May 2003, pp. 8-15.

elite[7], also took place in Georgia. The Georgian government was dominated by clientelistic networks or "clans", as Georgians themselves call them (see more on this in the *Society and Citizenship* chapter). Georgia's image was that of one of the most corrupt countries in the world: in 2002, Transparency International rated it 85th out of 102 countries surveyed; in 2003 it was 124th out of 133 countries, with the ratings of 2.4 and 1.8 respectively.

The phenomenon of "state capture" was also linked to the problem of *state weakness*, or in a more radical formulation, *state failure*.[8] Georgia under Shevardnadze was often called a "failing state", particularly in the last period of his rule. Failure of territorial control was its most obvious expression . Apart from the zones of "frozen conflicts" in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, there remained uncertainity about the jurisdiction over the Autonomous Republic of Achara. Its leader, Aslan Abashidze, took advantage of the period of chaos in the early 1990s to create a regime of personal dictatorship in the region. He never formally contested Georgian sovereignty over Achara and even labelled himself as the guardian of Georgian unity. However, in practice he ensured the effective independence of his turf from the Georgian authorities, often openly resisting even legitimate demands from Tbilisi. The Acharan government was fully dominated by his family clan, and the region refused to transfer tax revenues to the state budget. Abashidze monopolized control over the port of Batumi and the Sarpi checkpoint, the main passage to Turkey. He exercised his own foreign policy, which was much more pro-Russian than that of Tbilisi, and had his own contacts with the separatist authorities of Georgia. While in the mid-1990s his Revival Party was formally in concord with the CUG, towards the end of the decade Abashidze became openly opposed to the Shevardnadze regime, heading the largest opposition bloc in the 1999 parliamentary elections.

Since 1999, Georgia has also lost effective control over a small area of Pankisi bordering on Chechnya. The inhabitants of this area, the Kisti, are related to the Chechens. The problem in this area emerged as a spillover effect of the war that Russia was conducting in Chechnya when thousands of Chechen refugees fleeing the war moved to this area where some seven thousand Kisti already lived. Because some of them were anti-Russian insurgents, Moscow accused Georgia of harbouring terrorists. Pankisi soon degenerated into an area outside effective state control and became a haven for

[7] See more on this in Joel Hellman, "Winners Take All: The Politics of Partial Reforms in Post-Communist Transitions", *World Politics* No. 50, January 1998; Robin S. Bhatty, "Touch Choices: Observations on the Political Economy of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia", memo prepared for the World Bank, <http://www.cis7.nsf.>

[8] See more on this in David Darchiashvili and Ghia Nodia, *The Weak State Syndrome and Corruption*, in: International IDEA, *Building Democracy in Georgia*, Discussion Paper 5: *Power Structures, the Weak State Syndrome and Corruption in Georgia*, May 2003, pp. 16-22.

the illegal trade in arms and drugs and in kidnapping for ransom. Georgian law enforcement officials had de facto given up policing the area.

Georgia's image of that of one of the most corrupt countries in the world

However, if only because of the kidnappings, full isolation of the Pankisi area proved to be impossible. Residents of the neighbouring region of Akhmeta created a militia and threatened to establish order on their own, and this militia became a problem in its own right. In October 2001, by mysterious means (some alleged they were helped by Georgian law enforcement officials) a group of Chechen fighters relocated from the Pankisi to the vicinity of Abkhazia and tried unsuccessfully to fight its way into the renegade province.

Elections in Georgia

Reports of OSCE-ODIHR election observation missions are important sources of information on the quality of elections in Georgia. The final report on the 1999 parliamentary elections in Georgia mentioned "some instances of intimidation and violence...occasional restrictions on the freedom of movement for political parties...a clear advantage for the ruling party in the electronic media and ballot-stuffing". Polling in the regions of Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli was considered "less than satisfactory" and in Achara "unsatisfactory".

After the 2003 November parliamentary elections, the OSCE-ODIHR mission wrote that "the elections demonstrated that the authorities lacked the political will to conduct a genuine democratic process. This resulted in widespread and systematic election fraud during and after election day, most obviously in the Adjara and Kvemo Kartli regions." In the process of tabulating voting results, the election commissions "disregarded the voters' choices and were directly involved in producing dishonest election results."

Assessments improved after the Rose Revolution. According to the OSCE-ODIHR mission report on the March 2004 partial repeat parliamentary elections, they "demonstrated notable progress and were the most democratic since independence". However, the report also noted continuing problems that "posed a challenge to the integrity of election results in some districts." Achara and Kvemo Kartli regions were named as the most problematic.

While the Georgian central government's lack of capacity partially explains the authorities' inability to control the situation in Pankisi, it also appears true that corrupt law enforcement agents preferred to tolerate an environment that permitted them to profit from the criminal activity thriving in the area.

After September 11, 2001, the global pre-eminence of the issue of terrorism changed both Georgian and international attitudes toward areas like Pankisi. Uncontrolled enclaves within failing states, especially if they happened to be populated by Muslims, were seen as possible sources of terrorism. Georgia came under pressure from both Russia and the United States to take action, and this pressure produced results.[9] Georgian law enforcement agencies undertook several operations in Pankisi and gradually succeeded in improving the situation, but this only happened after corrupt officials in the Ministries of Internal Affairs and State Security were dismissed. The Pankisi problem led the United States to launch its Georgia Train and Equip Programme in 2002, which sent 200 US Special Forces soldiers to Georgia in order to help train the Georgian military.

By the end of Shevardnadze's rule the state's capacity to exert territorial control was weakened, which meant a setback in the positive trend of the mid-1990s. With it, the state's capacity to deliver on such public concerns as security, conditions for economic growth, and the development of public infrastructure, was also diminished. This led to a catastrophic drop in the government's popularity. Georgians decided that Shevardnadze's genius for "balancing" had exhausted itself.

The end of the Shevardnadze era and the Rose Revolution

It was the rift between the group of "young reformers" who had been shaped under the umbrella of the Shevardnadze government and the more conservative part of the political establishment that played a decisive role in bringing about the next change. This rift started to show after the 2000 presidential elections were won by Shevardnadze. The "reformers" themselves split into various groups. Several politicians with a background in business, who had joined Parliament in 1999, defected from the majority faction as early as in 2000 and created the New Rights Party (from 2005 on New Conservative Party). In September 2001, the then Minister of Justice, Mikheil Saakashvili, resigned and created the opposition National Movement. Zurab Zhvania's and Nino Burjanadze's estrangement from the president's camp was completed in the spring of 2002 when they created the United Democrats' Party. Another important factor was the Labour Party, which attracted the votes of

[9] Ariel Cohen, "Moscow, Washington, and Tbilisi Wrestle with Instability in the Pankisi," *Eurasia Insight*, 19 February, 2002.
<http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav021902.shtml>

the poorest electorate and, as such, was a relevant player on the side of the opposition. Industry Will Save Georgia (IWSG), another party of businessmen that had achieved relative success in the 1999 elections, tried to find a middle way between the government and the opposition.[10]

The local elections of 2002 were a testing ground for the new struggle between the government and the opposition. It ended in a crushing defeat for the government, notably in the Tbilisi City Council elections where the CUG obtained less than two per cent of the vote. However, the opposition looked fragmented. In the Tbilisi elections, the Labour Party and the National Movement prevailed, getting about a quarter of votes each, and Mikheil Saakashvili became the chairman of Tbilisi City Council. Outside Tbilisi, where voting was not according to the proportional system but based on the first-past-the-post system, the New Conservatives and IWSG were more successful.

The results of the local elections showed that the government had no or very limited chances of winning the parliamentary elections scheduled for November 2003, in the event they would be fair. On the other hand, various attempts to unify the opposition failed and the National Movement, the United Democrats and the New Conservatives limited themselves to agree not to attack each other in public and to concentrate their campaigning efforts on denouncing the government. The Labour Party chose to distance itself from both the government and its recent defectors, criticizing both in equally harsh terms.

The elections that took place on 2 November 2003 showed that the government was ready to revert to large-scale fraud in order to retain power. As Table 2 shows, serious discrepancies existed between the "official" results and the parallel vote tabulation (PVT) conducted by the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED), a Georgian election-monitoring organization working in cooperation with the National Democratic Institute of the United States. PVT gave the four opposition parties a clear and overwhelming victory over the government parties. The latter were united in the "For a New Georgia" bloc of Shevardnadze's supporters and worked together with the Revival movement led by Aslan Abashidze, the Acharan leader with whom Shevardnadze would cooperate in parliament.

Reaching agreement between different opposition forces in such a parliament might still be problematic, but the National Movement was emerging as a clear leader among them, and the record of Tbilisi City Council elections the previous year suggested that the opposition would be able to take control of parliament. The official results announced by the Central Election Commission (CEC), however, gave the two government parties room to manoeuvre if they entered into alliance and attracted the support of most candi-

[10] For more background information on the different Georgian political parties see their files in the Annex.

dates from the single-mandate districts (as they were expected to do). In short, the electoral fraud was significant enough to make a difference between allowing or denying the opposition a chance to control parliament.

Parties	CEC results	PVT results
For a New Georgia	21.3	18.9
Democratic Revival Union	18.8	8.1
National Movement	18.1	26.3
Labour	12.4	17.4
Burjanadze-Democrats	8.8	10.2
New Conservatives	7.4	8
Government parties total	40.1	27
Opposition parties total	46.7	61.9

Table 2. CEC and PVT results of 2 November 2003 vote in party lists

While the CEC was counting votes (the official results were only announced on 20 November), mass demonstrations were going on demanding that the government either recognize the victory of the opposition or resign.[11] These mass rallies were led by the National Movement and Burjanadze-Democrats, while the Labour Party and New Conservatives chose not to join them. After the CEC announced the results and the first session of Parliament was scheduled for the afternoon of 22 November, it became clear that things would come to a show-down. The opposition demonstrators disrupted the new Parliament session a few minutes after it began and forced the MPs and the president, who was delivering his opening speech, to leave the room. The next day, the president resigned, which, according to the constitution, made Nino Burjanadze, the acting speaker of Parliament but also one of the opposition leaders, the interim president. Soon afterwards, the Supreme Court of Georgia invalidated the results of the 2 November vote.

The Rose Revolution demonstrated the Georgian people's commitment to defend both the values of democracy and their political rights

The Rose Revolution was at the same time a demonstration of failure and a great success for the Georgian people and its institutions. The latter failed to provide for an orderly and constitutional transfer of power when the government had obviously lost its popularity and people demanded change. On the other hand, however, the events of November 2003 demonstrated the commitment of the Georgian people to the values of democracy and their intolerance towards blatant infringements on their political rights. Society developed an ability to successfully mobilize peaceful and orderly protests for

[11] The Burjanadze-Democrats had a somewhat different demand: that election results be nullified and new elections called.

defending its rights. After the president was forced to resign, events quickly fell back into the constitutional groove. This was in glaring contrast to the events of 1992 when the president was also forced to leave but only after blood had been shed and nothing could prevent a lengthy and dramatic period of internal turmoil.

The revolution also propelled Mikheil Saakashvili and his National Movement to uncontested leadership. Before the revolution, three leaders and their parties – Mikheil Saakashvili, Nino Burjanadze and Shalva Natelashvili from the National Movement, United Democrats and the Labour Party respectively - enjoyed similar popularity ratings without a clear leader among them. The invalidated vote of the 2 November elections showed that many people had switched their support to the National Movement at the last moment, but even then (provided the votes had been counted according to the PVT) Saakashvili would have been only first among equals. However, during the days of mass protests, he and his movement convinced most Georgians they were the fittest to lead the nation. On 4 January 2004, Saaksashvili ran virtually uncontested in snap presidential elections (no other important political leader took part) and obtained 96.27 per cent of the vote. In March 2004, the National Movement merged with the United Democrats into the United National Movement and carried the parliamentary elections with 66.24 per cent of the vote. The new generation of Georgian politicians received an unprecedented popular mandate. Now they had to give a fresh start to the country.



Map 2. Georgia and territorial fragmentation

The third attempt at democratic transition: State and nation-building as the new political agenda

As has been said, being a "weak" or, in more extreme words, a "failing" state is the central problem that has haunted Georgia since its independence. It appears that from its very inception the new Georgian government has given priority to efforts aimed at improving Georgia's score on this issue.

The problem of state weakness can in its turn be divided into two major categories. One is about the issue of *territorial control* and *nation-building*, or territorial unity and national integration. The second relates to the *control of the state bureaucracy (*or "state capture"*)* and *state effectiveness*.

When it comes to the issue of territorial control, the new Georgian government faced three very obvious challenges: the two unrecognized separatist regimes of Abkhazia and South Ossetia and the uncertain status of Achara. The Shevardnadze government took steps to tackle these issues, but with no success. Arguably, at some point Shevardnzdze's government started to regard these issues as insoluble, at least for the time being.

Reintegrating Achara was the first spectacular success of the new Georgian authorities

The new authorities gave a new sense of urgency to solving the issue of territorial control and displayed a determination to achieve results as quickly as possible. The first and rather spectacular success, which was in Achara, was made possible because ties between Achara and Georgia had never really been severed: the people in Achara felt part and parcel of Georgia, the Acharan economy was not separate from the Georgian economy and Acharans always took part in Georgian elections. It was only Aslan Abashidze's regime that defied the Georgian government. With the new and determined government in Tbilisi, conflict was unavoidable. However, the parties to the conflict were not, strictly speaking, Tbilisi and Batumi. To the surprise of many, it was the people of Achara, obviously inspired by the Rose Revolution and encouraged and supported by the new government, who rose against Abashidze and, in early May 2004, forced him to flee after a series of mass protests. The events in Achara were perceived as a double victory: a victory for democracy because an autocratic ruler was overthrown through a demonstration of popular power and a victory in the process of state- and nation-building. The people and land of Achara returned to the Georgian, now democratic political space.

Encouraged by the Acharan developments, President Saakashvili's government decided to take the next step in South Ossetia. After ten years of "cold peace", there were no obvious expressions of hostility between Georgians and Ossetians. People could move freely between the zone of conflict

and the rest of Georgia and were actively trading with each other. This fed the idea that the problem was only the corrupt clan of Eduard Kokoiti ruling in South Ossetia and that it would suffice to send some signs of encouragement to the Ossetian people for the separatist government in Tskhinvali to fall. The Tbilisi authorities closed down the wholesale market in Ergneti, in South Ossetia, that used to be a huge legalized loophole for smugglers between Russia and Georgia, thus hoping to sever the economic base of the Tskhinvali regime. At the same Tbilisi started a "humanitarian offensive" through a set of measures aimed at winning over the people of South Ossetia. The effort was backed up by a demonstration of force aimed at intimidating the separatist government by formally moving some troops into the region under the terms of the 1993 ceasefire. However, the effect was contrary to that planned since Ossetians consolidated behind the separatist government, while Georgian military manoeuvres soon led to armed skirmishes and human casualties. The Georgian government withdrew its forces after the failure of its strategy became obvious and so avoided a full-scale war. However, in contrast to the triumph in Achara, the episode of South Ossetia turned out to be an overall setback for the Georgian government.[12]

Thus, the unresolved conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia remain the main challenges to state- and nation-building in Georgia. Neither the Georgian authorities nor the international community have a clear strategy for solving this problem.

The government is trying to move Georgia's unresolved conflicts to the forefront of international attention, insisting that the issue cannot be postponed indefinitely

Although the international community insists that only peaceful means should be applied, nobody knows how long peaceful diplomacy may take until the issue is resolved, if ever. While accepting that only peaceful means are to be used, the Georgian government does not permanently rule out a military option. Its strategy seems to be to move Georgia's unresolved conflicts to the forefront of international attention and to force the internaltional community to realize that the issue cannot be postponed indefinitely. In January 2005, the government presented its peace plan on South Ossetia and won international approval at the OSCE year-end conference in Ljubljana in December 2005. Observers highlighted the fact that the Georgian peace plan received Russia's endorsement, Russia being the key-player in resolving these conflicts. Georgia's and Russia's approaches to the issues of Abkhazia and South Ossetia had been often at odds. This endorsement thus represents

[12] For the most comprehensive account of the summer 2004 crisis in South Ossetia see *Georgia: Avoiding War in South Ossetia*, International Crisis Group, Europe Report No. 159, Tbilisi-Brussels, November 2004.

a small diplomatic breakthrough for Georgia, although there is a great distance between this and actual change on the ground.

Increasing state effectiveness was the second major task prioritized by the new government. This implies that the government is able to manage state bureaucracy and to provide public goods. The first obvious step was that of paying adequate salaries to state employees. In Shevardnadze's time, even ministers got salaries that were barely above the living wage, while the vast majority worked for a wage on which they theoretically could not survive. That implied that those holding government positions were expected to use them for getting their livelihoods themselves: by taking bribes, by taking their cuts for protecting businesses, etc. Therefore, the government's first step was to start raising salaries for public employees. The increase had to be substantial to make any real difference (in fact, even a one hundred per cent increase would not change a great deal), and obviously this could not be done for everybody. A Reform and Development fund was created in 2004 ??? to pay salaries to several thousand top government officials. It was funded by international donors and Georgian businesses. Later, similar funds were also created to support reforms in the fields of defence and law enforcement.

These measures were quite controversial, as huge differences in salaries could not be called fair, and government spending through such extra-budgetary funds bypassed normal monitoring procedures. However, the measures did at least create a category of government employees who could rely on government salaries for their subsistence. They mainly comprised the top layer of civil servants, as well as army and law enforcement officers. This allowed the government to attract qualified young people into the civil service, many of whom had previously worked abroad, for international organizations, NGOs or in the private sector.

The new government is especially proud of substantial increases in public revenues and salaries of public servants and of investments in public infrastructure

The failure of governments to collect public revenues has been an especially notorious indicator of state weakness in Georgia. According to different estimates, up to seventy per cent of the Georgian economy can be considered a "shadow" economy, and until recently, governments have collected only around ten per cent of the GDP in public revenue, the lowest level even in the former Soviet Union. Even very modest budget targets were never met, and at the end of every year the government, under pressure from the IMF, was forced to cut its budget. It is particularly in the fiscal area where the new

government is now claiming its greatests achievements, since during the short time tax collection has increased dramatically.[13]

The sharply increased budget allowed the state to do things it could not previously afford to do. Apart from increasing the salaries of public servants, it also invested in public infrastructure. Road repair, repainting the façades of buildings and the reintroduction of free medical emergency services are achievements the new government is especially proud of.

The balance between the executive and legislative powers in Georgia

The relations between the political institutions of the new Georgian state are determined by the 1995 Constitution amended in February 2004. The President is elected by direct popular vote for a five-year term, while Parliament is directly elected for a four-year term. The President appoints a Prime Minister who then appoints the Government members (Ministers) with the President's consent. Ministers of Internal Affairs and Defence are appointed by the President directly. The Government (the Cabinet of Ministers) needs to obtain the support of Parliament. However, if the Government fails to obtain Parliament's support three times, the President can appoint the Prime Minister without this support. In such a case, and in the event that Parliament rejects the budget proposed by the Government three times, he/she shall dissolve Parliament and schedule extraordinary elections. The President also enjoys the unrestricted power to dissolve the Government. Before February 2004, there was no institution of Prime Minister and Government, and the President did not have the powers to dissolve Parliament.

The current system is defined as semi-presidential, but some experts also call it super-presidential, because it gives rather extended powers to the President. Its supporters consider it to be the first step in a gradual transition to a more European system where the Cabinet is separate from the President, and Parliament has a greater role in shaping it. They also consider the extended powers of the President necessary for a transitional period when speedy reforms are needed. The opponents are concerned with a weakening of Parliament and excessive concentration of power in the executive. Such systems are usually not conducive to the development of political parties because the parties are removed from the centre of power, which is concentrated in the person of the President. International organizations such as the Council of Europe have urged Georgia to further revise the Constitution in order to achieve greater balance between the executive and legislative powers.

[13] In 2003, actual budget revenues constituted 932 million lari; in 2005, they constituted 3.26 billion lari. – Galt and Taggart Securities, Georgia Weekly Stock Market Commentary, 26 January, 2004 and 23 January, 2006.

The fight against corruption and organized crime is another priority of the new government. This is an important part of the agenda of streamlining the Georgian state, as uncontrolled corruption and the power of the organized crime have been reasons to see Georgia as a "Mafia-dominated state". To fight corruption, the government has relied on the law-enforcement agencies to break the "syndrome of impunity", and has undertaken structural reforms aimed at preventing corrupt practices. One of the government's first steps after coming to power was to introduce new legislation to facilitate the speedy and effective prosecution of corruption cases. This included plea bargaining that allowed suspects to be released after pleading guilty, providing useful information to the prosecution, and re-paying embezzled sums to the state. This procedure was applied to a number of high-ranking officials of the Shevardnadze regime who were arrested on corruption charges and were soon released after having paid hefty sums to the treasury. This practice, however, has invited widespread criticism, including that of the Council of Europe,[14] for giving too much arbitrary power to the prosecution and not following the norms of due process. The most salient arrests were made early in 2004; later, those arrested and prosecuted on corruption charges were mostly middle-level public officials.

A number of structural reforms targeting corruption have also been undertaken. In July 2004, the notoriously corrupt traffic police were disbanded altogether and replaced by a new patrol police that became much more popular. The government also simplified procedures for property registration in both tax and customs offices. In the summer of 2005, the first national matriculation exams were organized by the Ministry of Education and Science. The grades achieved in these exams became the only basis for being admitted to Georgian universities. While university admissions used to be extremely corrupt, these entrance exams are nowadays widely recognized as fair. In some areas where the government did not believe it had resources to eradicate corrupt practices, it made bold but controversial decisions to annul some government functions altogether. For instance, the government suspended the mandatory technical inspection of all cars.

The government believes that it has been successful in breaking the pattern of systemic corruption in major public agencies

The government believes that it has been successful in breaking the pattern of systemic corruption in major public agencies. It is too early to judge how deep these changes are and how sustainable they are likely to be in the long run. International monitoring bodies such as Transparency International still consider Georgia among the most highly corrupt countries. Many pro-

[14] *Honouring of obligations and commitments by Georgia*, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Resolution 1415 (2005).

cedures continue to be insufficiently transparent, most notably in procurement. Many important decisions are spontaneously made and hastily implemented, and are then justified as necessary in order to increase efficiency.

The new government also considers breaking networks of organized crime to be its priority and claims it has made some achievements in this area. However, it was in late 2005 that this issue was moved to the forefront of the government agenda. The President signed new legislation against organized crime which among other things has criminalized belonging to organized criminal networks, and a new campaign was started against the domination of organized crime in the penitentiary system.

Further challenges

Although most independent observers recognize that the new government is responsible for some notable achievements in making the Georgian state work, there remain many further challenges. Government actions often invite criticism as well. The unresolved issues of Abkhazia and South Ossetia are still the main strategic impediments to normalizing the Georgian state. Here the Government faces an important dilemma because, although the Georgian government has pledged to use only peaceful means to resolve conflicts, its reliance only on the long-term efforts of quiet diplomacy and confidence-building may once again relegate the problem to the periphery of the international agenda as another "frozen conflict", and the status quo may continue ad infinitum as in other similar areas of the world. The government's insistence that the conflicts should be resolved within a few years (in the South Ossetian case, a one-year time frame is usually given) appears to be aimed at instilling a new sense of dynamism and urgency to solving the problem.

In the area of strengthening government institutions, it is recognized that a sharp increase in public revenues may not continue and that greater stress should be now laid on increasing the efficiency of state institutions. The development of well-paid, professional public services is crucial in this area. In 2004 the government was accused of acting in a "revolutionary mode", which included, among other things, frequent reshuffles of government officials and periodic drastic staff overhauls in public agencies. Many key political figures changed three or four top government positions within the first year and a half. Critics also noted that the government relied on well-meaning but spontaneous decisions rather than on a well-designed strategy. The situation started to improve in 2005 and, as noted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), "The post-revolutionary euphoria has given way to more pragmatism; the hasty, sometimes even chaotic

initial approach to reforms is very gradually being replaced by a clearer focus on priorities and by a better-defined strategy."[15]

In 2005, the government took some steps towards formulating strategy, having adopted such documents as the "Anti-Corruption Strategy and Action Plan", and the "National Security Concept". The office of the Minister of State, Kakha Bendukidze, prepared its own plan for the reform of public institutions. However, the shortage of qualified personnel is a serious problem impeding the development of the civil service.

Building Democracy

When the new Georgian government is criticized, the most frequent area of criticism is democracy. This may seem paradoxical as the ethos of the Rose Revolution was apparently democratic, and the new government includes many figures that first became known to the public as pro-democracy and human rights activists. Some people joke that if the period of Shevardnadze's rule was characterized as "democracy without democrats", now Georgia has arrived at a period of "democrats without democracy." However, there may also be some logic to this paradox. Having embarked on an agenda of speedy reforms in order to preserve its momentum for change, the government tried to concentrate decision-making within the small circle of like-minded individuals. But this did not benefit the development of an inclusive decision-making process based on deliberation and striking a balance between different societal groups and their interests.

This does not mean that the new government has nothing to boast of in the area of democracy and human rights. Presidential and parliamentary elections in 2004 (and later by-elections), while not perfect, constituted a significant improvement compared to previous elections: the OSCE-ODIHR described them as "the most democratic since independence".[16] In 2005 ?? the new media law was adopted, which decriminalized defamation and has made it much more difficult to sue journalists. State-run TV and radio were turned into a public service. Violence against religious minorities was stopped. Important new legislation was also adopted by local governments. However, there are also important challenges in the area of democracy-building that some commentators feel may even outweigh the achievements.

The weakest point of the nascent Georgian democracy is the lack of balance between different government branches and societal institutions. Some

[15] Implementation of Resolution 1415 (2005) on the honouring of obligations and commitments by Georgia, Resolution 1477 (2006) of PACE.

[16] *Georgia: Partial Repeat Parliamentary Elections 28 March 2004*, OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Report, Part 2, Warsaw, 23 June 2004.

of this imbalance may be blamed on specific decisions taken by the current government, but most of these problems are structural in their nature. In February 2004, one of the first steps of the new government was to push through Parliament amendments to the Georgian constitution that substantially strengthened presidential powers vis-à-vis Parliament (see box p. ??34).

The weakest point of the nascent Georgian democracy is the imbalance between different government branches and societal institutions

Georgia has never had a strong independent judiciary system, but it is widely believed that, under the new government, there is increased executive pressure on the courts who rarely dare to seriously displease the prosecution. Measures taken against allegedly corrupt officials from the previous government are often said to constitute "revolutionary justice" rather than the application of the due process of law. The government retorts that the existing court system is very poor and, precisely in order to change this, it has to take energetic measures that opponents portray as pressure against the courts. Both sides recognize, however, that the court system in Georgia is grossly inadequate for a democratic country and it may be the single weakest point of Georgian democracy.

The absence of viable local governments is another glaring imbalance. In late 2005, a new law on local governments was adopted, and local elections are expected in the autumn of 2006. The law instituted the single level of local government in Georgia, which is the rayon (district). The government believes the rayon can be a viable unit of local government, but the new legislation is often criticized for not leaving local governments enough resources to create viable institutions.

The weak position of the opposition constitutes another grave concern. The post-revolution Parliament is dominated by a single party, and only one opposition party managed to overcome the seven per cent threshold in the 2004 elections. The United National Movement effectively controls more than two thirds of the Parliament vote, which allows it unilaterally to change the Georgian constitution at will. The opposition continues to be rather weak even two years after the Revolution. During parliamentary by-elections in October 2005, all five seats still went to the UNM, although there were no complaints about the unfairness of the vote tabulation.

Problems experienced by the media are another matter of concern. These include both the genuine independence of the media and its competence and professional standards. After the Rose Revolution, two important TV networks (*Rustavi-2* and *Mze*) changed ownership, with people close to the new government becoming their new owners. In January 2006, ownership of both networks was concentrated in a single individual. Some political talk-shows that gave the floor to opponents of the government were taken off the

air, allegedly under hidden government pressure. Typically, the independent media in Georgia are not a lucrative business and their owners are said to subsidize them from the revenues from other businesses. Therefore, establishing and keeping media outlets may be motivated by the pursuit of some other political or economic agenda. In January 2005, the Council of Europe considered "a self-censored media" to be an important area of concern in Georgia.[17] In January 2006, it noted that "The media are financially weak and still lack the democratic culture which would allow them to credibly perform their role of democratic watchdog". [18]

This is not to say that the Georgian media, including major TV networks, do not criticize the government or give time to its opponents. The Georgian media legislation is rather liberal. However, the quality of public debate on Georgian TV is rather low, and what Georgian TV viewers usually see are personal attacks rather than discussions on public policies. Georgian media have yet to grow economically and professionally enough to develop into a strong and sustainable pillar of democracy.

Civil society institutions experienced a relatively high level of development before the Rose Revolution, this widely considered as one of the reasons why the revolution was successful. However, once Georgia got a popular and active government, civil society started to look less robust than it had before. While civil society organizations in Georgia have developed important organizational capacity and expertise, they are still largely confined to a narrow social circle of young urban elites. There are almost no broad membership-based organizations, and the existing organizations mainly depend on foreign donor assistance. Civil society organizations are active in public debate, but they have yet to develop the capacity to become an independent societal actor.

The main question about Georgia's democratic development is whether or not the change of power in November 2003 was a "revolution to end all revolutions", leading to the creation of a consolidated system of democratic institutions that allows routine constitutional transfers of power. From a more sceptical point of view, the Rose Revolution could be seen as just starting a new political cycle, whereby an unpopular government is ousted through mass public protest and a new one creates a dominant party that – like its predecessor – gets amalgamated with state agencies, while a weak and marginalized opposition merely criticizes the government but does not propose a viable alternative. The latter scenario suggests the threat that political competition again will spill out of the constitutional framework, and

[17] *Honouring of obligations and commitments by Georgia*, Resolution 1415 (2005) of PACE.

[18] *Implementation of Resolution 1415 (2005) on the honouring of obligations and commitments by Georgia,* Resolution 1477 (2006) of PACE.

change of government will only become possible by means of a revolution, coup, or other violent event.

In consolidated democracies, the main actors in competition for power are political parties. The development of stable democracy in Georgia is hardly conceivable unless a system of viable and sustainable political parties develops. Political parties are organizations that represent the multiplicity of social interests and approaches to different issues of public policy, but allow conflicts among them to be channelled into an orderly and constructive process.

Political parties, however, can only develop in a certain environment. The state has to create the legal and institutional grounds on which the parties function, but parties should also be rooted in the diversity of societal groups and interests. In the next two chapters, the legal and social environment in which Georgian political parties function will be discussed.

Main findings

- Georgian society has demonstrated its commitment to democratic values and a firm resolution not to tolerate autocratic rule; however, several attempts at democratic transitions have yet to lead to the creation of a system of consolidated democratic institutions;
- Since independence, Georgia has been haunted by the weakness of state institutions and political instability;
- The existence of unresolved territorial conflicts constitutes the major impediment to Georgia's state -and nation-building;
- The Rose Revolution has brought some notable successes, especially with regard to strengthening state institutions, but fundamental structural challenges still have to be addressed.

1.2 Putting Georgia on the Map: The International Dimension and Impact

Georgia is a neighbour of Russia, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Turkey, and has access to the Black Sea. Together with Azerbaijan and Armenia, it forms the small region of the South Caucasus, but it is often seen as part of larger regions such as the former Soviet Union, the Black Sea area, wider Europe, and the wider Middle East. Georgia is a member of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE, former CSCE, 1992), the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC, 1992), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS, 1993), the Council of Europe (1999), and the World Trade Organization (WTO, 2000). In 2004, it was included in the European Neighbourhood Policy of the European Union and launched an Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

The general direction of Georgia's foreign policies

As for every small and vulnerable country, finding its place in the web of international relations is especially important for Georgia. On the level of public discussions, the dilemma of Georgian foreign policy is often understood as that between being "with Russia" or "with the West". This is, of course, a simplification; in fact, Georgia needs good relations with countries of the region as well as with major international organizations and the powerful states that define the direction of international politics. However, the South Caucasus is often seen by international analysts as an arena of international competition for influence in which Russia on the one hand and the leading Western countries on the other have emerged as the main actors. Two of Georgia's main neighbours – Armenia and Azerbaijan – have been involved in a protracted conflict over Nagorny Karabakh. On the whole, Georgian foreign policy has developed in a contentious environment.

Despite internal political conflicts and deep differences between governments, the general direction of Georgia's foreign policy has been fairly stable since independence. Zviad Gamsakhurdia did not have time to develop genuine international policies since he was deposed before Georgia gained international recognition. For the governments of both Eduard Shevardnadze and Mikheil Saakashvili, the first priorities on the international scene were to attract the political and economic support of the United States and Europe and to cooperate with the major international institutions, most no-

tably NATO and the European Union, with membership in them as the ultimate goal. Different governments, as well as the Georgian political elite in general, have regarded joining Western institutions as the ultimate guarantee of their security and development. But this is also a matter of identity because Georgians consider themselves to be a European nation and want to be recognized as such.

Despite internal political conflicts, the general direction of Georgia's foreign policy has been fairly stable since independence

On the other hand, having good neighbour relations with Russia, as well as with other countries of the region, is also extremely important. Russia is Georgia's main economic partner, and without these economic contacts prospects for economic development would be seriously challenged. Russia's policies are also extremely important for solving internal conflicts in Georgia, such as the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

Eduard Shevardnadze was successful in attracting international political and economic assistance to Georgia. Under his leadership, Georgia became one of the top recipients of US aid per capita in the world. Due to his role in the unification of Germany, Shevardnadze's Georgia also enjoyed an especially good relationship with that country.

There were also important EU programmes implemented in the country, such as ECHO humanitarian assistance, the Food Security Programme and the Tacis National Programme. Total EU assistance in the period 1992-2003 amounted to about €370m[19]. One of the most notable projects initiated by the European Commission in 1993 was the TRACECA (Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia) programme which aimed at developing transport infrastructure in Central Asia and the South Caucasus. Within this programme, technical assistance projects and investments for the rehabilitation of infrastructure have been funded and are now being implemented.

The most important international economic project carried out in Georgia, with the strong political support of the US Government, was the construction of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline (the Georgian part was completed in 2005) and the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline (to be completed in 2006). These projects have not only brought large foreign investments to Georgia but have also created a stake in Georgia's security for major international players, especially the United States, and have increased energy security for Georgia.

[19] See EU Relations with Georgia: Overview, <http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/georgia/intro/> accessed 7 February, 2006.

In April 1999, Georgia was admitted to the Council of Europe, which was considered by Georgian society as an important recognition of the country's European orientation. Zurab Zhvania's dictum of the time, "I am Georgian, therefore I am a European", became a catchphrase to express Georgia's Euro-enthusiasm. While Shevardnadze's government gradually developed its co-operation with NATO, it was only in November 2002 that Georgia formally announced its bid to join the alliance. As for EU membership, Georgia under Shevardnadze never made a formal bid to join.

Eduard Shevardnadze was successful in attracting international political and economic assistance to Georgia

The context of the "War on Terror" gave a new, military dimension to Georgia's cooperation with the United States. The US Government became concerned that Pankisi Gorge was going to become a safe haven for Islamic terrorist cells affiliated to Al Qaeda. Against this backdrop, in April 2002, the US Government started a $ 64 million Georgia Train and Equip programme, which included training the Georgian military.

In the mid-1990s Georgia was considered one of the front-runners in democratic reforms in the post-Soviet space, and Shevardnadze had an international reputation as a leader who was gradually building up democratic institutions. This, in addition to interests related to the oil pipeline, was probably the main reason behind the high level of political support and financial assistance that Georgia was receiving. In the last years of Shevardnadze's rule, however, foreign donors gradually became disillusioned with Georgia, which was considered yet another weak and corrupt state where most international assistance was misappropriated.

Despite this, Shevardnadze left behind a legacy of a fairly high level of support from and cooperation with major Western countries and organizations. His record of relations with Russia was less successful. In fact, Georgia may have the poorest relations with Russia of all the former Soviet countries. It was the last country to join the CIS, in the autumn of 1993, after its defeat in Abkhazia, and this was widely believed to have happened under pressure from Russia. Subsequently, the Georgian government announced its policy of a "strategic partnership" with Russia. In practice, this meant that Georgia recognized Russia as the sole peace-keeping force in Abkhazia (Russian peace-keepers formally have a CIS mandate), and it signed an agreement legitimizing Russian military bases in Georgia (which nonetheless was never ratified by Parliament). In return, Georgia expected a vast resolution of the Abkhazian and South Ossetian conflicts under Russian brokerage. As the latter failed to materialize, Georgia started to give priority to its relations with the West, which did not please the Russian political elite.

Since then, Georgian-Russian relations have tended to get worse rather than better. Russian politicians often disapprove of what they see as Georgia's excessively "pro-Western" policies, and accuse the Georgian government of unfair "anti-Russian" rhetoric. Georgia, on the other hand, blames Russia for supporting separatist regimes in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The bilateral relations reached their nadir after Russia accused Georgia of harbouring Chechen terrorists in Pankisi Gorge. In 2002 the two countries were on the verge of a military conflict, and Russia even bombed Pankisi Gorge[20].

Drive to Europe: Repositioning Georgia's regional identity after the Rose Revolution

The new government that came to power after the Rose Revolution augmented Georgia's efforts to join Europe and the Euro-Atlantic space. In this area, the differences between the new leaders and their predecessors may be best described by saying that the former are more straightforward in formulating their foreign policy goals, they push for them more aggressively and they are more willing to recognize that the likelihood of achieving foreign policy goals is linked to internal reforms.

The new government clearly set membership of NATO and the European Union as its strategic foreign policy goal. The highlighting of Georgia's European orientation has become a central feature of President Saakashvili's frequent visits to the West. Starting from the presidential inauguration ceremonies in January 2004, the EU and Georgian flags have been consistently displayed side by side on all official public occasions in Georgia. The new government can claim some important achievements in relations with both the EU and NATO. In May 2004, the General Affairs Council of the EU reversed its previous decision and included three countries of the South Caucasus in the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The very fact of the Rose Revolution and the active diplomacy of the new Georgian leaders are believed to be at least in part responsible for that decision. The new Action Plan that will put Georgia's relations with the EU on a new footing is expected to be adopted in 2006. An Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) with NATO was approved in October 2004.

After the Rose Revolution, the new government augmented Georgia's efforts to join the EU and NATO

[20] See on this Jaba Devdariani, "Georgia and Russia: the Troubled Road to Accommodation", and Oksana Antonenko, "Frozen Uncertainty: Russia and the Conflict over Abkhazia", in Bruno Coppieters and Robert Legvold, Eds., Statehood and Security: Georgia after the Rose Revolution, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass. – London, England, 2005, pp. 153-271.

However, enthusiasm about joining the EU has abated over time. The main reason is that Georgia's aspirations have been dampened by Brussels. While Georgia considered inclusion in the ENP as offering the possibility of membership in the EU, Brussels considers this framework as a polite way of declining the bid for membership. Frequent visits to Brussels have shown Georgian politicians that the fatigue and trauma caused by the unravelling of the European Constitution Project have made the prospect of Georgian membership in the EU more distant.

On the other hand, enthusiasm for NATO is growing. The Georgian government hopes that it can start a Membership Action Plan (MAP) with NATO after the IPAP has been implemented in 2006 and that it will be invited to join NATO as early as 2008. NATO does not encourage predictions containing specific dates, but the prospect of membership looks much more realistic than it did a few years ago. In that sense, Georgia could follow the same path of integration followed by other European countries, first becoming a member of the security alliance and afterwards of the EU.

Other foreign policy activities are linked to this goal. Georgia is looking for allies mainly in the context of getting support for its European and Euro-Atlantic aspirations. The National Security Concept of Georgia, adopted in the summer of 2005, defined three countries as Georgia's "strategic partners": the United States, Ukraine and Turkey. While the EU is relatively passive in the region, Georgia considers the United States as the main guarantor of its security. Georgia is an active participant in the US-led military operation in Iraq, where it has a fairly large military detachment (850 soldiers,) making Georgia one of the most significant contributors to the coalition forces in terms of a country's per capita troop deployment. Georgia was also included at the last moment in the US Millennium Challenge programme, which was a symbolic expression of goodwill towards Georgia on the part of the US government. Under the programme, Georgia will receive US assistance amounting to $295 million to implement programmes in the development of infrastructure, support of small business and other activities aimed at reducing poverty in Georgia.

Georgia hopes to be invited to join NATO in 2008

Special links with Ukraine and Turkey may in part be explained as the attempt by the new Georgian government to reposition Georgia in terms of the region to which it belongs. One of the reasons why Georgia's European ambitions are often shunned is that Georgia is considered part of the South Caucasus, a region which is usually associated with conflict and disorder. While Georgia cannot and does not wish to deny its Caucasian identity, it does want to broaden the definition of the region to which it belongs and within which it can play an active role. In different international fora, Geor-

gia promotes the concept of the Black Sea region; on the other hand, it increasingly wants to be seen within the context of an even broader region that includes countries between the Baltic, the Black Sea and the Caspian.
Especially close relations with Ukraine are essential to this, and their development may be the most striking new feature of President Saakashvili's government in the foreign policy sphere. The Georgian government celebrated the Orange Revolution in Ukraine as if it were its own success. The Ukrainian revolution was broadly considered part of a new tide of popular uprisings for democracy in the post-Soviet space, and Georgia thus acquired the informal status of a country that initiated a new stage of democratization in the former Soviet Union. This is very important for the international image of Georgia and something the new government wants to capitalize on. A link to Ukraine is also important because Ukraine is more often considered as a prospective candidate for EU membership than is Georgia.

Georgia's National Security Concept

In the summer of 2005, the Georgian government adopted a National Security Concept that for the first time defined the main guidelines for Georgia's foreign and security policy. It described Georgia as "an integral part of the European political, economic and cultural area" and affirmed its determination "to return to its European tradition". This will be achieved through "full-fledged integration into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU)", contributing "to the security of the Black Sea region as a constituent part of the Euro-Atlantic security system." The concept listed independence, freedom, democracy and the rule of law, prosperity, peace and security as "fundamental national values".

The concept incorporated into the main directions of Georgia's security policy the strengthening of public administration and consolidating of democratic institutions, the strengthening of state defence, the restoration of the territorial integrity of Georgia, and Georgia's integration into NATO and the EU. In pursuing these goals, the Concept described the United States, Ukraine and Turkey as "strategic partners" of Georgia, while Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia are considered "partners".

On 12 August 2005 in Borjomi, Georgia, Presidents Mikheil Saakashvili of Georgia and Viktor Yushchenko of Ukraine signed a declaration calling on the leaders of all countries within the Baltic-Black Sea-Caspian area who share their vision to create a Community of Democratic Choice (CDC). In November of the same year such an organization was launched at a summit

meeting of nine Heads of State in Kiev[21]. The CDC will focus on the promotion of democratic values, regional stability, and economic prosperity. Being one of initiators of such an organization is another way for Georgia to underscore its commitment to European values.

Through this and other measures, Georgia is cultivating a group of friends within the EU and NATO. Relations with the three Baltic States, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria have been the most active in that context. In February 2005, these countries formally established a New Group of Friends of Georgia[22]. Georgia expects lobbying for its admittance to the EU and NATO as the highest expression of this friendship.

Turkey, on the other hand, is a very important partner for Georgia in the energy and military spheres. A bilateral energy partnership was sealed by the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum gas pipeline projects. Probably even more important, Turkey has served for several years as a bridgehead to NATO as it implemented several programmes of military assistance to Georgia.

Georgia does not see a conflict between its aspirations to join NATO and the EU and establishing good partnership relations with Russia. President Saakashvili has often reiterated that Georgia fully welcomes the participation of Russian business in the Georgian economy. In May 2005, the two countries reached an important decision to withdraw Russian bases in Georgia. This issue had been another stumbling block in bilateral relations for several years and resolving it was an important achievement for both countries. However, the unresolved Abkhazian and South Ossetian conflicts continue to challenge bilateral relations. Georgia understands that it needs much friendlier relations with Russia, but achieving significant progress with regard to conflict settlement appears to be a necessary precondition for this.

While Georgia increasingly seeks to broaden and "Westernize" its sense of regional belonging, presenting itself as a "Black Sea and South-Eastern European State[23]", it does not forget to give priority to relations with its immediate neighbours in the South Caucasus, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The latter was usually seen as the main partner in the energy projects already mentioned. Relations with both Armenia and Azerbaijan are also crucial in the context of the integration of large Armenian and Azeri minorities within Georgia. The importance of economic contacts between the three countries is also obvious. However, while the conflict over Nagorny Karabakh remains unresolved and relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan remain as hostile

[21] Ukraine, Georgia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Romania, Moldova, Slovenia, and Macedonia joined the CDC.

[22] This group was called 'new' since a decade ago a Group of Friends of Georgia had already been created in order to help Georgia solve its separatist conflicts. It was comprised of the United States, Germany, Britain, and France, and Russia.

[23] National Security Concept of Georgia, 2005.

as they are, the South Caucasus cannot really work as a region. Logically, for the time being Georgia will be looking for a larger and more comfortable region to fit into.

The Impact of International Actors

Since independence, different Georgian leaders have given priority to securing international support for achieving their national policy goals. What has been the actual impact of the involvement of international actors?

Measuring this impact is notoriously difficult. Those who prefer to explain politics in terms of conspiracy theories are tempted to see foreign powers behind all principal developments in a small and weak country like Georgia. Such simplistic speculations are easy to dismiss. But it is also obvious that had it not been for the activities of international players, Georgia would be a rather different place. Some major areas where the impact is easier to trace can be outlined here.

The Rose Revolution is a good case. Quite a few observers are convinced that it was the United States government which was behind the regime change; according to this theory, Washington became disillusioned with the elderly and ineffective leader and facilitated his replacement by a younger, more dynamic US-educated lawyer.

This view is hard to substantiate as there is no evidence in its favour. Western players, however, had an obvious indirect role in the success of the Rose Revolution. Their most important role was their decade-long support of civil society organizations and independent media in Georgia, both of whom were important in the events of November 2003. It is no wonder that many autocratic and semi-autocratic leaders of the CIS countries have started to become concerned over the role of international democracy-promoting foundations in their countries.

The development of civil society institutions like the independent media and NGOs in Georgia is widely considered a success story when it comes to international assistance programmes. It is certainly the case that after they encountered a much more robust and active counterpart in the new Georgian government, civil society institutions started to look much less formidable than they had previously seemed. Still, by regional standards, Georgia looks promising in terms of the development of democratic institutions and civil society. This could hardly be the case without the involvement of international actors.

The development of civil society institutions is widely considered a success story of international assistance programmes in Georgia

Cooperation with international organizations in the context of Georgia's possible membership is probably the most productive in terms of influencing internal reforms. By insisting on its European orientation and aspiring to membership in prestigious international organizations, both the Georgian government and Georgian society voluntarily set themselves ambitious goals that serve as major benchmarks of their development. In the process of joining the Council of Europe, Georgia carried out a number of important reforms that brought it closer to democratic standards and undertook an obligation to take further steps in the same direction. Fulfilment of these obligations may take more time than initially planned, but they have set the country in the right direction.

Georgia's bid to join NATO and the EU pushed it to set even more ambitious goals with regard to internal reforms in different areas. Becoming a member of these organizations, or even closly cooperation with them, requires fulfilment of specific action plans, such as IPAP and possibly MAP in the case of NATO. Action plans inherent in the European Neighbourhood Policy require specific actions from countries but also provide powerful "carrots" that motivate the country to implement often painful reforms.

In the area of market reforms, cooperation with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank as well as the process of being accepted into the World Trade Organization have all played a similar role.

Last but not least, the involvement of international actors is an important factor for maintaining regional peace and stability. The main conflicts in the region, such as those in Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno Karabakh, occurred during the demise of the Soviet Union when security was uncertain. Russia could not enforce regional security any longer, while the international community was not yet on the scene. The persistence of "frozen conflicts" does not prove the international community's ability to solve conflicts, but the influence of international actors is important in containing these conflicts and preventing them from returning to the "hot" stage. Political actors involved in the web of international relations and obligations are much less likely to take chances with attempts to use violent means for resolving conflicts.

Political parties and international policies

As has been said, when it comes to issues of international orientation there is greater consensus than division between Georgian political parties. The period of 1993-94, when Georgia joined the Commonwealth of Independent States and declared Russia to be its principal strategic partner, was probably the only exception to this rule so far.

At that time, a large part of the political elite around Eduard Shevardnadze believed that Georgia's future lay in close cooperation with Russia,

while the opposition of the time considered this view as a betrayal of Georgia's national interests and called for closer cooperation with the West. The government expected that orientation towards Russia would lead to a resolution of Georgia's territorial conflicts and would bring economic prosperity. As these expectations were frustrated, Shevardnadze's government gradually drifted towards orientation to the West.

When it comes to issues of international orientation there is greater consensus than division between Georgian political parties

While there are political groups in Georgia who question the country's strategic goal of integrating into European and Euro-Atlantic institutions and who call for orientation towards Russia, they have always been marginal and have never played a role of any importance in Georgian politics.

It is more typical in the Georgian political debate for the opposition parties to criticize the government for not being consistent enough in its orientation towards Western institutions and for making too many concessions towards Russia. Mutual allegations of a hidden pro-Russian agenda also abound. This was as true in Shevardnadze's time as it is today. For instance, while the United National Movement initiated a move to demand the withdrawal of Russian peacekeepers from Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the opposition parties such as the New Conservatives, Conservatives and Republicans pushed for Georgia's withdrawal from the CIS as well.

In general, consensus on the main foreign policy issues exists among all relevant political parties. This is certainly a major factor of stability for the country.

Main findings

- International actors play a significant role in stimulating Georgian civil society and democratic institutions;
- International attention to Georgia by European and transatlantic institutions has contributed to dimishing the chances of internal armed conflict;
- The foreign policy choices of different Georgian governments have been strongly focused on combining Western-oriented steps and good relations with neighbouring countries;
- There is a general consensus among all relevant political parties on foreign policy issues and this is a major factor of stability for the country.

1.3 Parties and the State

The Georgian constitution on political parties

Article 26

2. Citizens of Georgia shall have the right to form a political party or other political association and participate in its activity in accordance with the Organic Law.

3. The creation and activities of such public and political entities whose goal is to overthrow or change the constitutional order of Georgia by force, or violate the independence of the country or violate the country's territorial integrity or advocate war and violence, or attempt to induce ethnic, racial, social and national unrest is impermissible.

General provisions of political party legislation in Georgia

In any country, laws on political parties serve several purposes, one of them being to provide legal guarantees for unimpeded political participation. The law must protect parties from pressure from the authorities and allow them to express their opinions and declare their interests freely. On the other hand, the law may need to limit the activities of political parties in order to protect democratic institutions and public peace in the country. International experience shows that organizations advocating the use of violence are capable of undermining the existing democratic political system and even of inducing civil war. The Weimar Republic in Germany is the most famous example of this phenomenon. This danger justifies imposing certain regulations on political parties, even though such limitations may at first glance appear undemocratic.

The Georgian constitution tries to meet both these requirements. It guarantees the main civil and political rights and freedoms, including freedom of conscience, freedom of speech and the right to take part in political activity. Together with the right to form public associations of other kinds, Article 26 of the Georgian constitution recognizes the right to form a political party and take part in its activities. It also defines possible reasons for banning a political association. Constitutionally it is forbidden to create political associations that aim "to overthrow or change the constitutional order of Georgia by force, or violate the independence of the country or violate the country's territorial integrity or advocate war and violence, or attempt to induce ethnic,

racial, social and national unrest" (Article 26.3). However, the constitution also stipulates that even in these cases, the activities of a political party can be prohibited only by a decision of the Constitutional Court.

Georgian law recognizes the particular importance of parties to the democratic political system

In Georgia, the legislation regards political parties as entities of public law. The Organic Law of Georgia on Political Associations of Citizens adopted in 1997 spells out regulations for political parties in greater detail. The law defines a political party as a "voluntary and independent association of citizens based on a common world outlook and an organizational structure that is registered in accordance with the rule established by this law and carries out its activities within the framework set by the Constitution of Georgia and other legislation." According to the law, a party is a "necessary legal constituent part of a democratic society" which "takes part in expressing the citizens' political will." Thus Georgian law recognizes the particular importance of parties for a democratic political system.

Organic Law of Georgia on Political Associations of Citizens
The main points:

- The political party is defined as a voluntary association of citizens based on a common worldview and organizational structure;
- The party cannot be created or be active if it aims to overthrow or violently change existing constitutional authorities, undermines the independence or territorial integrity of the country, propagates war or violence, breeds hatred on national, regional, religious or social grounds;
- Creation of regionally based parties is not allowed;
- Parties are registered by the Ministry of Justice. In order to be registered, they need to have at least 1,000 members and a party statute;
- Once a party is registered, only the Constitutional Court of Georgia can prohibit its activities;
- Representative party congresses should be held not less than once every four years. The party congress can adopt and amend the party programme and statutes, and elect the governing bodies of the party. Some governing bodies are specified in the law;
- Parties are entitled to certain financial and other kinds of support from the state (see box on p.49). At the same time, private financing is also allowed. This financing is restricted to 30,000 laris per year from a private person and 50,000 per year from a legal entity.

The 1997 law also requires parties to conform to the following general principles in their activities and organizational set-up:

a) voluntary membership and termination;
b) independence and self-governance;
c) electivity and accountability;
d) equality of parties before the law;
e) transparency of establishment and activities of parties.

At the same time, the Organic Law does not always specify how each of these principles should be implemented. For instance, it does not define what "electivity and accountability" actually mean in practice. Therefore, the law allows for a great variety of types of internal party hierarchies in Georgia, including organizations where all party positions at all levels are filled through elections or those where leaders of local party organizations are appointed by their superiors. The law specifies the governing, executive and auditing bodies (the congress, board, commission, audit/inspection commission) and describes the function of each of them. However, it allows for the existence of other entities within the party structures as well. The existing political parties usually adopt the organizational model prescribed by law without any modifications.

There are some restrictions to membership in political parties. All Georgian citizens can join political parties, while foreigners cannot. On the other hand, members of the armed forces and law enforcement bodies as well as judges and prosecutors are obliged to suspend their membership in political parties. Most democracies do not have such limitations on the political rights of such groups of state officials. In the Georgian context, the motivation for instituting such restrictions was probably a legacy of both Communist rule and the first period of independence. In the Soviet regime, the law enforcement system was dominated by the Communist party and the concept of a politically neutral justice system hardly existed. On the other hand, in the period of the struggle for independence and the civil war, some parties developed militarized branches of their own. Therefore, the law-makers felt it was necessary to draw a hard and fast line between the army and law enforcement on the one hand and the realm of political competition on the other.

The law stipulates the conditions which have to be met to create and register a party. These requirements are not overly complicated: in order to register, parties need to have the signatures of at least a thousand members, organize a party conference with at least 300 participants and also submit a copy of the party charter and a notarized signature of the party leader to the Ministry of Justice.

Cases of denying registration to political parties

In the recent history of Georgia, there have been only two parties to whom the Ministry of Justice has denied registration. The best-known is the case of *Virk* (old Armenian name for Georgia), which at some point changed its name to *Zari* (meaning "Bell" in Georgian) but later reverted to Virk. This organization is based in *Javakheti*, the region populated mainly by ethnic Armenians. It champions the idea of creating a special autonomous status for regions of Georgia with an ethnic Armenian population. It has been denied registration several times since 1998. Virk continues to act openly, but the fact that the party is not registered prevents it from taking part in local or national elections.

Registration was denied based on the article of the law banning regionally based parties. However, Virk claimed that the organization had branches in different parts of the country and that it could therefore qualify for registration. In 2001, the Ministry of Justice denied registration to *Mkhedrioni*. This was a successor to a powerful paramilitary group that played an important role in overthrowing the Government in 1992, but whose many members were later imprisoned for criminal activities. The Ministry argued that, although the organization's charter did not include any goals conflicting with Georgian law, the leaders of the organization were individuals who in the past had committed many crimes against the state and society. Accordingly, it was inadmissible to register such an organization as a political association.

The most important limitation on establishing political parties introduced by the Organic Law is stipulated in Article 6, which does not allow registration of parties that are established according to the regional or territorial principle, although it is unclear what precisely "territorial principle" in practice means. The main motivations for imposing this restriction are the experience with separatist movements in Georgia and a fear that new movements may emerge in other regions where ethnic minorities are concentrated[24].

[24] See more on ethnic minority problems in the next chapter, *Society and Citizenship*, on p. 63.

State funding of political parties in Georgia

In December 2005, the Georgian Parliament enacted amendments to the 1997 Law on Political Associations of Citizens. The amendments defined the formula for calculating state assistance to political parties. Parties are now entitled to such assistance if they received more than four per cent of the vote in the last elections. Every year these parties will receive 2 laris for each voter for the first 200,000 votes they received, plus 1.5 laris per voter between 200,000 and 500,000 votes, and 1 lari per voter above 500,000 votes.

This rule, while it corresponds to international democratic practice, was disadvantageous for those opposition parties that did not participate in the March 2004 elections independently but broke away from the National Movement later (this includes the Conservative and Republican parties). After negotiations with the party in power, it was decided that the disadvantaged parties would receive their share from the funding intended for the National Movement proportionately to the number of MPs from these parties elected through the common party list. State funding will also be divided equally between those parties that created electoral blocs.

Unlike some other countries, the law does not institute any limitations for the ways political parties spend funds provided by the state.

In general, the Georgian legislation is considered liberal when it comes to the creation and functioning of political parties, and the parties themselves do not envisage serious problems in this area. The ban on regional and territorial parties is the only important exception (see box above). However, there are a number of vague formulations in the law, such as the requirements of electivity and accountability or the prohibition of incitement to hatred between social groups, that may potentially be abused by the state if it decides to restrict the activities of certain parties.

State funding of political parties

In a democratic country, the state guarantees political rights, such as the freedom for a political party to be set up and to function without state interference. However, many democratic countries go further and institute state support for major political parties. This is based on the recognition of the fact that robust political parties are necessary for the smooth operation of democratic institutions. In addition, the availability of public funding may protect political parties from overdependence on private interests.

The Georgian state also provides financial support for political parties. However, this support was rather symbolic until recently and it did not play any important role in actual party financing. In Western European countries, state support is more substantial and plays an important role in the institutional development of parties (see table 3).

According to the original version of the Law on Political Associations of Citizens, the state provided funding for all the parties which had won more than five per cent of the vote in the most recent parliamentary election. This funding extended to the whole period between elections. However, the law did not specify how the amount of party funding was to be determined. In practice, this legal provision has not been observed since it was adopted. The only exception has been the financing of the parliamentary groups in proportion to the number of their members, but these sums were very small and play an insignificant role in party budgets.

The generally low level of public revenues in Georgia served as an excuse for this practice. Political parties did not find it expedient to press for state funding too strongly when the state was not even able to pay meagre retirement pensions. As public revenues have grown considerably in the last two years, the issue of state financing for the political parties has again become a matter of debate.

	France	Germany	Netherlands	United Kingdom
Introduction direct funding and recipients	1988 Party presidential and parliamentary elections and candidates	1959 National party organisation 1968 parliamentary groups	1964 Parliamentary group 1971 central party organisations	1975 Parliamentary opposition (none to national party organisations)
Targeting	General purpose and campaigning	General and campaign reimbursement	Research and education	General
Contribution limit for private donations	Yes	No, but with strict registration of identity of donors	No	Yes, anonymous gifts illegal
Matching funds	No	50 per cent	No	No
Interval	Annual and election	Annual and election	Annual	Annual
Audit requirement	Annually to independent body	Annually to independent body both income and expenditures account	Annually to Ministry of Finance, only overall account of ancillary organisations	Quarterly (or more frequent if requested) to Electoral Commission of both party and ancillary organisations
Basic Allocation Criteria	Per seat, per vote and per candidate	Per vote and per seat, minimally 0,5 % of 2nd votes	Basic amount plus per seat. Not to exceed 10 % of salary expenditures and 30 % of all expenditures	Per seat
Introduction of indirect support and subsidies and recipients	1988 billposting, mailing and telephone facilities, (partly) free travel, free broadcasting, and press access	1983 billposting, broadcasting, youth, foreign aid and educational organisations	1925 subsidy for media broadcasting, billposting 1972 research organisations 1975 women and youth, educational organisations 1990 East European Assistance	1975 broadcasting, mailing and use of public halls

Table 3. State support for political parties in Western Europe
Source: A. Krouwel: 1999. "The development of the catch all party. A study in arrested development. Phd Free University Amsterdam.

In December 2005, following a series of discussions and negotiations with opposition parties, Parliament enacted a package of amendments to the election code and the law on political parties. It envisaged increased state financing for those parties that had received at least four per cent of the vote in the most recent parliamentary elections. This time the law defined a precise

formula for calculating the amount of state funding for each party (see inbox).

When this law is enacted, the absolute volume of party funding received from the state will constitute a sizeable addition to the political party budgets. However, it is also clear that such financing will not be sufficient for political parties to be able to cover the major expenses involved in maintaining their organizational infrastructure or conducting election campaigns.

Campaign expenditure

Another more important part of Georgia's election legislation refers to the transparency and accountability of party spending during elections. The election code requires political parties to submit reports on their sources for financing electoral campaigns and on campaign spending, both within a month after elections. These reports are made public.

The parties do not contest the need for such legislation nor do they demand that it be amended. However, there are widespread doubts about the effectiveness of such legislation. It is widely believed that the parties report only a fraction of their actual campaign spending. Since, however, this is true both of the government and the opposition parties, it rarely becomes an issue in discussions between them. It is only the media and civil society that point to some inconsistencies or uncertainties in the financial reports of political parties. However, even these groups do not press the issue too far as it is believed that strict enforcement of rules regulating the transparency of party financing may in fact be disproportionately damaging to the opposition as private businesses may be reluctant to be seen openly subsidizing the opposition.

The electoral system

Electoral laws may be the single most important element in the legal environment that influences the character of competition between political parties as well as their internal development. They also happen to be among the most contentious pieces of legislation in Georgia. Different political actors are continuously trying to change the electoral legislation to their advantage. But this is not strange. As Table 4 shows, state regulations in Western Europe are not uniform; rather, they differ substantially between countries, reproducing the political system and the correlation of power between the political parties in each country.

With regard to elected bodies, Georgian citizens participate in three kinds of elections. These are presidential elections, parliamentary elections and local elections. In addition, residents of the autonomous region of Achara

take part in regional elections. In other Georgian regions ("mkhare") there are no elected assemblies.

Electoral laws are among the most contentious pieces of legislation in Georgia

The 1995 constitution made the president the most powerful political leader in the country. The president is elected by direct popular vote and is considered elected if he or she receives more than half of the votes cast. If none of the candidates receives the required number of votes, a run-off election is held in which the two strongest candidates take part, and the candidate who receives more votes is declared the winner. Thus far, there has been no precedent for the second round in Georgian presidential elections.

	France	Germany	Netherlands	United Kingdom
Campaign finance from the state	Yes (Presidential elections)	Yes	No	No
Restrictions on TV access	Equal access	Proportionate	No	Proportionate
Paid political ads on TV allowed	No	Yes, but regulated	Yes	No
Free airtime to political parties	Yes 4 minutes slots	Yes 2,5 minutes slots	Yes 7-8 minutes slots	10 minutes slots
Fair balance rules	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Leader debates televised	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Ban on publications of opinion polls prior to election	No (abandoned in 1998)	No	No	No
Spending limits	Yes	No	No	Yes
US consultants involved in recent campaigns	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Table 4. State regulations concerning political campaigning by political parties. Source: Norris 2002, Farrell and Webb 2000, quoted in A. Krouwel 2004. Partisan states. Legal regulation of political parties in France, Germany, the Netherlands, United Kingdom. Wolff Legal Publications. Nijmegen.

Presidential elections have never been particularly important for party politics since the competition here is among individuals. Moreover, in each presidential election there has been a clear frontrunner who was elected without serious competition. Parties are effectively sidelined from this process.

This leaves parliamentary elections as the main arena where political parties in Georgia compete for votes. Local elections are also quite competitive, but the competences of local councils have been extremely limited; parties therefore consider local elections more as testing grounds in preparation for the more important parliamentary elections. Now that the new local government law was enacted by the Georgian Parliament in December 2005, the cost of winning local elections will probably increase, as the local councils will elect heads of rayon-level administrations (these officials were previously appointed by the president).

According to most political parties, there are several very important and controversial issues related to the electoral law. The first is the mode of election: the majoritarian, or first-past-the-post system (FPP) as opposed to proportional representation (PR); the second issue is the thresholds for political party lists in PR; and the third is the composition of the electoral commissions.

The Georgian Parliament has 235 members, elected through a mixed voting system combining FPP and PR methods. Its 150 members are elected in a PR vote using nationwide party lists, and 85 members represent single-mandate constituencies. The electoral law recognizes the parties and blocs of parties as key participants in the electoral process that can submit electoral lists, while representatives of parties and blocs as well as independents can run for the single-mandate seats.

In November 2003, simultaneously with parliamentary elections, a referendum was held on reducing the number of MPs in the Georgian Parliament. Based on its results, Parliament adopted amendments to the Georgian constitution. The number of MPs was reduced to 150, with 50 MPs elected by the majoritarian system and 100 through proportional representation. It is yet to be decided how the 50 majoritarian mandates will be divided between the Georgian regions. The next parliamentary elections, expected in 2008, will be held according to the new rules.

While many details of the electoral legislation (the composition of electoral administration, rules according to which proportional elections are held, etc.) are changed before each election, the mixed system of voting has been relatively stable. It was initially adopted for the first multiparty elections held in October 1990. As in other Eastern European countries, in Georgia the anti-Communist forces feared that, in a totally majoritarian system, the ruling party would use the clientelistic networks that had taken shape over many years to win elections in individual localities and so form a majority in Parliament. The introduction of the mixed voting system in the elections became possible through a compromise reached between the Communist Party and the opposition. Since then, it has been traditional to consider the proportional system of voting more democratic. Single-mandate constituencies are often won by independent candidates who distance themselves from

all political parties, but once in parliament, independent candidates are more likely to support the pro-government faction. This was true for all convocations of Parliament.

In 2005, Parliament, following the initiative of the United National Movement, enacted new legislation introducing multi-mandate FPP for the majoritarian part of Tbilisi City Council elections (other mandates for the City Council will be distributed by the PR system). The city is divided into several large electoral districts with a certain number of seats (three or four) allocated to each. Elections in these districts will be based on the winner-takes-all principle: the party list that gets a plurality takes all the seats allocated to the given district. The opposition strongly contested this system as they believed it was biased towards the government party. This will certainly be true as long as the opposition remains fragmented. The system will be tested in the local elections expected in the autumn of 2006.

An electoral threshold for political parties was introduced for the first time during the 1990 elections. The threshold was set at four per cent and its introduction aimed at admitting to Parliament only the strongest of the numerous political organizations that were in existence at the time. Then as now it was widely recognized in Georgia that the political scene was too fragmented with more than 180 parties officially registered; therefore a threshold was needed to limit the chances of parliamentary representation of groups that were considered by many to be marginal. In the first election under these new rules, only the victorious Round Table-Free Georgia coalition and the Communist Party cleared the threshold.

The high threshold for political party lists is supposed to cut off marginal political players, but it also endangers fair representation and political pluralism

In the 1992 elections that followed the ousting of President Gamsakhurdia and fragmentation in the country, the electoral threshold was rejected altogether as the aim was to keep all political groups in Parliament rather than on the streets. In later elections, however, the electoral threshold was progressively raised to five per cent in the 1995 constitution and to seven per cent before the 1999 elections. In 1995 and 1999, three parties cleared the threshold, in 2004 only two were successful. Indeed, the victorious coalition coming out of the Rose Revolution also refused to introduce changes, arguing that a lower threshold was conducive to the proliferation of numerous small parties that would not be advantageous to developing a strong party system in Georgia. Before the 2004 elections, the OSCE-ODIHR and the Council of Europe recommended that Georgia reduce the threshold to at least five per cent since a high threshold created the risk of a parliament

without any opposition being elected.[25] This recommendation was supported by the opposition parties. Since the elections were held in the aftermath of the Rose Revolution when the National Movement was extremely popular, there was a fear that no opposition party at all would be able to clear the threshold (in the end, the New Conservatives barely made it past seven per cent).

	Threshold (%)	Votes for parties over threshold (%)	Unrepresented voters (%)
1990	4	83.6	16.4
1995	5	38.6	61.4
1999	7	74.0	26.0
2004	7	73.6	27.4

Table 5

This, as well as the introduction of a winner-takes-all system in multi-mandate districts, suggested that the current government is in favour of legislation that is advantageous only to strong parties. The party in power also proposes extending the same system (winner-takes-all in multi-mandate districts) to the majoritarian part of parliamentary elections to be held in 2008. This could push the opposition parties into joining forces against the government party since a fragmented opposition will have no chance of succeeding under such legislation.

Frequent changes of electoral thresholds and, more recently, the introduction of multi-mandate districts demonstrate a tension that exists in the Georgian political system between the two imperatives, that of reducing parliamentary fragmentation and that of ensuring fair representation and political pluralism. It is widely believed that the current system hampers fair political representation and democratic pluralism at the national level and encourages the system of single dominant parties. Table 5 shows that this system results in a considerable number of voters not being represented in Parliament since they voted for parties that did not clear the threshold. However, there is still the fear of fragmentation, which could bring instability and reduce the effectiveness of Parliament. The 1992-95 Parliament, which was extremely fragmented since the parties were elected without any threshold[26], is also believed to have been especially chaotic and ineffective, although, it did adopt a constitution.

[25] PACE (Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe), Functioning of Democratic Institutions in Georgia, Resolution 1363 (2004).

[26] Twenty-four parties and blocs were elected to Parliament, in addition to 60 independent candidates.

Administering elections

Staffing the electoral commissions at different levels continues to be one of the most controversial issues. Until this year, the composition of the electoral commissions was based either on the principle of party representation or on the mixture of party representation with notionally neutral civil servants; the latter, however, were presumed to be biased in favour of the government. This approach also goes back to the time of the first post-Communist elections in 1990. With no experience of democratic elections, there were no institutions at that time that could be trusted with impartial election administration; having some kind of parity in electoral commissions between the government and the opposition therefore appeared to be the only acceptable solution.

However, the exact balance of power within the electoral commissions became the arena of intense party infighting in the run-up to each election. Since the government had the stronger bargaining position, it always managed to get majorities in electoral commissions. As a result, faith in the electoral process was at a very low ebb, and election tabulation, especially since 1995, was widely believed to be massively fraudulent. Opposition parties and both the media and NGOs routinely accused the government of rigging elections on a mass scale. Assessments of international organizations were more cautious but increasingly critical. Commentators also spoke about behind-the-scenes deals in electoral commissions struck between political parties; in this way at least some opposition parties derived their own benefits from electoral fraud.

In April 2005, Parliament enacted amendments to the electoral code that abolished party representation in electoral commissions and declared that these commissions should be staffed by impartial civil servants selected by the President and Parliament on the basis of open competition. The failure of the electoral commission based on party representation to ensure clean elections was referred to as the main reason for this decision. This change provoked vigorous protests from the opposition, which called such electoral administration a "single-party" administration.

In this case as well, Georgian legislators have to strike a delicate balance between two requirements: developing a professional and politically independent electoral administration and ensuring that all political players have confidence in its impartiality. So far, the Georgian political elite have failed to arrive at a consensus on this extremely important issue.

The Parties and their Relations with the State

The current state of inter-party debate reflects the most contentious issues of state-party relations in Georgia. This analysis and that found in the next

chapters of this book are mainly based on the meetings with party representatives held within this research project.

Attitudes to existing electoral legislation in Georgia differ radically between the party in power and the opposition parties. The latter firmly believe that the existing electoral laws, especially recent amendments to them, create unequal conditions favouring the party in power. The United National Movement, on the other hand, asserts that the whole point of recent changes in electoral legislation is to create conditions for conducting fair and orderly elections.

Staffing the electoral administrative commission

The representatives of the opposition stress that members of the Central Electoral Commission are nominated for Parliament's approval by the President, who is at the same time the chairman of one of the political parties. This arouses the opposition's suspicions that the new electoral administration will in fact defend the interests of the government and facilitate fraud. They believe that the previous rule for staffing the electoral administrative commission, under which parties appointed some of the commission members, used to give the opposition a greater opportunity to safeguard their votes, thereby creating greater confidence in the fairness of the process. "This is a step backwards from the multiparty principle which had already established itself in Georgian politics."[27] The opposition has no theoretical objections to the principle of an electoral administration staffed by impartial public servants, but it does not believe it can work in present-day Georgia.

The opposition believes that recent changes to the electoral legislation favour the party in power, while the latter insists the reforms were necessary to ensure fair and orderly elections and effective government

The United National Movement refers to the experience of past elections in justifying the reform that they initiated. It says that participation by parties in election administration did not prevent electoral fraud; on the contrary, the quality of elections deteriorated over time. The electoral commissions became the arena for back-room deals between parties, whereas the ruling party could always have a majority within electoral commissions anyway. The UNM believes that impartial, civil-service-based electoral administration will create better chances for conducting free and fair elections.

[27] Conservative Party

High electoral threshold

Opposition parties consider the seven per cent threshold for political party lists for the parliamentary elections to be too high. In their opinion, this threshold works to the ruling party's advantage. It was this rule that led to the total domination of Parliament by a single party. According to a representative of the Republican Party, this "shifts the political centre of gravity towards the authorities, which substantially impedes the normal development of multiparty democracy." The opposition parties normally support lowering the threshold to four or five per cent. It should be noted that even this threshold would be considered too high in many European democracies.

The ruling party representatives believe that a high threshold contributes to the creation of larger and more effective parties. At the same time, they say they do not have very strong opinions on the subject and concede it is open to debate. However, they believe that the opposition exaggerates the importance of this problem.

The "administrative resource" or the "merger" between the party in power and the state.

The opposition parties contest not only the election legislation, but also the established patterns of relations between the authorities and the opposition. They think that there is a need to change the established practice of relations between political actors.

The issue most frequently mentioned is government abuse of the so-called "administrative resource". This, according to the opposition, manifests itself in the use of state resources by the party in power. For instance, a party can spend its budgetary resources just before elections on specific districts where it needs votes; high-level government officials can take part in the election campaign at public expense, and so on.

In more general terms, this problem is defined as that of merger between the state and the (majority) party. The opposition has claimed that staffing the state apparatus with members of the party in power is symptomatic of such a merger. This practice did not start with the current government but has been typical of Georgia since independence. In a negative way, this problem was confirmed by the fact that the previous ruling party simply ceased to exist as soon as it was divorced from state bureaucracy. However, the situation also failed to improve under the new authorities. "The model of the political party which is adopted by the incumbent authorities, similar to the model that existed under the previous authorities, is not an organization that unites the people around some idea. It is a political party that is formed by those in power," a Labour Party representative said.

According to the opposition, annulment of the constitutional norm which had banned the President from taking a party position[28] demonstrates that the party in power is not interested in separating itself from the state.

The most common solution to this problem is clear delimitation of the top positions in the executive to be filled by political appointees. All political parties recognized that it is normal for the party in power to appoint people to key positions in government. Beyond that, however, the civil service should remain stable and independent from political change. There are legislative norms in Georgia that make such a distinction, but they are not followed in practice.

Financing political parties: general challenges

The issue of party financing is especially important because it is often linked to political corruption. Donations to political parties by different interest groups may lead to abuse of political power in their favour and be detrimental to the public interest.

Two major kinds of responses emerge to solve this problem. One is adopting regulations concerning both the public and private funding of political parties/candidates. This includes **restrictions** on the size of private donations and demands that all parties' financial activities be made *transparent* through disclosure of earnings and spending. Another response is the financing of political parties by the state, either directly or indirectly (providing tax relief, free broadcasting time, etc.). State financing makes parties less dependent on private groups.

Although Western democracies have accumulated considerable experience in trying to fight political corruption, countries differ significantly in how successful they are in this. Yet it is a shared view that currently existing regulations cannot provide full guarantees for preventing the undue influence of particular interests on party activities. Existing regulations may be circumvented in different ways. Therefore, there is no generally accepted recipe for solving the problem. Rather, a well-informed and careful process of choosing particular measures appropriate for each country is needed.

[28] Until February 2004, Article 72 of the Georgian constitution said that "The President can hold no other position". In the period 1995-2002, President Shevardnadze was also chairman of the Citizens' Union of Georgia, which the opposition considered a violation of the constitution. In February 2004, the above article was amended and the words "…except for a party position" were added.

The United National Movement strongly rejected accusations of merger with the State apparatus. On the contrary, UNM representatives said that the party made a special effort to avert the danger and drew a clear distinction between party members who hold government posts and party activists who do not. For instance, not a single chairperson of a regional branch of the UNM is simultaneously involved in the local branch of executive power, contrary to the established practice of the Shevardnadze government. By taking this step, the UNM ensured that "it reacts appropriately to socio-political developments and preserves the function of public oversight [of the party]." As to the mass staff dismissals in government agencies that the new government initiated, they were caused by requirements of radical reform in the state apparatus and the need to uproot corruption.

Party financing

Georgian political parties view the issue of party financing as particularly important for the development of the party system in Georgia. In discussions that preceded enactment of the amendments to the Law on Political Associations of Citizens which introduced a new scheme of state funding for political parties (this is discussed earlier in this chapter), it was admitted that the existing system was utterly inadequate.

As state financing has not been sufficient for party activities (nor will it cover all party expenses after the introduction of the new scheme), parties depend mainly on private donations. The political parties in opposition claim that the existing domination by a single party in the country hampers their fundraising activities. They allege that businessmen are afraid to donate money to their parties as they fear reprisals from the government. Therefore, the general political situation in the country must change so that parties can raise funds in a free and transparent manner.

Parties recognize that the current legislation impels them to conceal their sources of financing. Most concede they have both legal and illegal sources for financing.

All parties agree that there is a need for state funding for political parties. But the United National Movement in particular is in favour of independent fund-raising as well. Its representatives insist that every party should raise funds independently. In this case, a party's financial assets will be proportionate to its popularity.

Party registration

No party complains that Georgian law creates any significant obstacles to forming and registering new parties. Most politicians recognize that the

procedure for registering parties in Georgia is quite liberal and they consider this beneficial for Georgian democracy.
Conversely, some party representatives – though a minority – have even argued that party registration is too simple in Georgia. They blame this for what they see as the excessive number of political parties in Georgia; having more than 100 parties is anomalous, they say. In order to create a more effective political system, they think the number of political parties should be reduced. State policy towards political parties should aim to preserve only those parties that have "appropriate financial and intellectual resources". In particular, it was proposed that, as prerequisites for party registration, the signatures of 10,000 members should be required (as against the 1,000 signatures stipulated in the current legislation) and that parties should have branches in no less than one third of the administrative districts of the country.

Main findings

- In general, the state does not hinder the creation, registration and functioning of political parties in Georgia. The ban on regionally based parties is the only serious restriction to forming political parties. In addition, there are uncertainties in the Law on Political Associations of Citizens that may potentially be exploited by the state against political parties if it decides to curtail the political rights of its citizens;
- Until recently, state funding for political parties was insignificant. A package of legislative amendments adopted by Parliament in December 2005 is expected to create a much more effective mechanism of state-based financial support for political parties;
- There is no consensus between the party in power and the opposition parties on certain basic rules of political competition. In particular, there are strongly different views on the issue of the composition of electoral commissions, on the threshold for party listsa and on the multi-mandate majoritarian districts;
- The opposition parties allege that abuse of "administrative resources", that is, the lack of a clear separation between the party in power and the state, is a major challenge to fair political competition in the country.

1.4 Society and Citizenship

In the early 1990s, Georgian society underwent a series of deep and traumatic transformations that included violent conflicts, a breakdown of the economy, dramatically reduced living standards, and drastic changes in political and economic institutions. The existence of the self-proclaimed states of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, which comprise about 15 per cent of Georgia's territory, as well as widespread poverty are the most conspicuous lasting effects of this crisis. The consequences of this in terms of citizenship have been notorious.

The nature and conduct of political elites are in general representative of the societies in which they operate and the way in which people exercise their citizenship. The political party system as the playing field of those elites is naturally linked to the structure of society. Parties act in a social context and normally they seek support among specific social groups or fragments of society. At the same time, each political party can be considered as a model of society at large: its internal structure, relations between its members, and internal problems reflect those of society and its *political culture*[29].

While it is beyond our ambition here to present a comprehensive picture of Georgian society, this chapter dwells on those characteritics that are relevant to political institutions and parties, namely the main cleavages within Georgian society and its elites, the main areas of consensus and the state of citizenship.

Socio-economic cleavages: poverty and corruption

Widespread poverty is one of the most pressing problems in Georgia. According to different statistical estimates, about half of the population of the country lives below the poverty line. Despite respectable figures of economic growth in recent years (the GDP grew by 8.4 per cent the last year), Georgia's poverty rates do not show any signs of dropping. As many economic commentators have observed, "Economic growth has not been translated yet into an overall decrease in poverty rates"[30].

[29] For a classic in the field of studies on civic and political culture see "The Civic Culture. Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations", G.A.Almond & S.Verba eds., Newbury Park, 1989.

[30] Gabriel Labbate, Levan Jamburia and Guram Mirzashvili, *Improving Targeting of Poor and Extremely Poor Families in Georgia: The Construction of Poverty Maps at the District Level*, UNDP Country Office in Georgia, Tbilisi, 2003.

It may still be too early to judge the effects of the new government's policies on the living standards of the population. Tough measures to uproot mass corruption, a sharp increase in tax collection, greatly expanded investments in infrastructure, massive salary increases for public servants but also drastic cuts in the size of state administration – all this may yield important economic results in several years' time, but in the short term they have had a rather mixed effect on living standards. While some people have had the chance to enjoy a decent quality of life without involvement in corruption, the overall picture with regard to poverty has yet to improve[31].

Georgian commentators often claim that "there is no middle class in the country". To be sure, many Georgians perceive themselves as having a middle income relative to other people[32]. In that sense, they may be called "middle class". However, in a country where over half of the population is considered to be living below the poverty line, statistically a middle income does not necessarily imply the decent living standards often associated with the concept of "middle class".

Most importantly, when people in Georgia do have decent living standards, this status may often have been achieved through involvement in corrupt practices. Businesses – small or large – are said to need government "roofs", informal protection provided by public servants, in order to survive. On the other hand, until the Rose Revolution, token salaries were paid in the public sector and they usually fell well below the minimum living wage. Therefore, government employees who enjoyed a middle-class standard of living were presumed to be corrupt. This presumption extended to such usually respectable professions as schoolteachers or university lecturers. Conversely, abusing public funds or government positions could be said to constitute one of the most effective (if not the best) paths to the middle-class status (or to riches, in the case of top officials).

After the Rose Revolution, the salaries of the top echelon of public officials were increased dramatically so that they would suffice to guarantee modest middle-class living standards, but this has been the case only for a few thousand elite public servants. The rest of the public employees who also received considerable salary increases now find themselves just somewhat above the living wage. Regarding other groups, the government's admittedly successful measures in curbing mass corruption undermined the economic positions of many thousands of persons who depended on it. There is a small but slowly growing market for professionals who can earn a decent

[31] According to the Department of Statistics of the Ministry of Economic Development of Georgia, in the first quarter of 2005 54.9 per cent of the total population was below the poverty line as opposed to 49.1 per cent in the first quarter of 2005. <www.statistics.ge>, accessed 2 November 2005.

[32] For instance, according to a poll conducted by the International Republican Institute (IRI) in 2003, 31 per cent assessed their income as "middle', 65 per cent as "poor", and 2 per cent as "well-off".

living outside state organizations as businessmen, managers, accountants, lawyers, physicians, experts in different fields, or competent office workers. In these areas, having a Western education or at least a good knowledge of English strongly increases one's chances of success.

In general, a widespread perception persists that acquiring wealth through honest means is hardly possible in Georgia. This, as well as a set of ideas from Communist times, is maybe the reason that in a country with a considerable level of economic inequality[33] like Georgia, people do not think in terms of rich and poor but rather talk about "the corrupt" and "the socially unprotected". This reflects the conviction that citizens' economic well-being mainly depends on the state, whereas affluence implies some sort of corruption.

There is a high level of economic inequality and "rich and poor" are synonymous for "the corrupt" and "the socially unprotected"

This suggests that no political party can achieve serious success in Georgian elections unless it attracts the votes of a large part of those who live below the poverty line. That does not necessarily mean using the appeal of the traditional left, such as supporting social equality against unhampered market forces. Instead, the stress is on fighting corruption. It is corruption rather than specific economic policies that is considered responsible for poverty. The political parties that were the most successful in the years preceding the Rose Revolution have made fighting corruption their main platform; in fact, some analysts even called this event an "anti-corruption revolution"[34].

The anti-corruption discourse transcends the traditional division between left and right and can be used by parties of all ideological persuasions. It also conceals the issue of poverty and diminishes the relevance of socio-economic cleavages for political party formation. So far, the cleavage between rich and poor has not been a prominent factor in Georgian politics; it may be called a dormant factor which may or may not come to the fore in the future.

Ethnic divisions and political participation

Georgian society is traditionally multi-ethnic. At the time of the Soviet collapse, some 30 per cent of Georgia's population was composed of ethnic minorities. Georgia's loss of the effective jurisdiction over Abkhazia and South Ossetia together with a large-scale emigration of more ethnic minori-

[33] According to the 2003 data, Georgia's GINI index, which measures economic inequality, was 38.9 – higher than in most European countries, but slightly lower than in the US and much lower than in most Latin American countries.

[34] Louise I. Shelley and Erik R. Scott, "Georgia's 'Revolution of Roses' Can Be Transplanted", Washington Post, 30 November 2003, p. B05.

ties than ethnic Georgians resulted in the proportion of ethnic minorities dropping to 16.3 per cent (according to the 2002 census). Azerbaijanis and Armenians comprise by far the largest ethnic minority groups (table 6)[35].

As has already been pointed out, the existence of breakaway territories jeopardizes Georgia's chances of achieving security and development. However, this cannot properly be called an issue of social cleavage since people in the separatist entities do not consider themselves part of Georgian society (with the exception of the ethnic Georgians who live in these territories). No elections to Georgian political bodies are held in those territories, and no Georgian political parties are or can be active there.

Therefore, when one speaks of the ethnic cleavages in Georgia that are relevant for internal party politics, this implies not so much the Abkhazian and Ossetian conflicts, but the relations between ethnic Georgians and those ethnic minorities that reside in the territory effectively under Georgian jurisdiction. The greatest concerns are about ethnic minorities concentrated in specific geographical areas bordering with their "ethnic homelands": Armenians who mainly live in the province of Samtskhe-Javakheti (bordering with Armenia and Turkey) and Azeris residing in Kvemo Kartli (which borders with Azerbaijan and Armenia). These are not issues of ethnic separatism and irredentism. While some Georgians are suspicious of hidden nationalist cravings within these minority communities, the latter have made no separatist demands or organized irredentist movements. The main areas of concern are the lack of socio-political integration of these minorities and the low level of their genuine participation in Georgia's nascent democratic institutions.

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The main obstacle is the inability of these minorities (unlike those dispersed in urban centres like Tbilisi) to speak the Georgian language, which is the only official language of the country[36], and there has been no visible progress with regard to their proficiency in Georgian since independence. This engenders a number of problems:

(1) Relations of minority citizens with the state: Members of ethnic minorities have difficulties in their relations with state agencies as the latter operate only in Georgian. They are obliged to work through interpreters,

[35] These figures do not include people residing in separatist territories, as the Georgian government was unable to conduct a census there.

[36] The Georgian constitution also recognizes Abkhazian as an official language in the territory of Abkhazia.

which leads to substantial practical complications and diminishes their perception of themselves as full citizens.

(2) Communication between citizens: Russian continues to be a lingua franca within Georgia when it comes to relations between ethnic Georgians and the minorities. However, given that the level of knowledge and daily use of Russian in Georgia is in decline, young people – whether ethnic Georgians or minorities – are no longer fluent in it. Therefore, citizens of Georgia have problems in communicating with each other.

Poor knowledge of the Georgian language is the major impediment to the full exercise of citizenship rights for the ethnic minority population

(3) Insufficient information for minority citizens about national developments: Almost all the Georgian media work in Georgian and cannot be understood by most minority citizens. Russian, Armenian and Azerbaijani TV stations, which broadcast only limited information about Georgia, are the minorities' main sources of information. Moreover, and this is especially true of Russian TV, their manner of presenting this information is sometimes unfriendly towards Georgia. During the last several years, with the help of the OSCE, some Georgian news programmes have been rebroadcast in the Javakheti region with simultaneous translation into Armenian. After the Rose Revolution, Georgian state television and radio (since 2005 – Georgian Public Broadcasting) resumed news programming in minority languages. This certainly helps, but is not enough. There is an ongoing concern that citizens belonging to national minorities are poorly informed about the latest Georgian legislation.

Ethnic group	Residents (in (thousands) 1989	Residents (in thousands) 2002	Share of country's total population 1989	Share of country's total population 2002
All	5400.8	4371.5	100	100
Georgians	3787.4	3661.1	70.1	83.7
Armenians	437.2	248.9	8.1	5.7
Russians	341.2	32.6	6.3	0.75
Azeri	307.6	284.8	5.7	6.5
Ossetians	164.1	38.0	3.0	0.87
Greeks	100.3	15.1	1.9	0.35
Abkhaz	95.9	3.5	1.8	0.0008
Ukrainians	52.4	7.0	1.0	0.0016

Table 6.[37]

[37] Source: Department of Statistics of the Ministry of Economic Development of Georgia. The 2002 figures do not include residents of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

	Institution	Positive		Rather positive than negative		Rather negative than positive		Negative		Difficult to answer	
		2003	2004	2003	2004	2003	2004	2003	2004	2003	2004
1	Parliament	1.2	9.6	4.7	35.0	22.7	29.6	71.5	23.9	0	1.7
2	The executive	1.1	15.5	4.2	35.9	19.3	25.4	75.4	22.4	0	0.7
3	NGOs	5.9	15.0	25.0	32.7	28.1	22.1	38.6	24.5	2.4	5.6
4	Georgian Orthodox Church	38.6	52.1	38.2	32.1	12.7	6.8	9.0	4.1	1.5	4.8
5	Mass Media	25.6	31.7	41.3	36.6	18.3	17.0	14.5	13.6	0.3	0.8
6	Police	2.3	17.5	5.7	26.1	16.7	23.1	75.2	31.3	0.1	2.0
7	The Prosecutor's Office	3.0	11.1	5.5	20.0	17.1	27.1	73.8	38.7	0.7	3.0
8	Court	3.1	10.2	8.0	20.2	20.3	25.6	67.6	40.2	0.7	3.8

Table 7. Polls of 1,000 respondents in three major cities of Georgia conducted by the International Centre for Conflicts and Negotiations (ICCN) in spring 2003 and spring 2004.

(4) Political representation: Minorities are not adequately represented in political institutions in Georgia. There were only 14 MPs of ethnic minority origin in the 1999 Parliament, and this number fell to eight after the Rose Revolution. Moreover, some of these MPs are scarcely effective in representing the interests of their communities, as they are not fluent in the language in which Parliament operates. Minority participation is even weaker in the executive: no Armenian or Azeri held a ministerial position in Georgia from the time the country gained independence until the Rose Revolution; afterwards, one Kabardin and one Ossetian obtained Cabinet-level positions[38]. Even in those provinces where minorities are concentrated, they usually become deputies but not the heads of local government agencies. The only exceptions are Akhalkalaki and Ninotsminda, two districts that comprise a Javakheti region (part of the Samtskhe-Javakheti administrative province), where over 95 per cent of the population is ethnic Armenian. Here the whole local administration is Armenian and it operates in the Russian and Armenian languages. This is an obvious violation of Georgian legislation, but the government turns a blind eye to it.

The most frequently quoted reason for this is that there are no qualified minority candidates who have mastered enough Georgian to fill important government positions. In recent years, some professionals (such as physicians) have had to pass government-organized exams in order to obtain the necessary license for practicing their professions. Here again, lack of proficiency in Georgian is a serious barrier to members of ethnic minorities, even

[38] The former was dismissed in November 2005.

though allowances are made for them and they are permitted to sit exams through interpreters. In 2005, after the national matriculation exams were introduced as a necessary precondition for being admitted to universities, only a rather small number of minority candidates were able to pass. Poor knowledge of Georgian was the main impediment.

(5) The low level of political participation may also be at the root of the above problem. Minorities think that it is safer to steer clear of Georgian political disputes. The political strategy of minorities is to show loyalty to the government party which they identify with the state. Minority regions usually vote overwhelmingly in favour of the ruling party. In response, the latter may include some minority representatives in its electoral lists. For instance, in the 1999 Parliament all minority MPs were also members of the ruling Citizens' Union (this pattern changed somewhat after the Rose Revolution). Opposition political parties rarely have minority members of any prominence. Since there are almost no politically active people who are of ethnic minority origin, this reduces the probability of minority representatives rising to high positions in government.

While there is no pronounced animosity or open conflicts on ethnic grounds, one can speak of mistrust and alienation between ethnic communities. Georgians interpret the failure of minorities to learn Georgian as a lack of interest in the country's development or even a lack of loyalty to Georgia. Minorities, on the other hand, resent insistence on language proficiency as a precondition for increased representation and access to prestigious jobs because they perceive it as discrimination on ethnic grounds. From time to time, demands for ethnically based autonomy are expressed by some groups in Javakheti, where minority concentration is the highest, but these demands lead to concern among Georgians as ethnic autonomy is considered to be the first step towards secession.

The Georgian state supports minority-language schools in the Russian, Armenian and Azerbaijani languages. Their existence may rightfully be considered an expression of respect for minority rights. However, the way these schools function is also part of the problem. The curriculum has changed little since Soviet times; as a result the schools do not guarantee proficiency in the Georgian language. Moreover, there is a shortage of teachers of Georgian in minority regions. As a result, graduates of these schools are not prepared to function in Georgian society and tend to emigrate to Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan or other countries. On the other hand, plans of the Georgian Ministry of Education and Science to strengthen the teaching of Georgian in the minority-language schools have led to fears of assimilation.

Ethnic relations in Georgia suffer from elements of mutual mistrust, majority prejudice and minority self-isolation. Aggressive anti-minority sentiments do not play any important role in Georgia, and there are no extreme

exclusionist parties that try to capitalize on such sentiments. On the other hand, minorities are considered a threat and a large segment of society is not ready to accept minority representatives in leading positions in the state. For instance, some political opponents of the late Georgian Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania openly made an issue of the fact that one of his grandparents was Armenian. This did not prevent Zhvania from becoming one of the leading politicians in Georgia and holding the posts of Speaker of the Parliament and of Prime Minister, but the presence of this topic in public discourse may have discouraged "fully-fledged" members of the Armenian and Azeri minorities from real participation in Georgia's political life. Whatever the reason, minorities are not developing and pursuing a realistic strategy of integration into Georgian society, thus perpetuating their marginal status.

Ethnic relations in Georgia suffer from elements of mutual mistrust, majority prejudice and minority self-isolation

As with socio-economic cleavages, there is a notable paradox. Objectively, integration of the effectively marginalized ethnic minority population is a crucial problem in Georgia's nation-building, and the post-Rose Revolution Government increasingly recognizes this. However, since the period of the ethnic-territorial conflicts of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the minority issue has been peripheral to Georgian politics. One could even call them "forgotten minorities" since international organizations and a handful of Georgian NGOs have paid much greater attention to the issue than has the government. The majority party took the minority vote for granted and opposition parties have hardly tried to compete in these areas[39]. The Georgian media occasionally reported on the activities of some Armenian nationalist groups in Javakheti, but this did not really make the headlines.

One possible explanation may be the collective memory of the conflicts of the early 1990s. The majority and the minorities learned the lessons that the politicization of ethnicity is extremely dangerous for all sides and that it is better to put the issue on the back burner for the time being. There was a tacit contract: the minorities expressed their loyalty through voting for the government party, while the majority never challenged their formal citizenship status.

It is unlikely, however, that the minority issue can be neglected indefinitely. There are different ways for the minority population to become active in Georgian politics. One is to make Georgian political parties compete for the minority vote; another for the minorities themselves to create their own ethnically based parties. The ban on regional parties as well as the high threshold for political party lists (see the previous chapter on *Parties and*

[39] The National Movement tried to break this tacit assumption before the 2003 parliamentary elections for the first time, but did not achieve any notable success.

State on this issue) are legal mechanisms that will make the latter outcome less likely[40]. However, unless existing political parties – including those in the opposition – become more open to ethnic minorities and find ways to articulate and represent their concerns, existing legal barriers may not be enough to prevent the creation of ethnic political parties in the future.

The role of religion and religious pluralism

Georgia's multi-ethnicity is accompanied by the multi-confessional nature of the country. According to the 2002 census, 83.9 per cent of Georgia's citizens considered themselves Orthodox Christians (this includes mainly the Georgian Orthodox Church but also a small fraction of the Russian Orthodox), 9.9 per cent were Muslims (this includes Georgian Sunni Muslims in Achara and Azeri Muslims, some of whom are Sunni and others are Shia), 3.9 per cent were Armenian Apostolic and 0.79 per cent were Catholics (this includes ethnic Georgians, Armenians, Poles and some others).

However, relations between the major religious communities in Georgia have never been politicized. Religion did not play a role in the ethnic-territorial conflicts of the early 1990s[41]. While there were some concerns about the infiltration of Islamic terrorist groups linked to Al-Qaeda in Pankisi Gorge in the early 2000s, Georgian Muslim communities have so far generally seemed immune to the influence of political Islam. Most Georgians, including most religious Georgians, tend to be fairly tolerant towards the so-called 'traditional' religious communities.

Georgia is a multi-religious country, but relations between the major religious communities have never been politicized

It is the relation between the historically dominant Georgian Orthodox Church and the state that have been an important issue of political life since independence. The rights of the so-called 'non-traditional" communities such as Jehovah Witnesses, Baptists and so forth is another bone of contention.

Georgia boasts an ancient Christian tradition which is an important part of the country's identity; Christianity has been the official religion of the Georgian state from the 4th century onwards, and the Georgian Orthodox Church is one of the most ancient autocephalic Churches in the world. Most

[40] While the ban on regional parties was clearly caused by the fear of ethnic separatism, maintaining a high electoral threshold may be in part motivated by the wish to prevent the creation of ethnic minority parties.

[41] The Abkhaz are partly Muslim and partly Orthodox, although the level of religiosity in this community is very low; the Ossetes share the Orthodox faith with the majority of Georgians.

of the medieval history of Georgia consists of the struggle with its more powerful Muslim neighbours such as the Persian and Ottoman empires. In this struggle, Orthodox Christianity, together with the Georgian language in which this religion was preached, served as the main guardian of Georgian identity.

The status of the Orthodox Church

1. The state shall declare complete freedom of belief and religion, and it shall recognize the special role of the Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Georgia in the history of Georgia and its independence from the state.
2. The relations between the state of Georgia and the Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Georgia shall be determined by the Constitutional Agreement. The Constitutional Agreement shall correspond completely to universally recognized principles and norms of international law, in particular, in the field of human rights and fundamental freedoms.
Article 9 of the Georgian constitution after amendments of 30 March 2001

This role of the Church diminished somewhat after Georgia was absorbed by fellow-Orthodox Russia (during the period of the Russian Empire, the Church was stripped of its autocephalic status, but it was reaffirmed after the Tsarist Empire broke up). The Soviet regime enforced atheism as an official ideology but simultaneously tried to control the hierarchy of the Church. Conversely, the Georgian independence movement restored to the Church its status as a symbol of Georgian identity and the major national institution. All public opinion polls invariably show the Orthodox Church to be by a large margin the most trusted institution in Georgia. (See table 2). In 1990, the construction of new churches became a conspicuous trait of life in Georgia, whereas almost no other new pubic buildings were constructed.

Simultaneously, the level of religiosity sharply increased. In the poll quoted above, 18.5 and 77.8 per cent of those surveyed considered themselves respectively "very religious" and "somewhat religious"[42].

The relations between the historically dominant Georgian Orthodox Church and the state have been an important issue of political life

After the break-up of the Communist regime, many Georgians believed that the special role of the Church had to be reflected in Georgian legislation. More liberal Georgians insisted, however, on the division between the

[42] These are data from 2003; no significant changes were observed the following year.

Church and state and the protection of religious pluralism. The architects of the 1995 Georgian constitution found a compromise between these two demands by including an article that both recognized the special historical role of the Georgian Church as well as the freedom of religion in all denominations.

This proved insufficient to resolve the issue. Defenders of the Orthodox Church thought that recognizing only its historical importance did not suffice. As the popularity of Eduard Shevardnadze's government and public trust in state institutions plummeted in the second half of the 1990s, the public increased pressure to upgrade the status of the Orthodox Church to that of "state Church" or established Church. Moreover, a large part of society developed a fear of and hostility towards the proselytizing activities of Western-based Protestant groups, especially of the Jehovah Witnesses, but also of Baptists, Evangelicals, Pentecostals, etc. This activism was widely believed to represent a threat to the national identity, as the resources of the rich West where these religious groups were based were seen as vastly superior to those of the Georgian Orthodox Church. This led to demands for the adoption of a law on religion to curb the activities of the "non-traditional" Western-based sects.

Such a law was never enacted by Parliament. However, animosity towards religious minorities found a more openly aggressive outlet: Georgia went through a wave of violent attacks against the "non-traditional" religious groups (Jehovah's Witnesses, again, were the main but not the sole target) which peaked in the period from 1999 to 2002. The attacks were perpetrated by the group surrounding the defrocked Orthodox priest Basil Mkalavishvili and members of some other extreme religious organizations. Although the Orthodox Church publicly distanced itself from Mkalavishvili, some of its members informally encouraged the attacks. The police did nothing to stop the violence. This could be explained as reluctance on the part of a weak and unpopular Government to go against popular sentiment. A sizeable part of society sympathized with the offenders: many of those who notionally disagreed with violent means saw the main source of the problem in the failure of the Georgian State to protect their national culture from the encroachment of sects that are perceived as aggressive[43].

One could say that attitudes towards religious pluralism and the status of the Orthodox Church have been defining issues in the Georgian public debate. On the one hand, there were religious traditionalists who demanded official status for the Orthodox Church and legislation that would outlaw or at least seriously curb the activities of other, especially non-traditional, religious organizations. These were opposed by liberals who demanded the

[43] In the poll quoted above, 45.2 per cent of the respondents "positively" or "somewhat positively" evaluated the activities of Basili Mkalavishvili, the main perpetrator of the violent attacks.

radical separation of Church and state and expected the State to effectively protect the rights of religious minorities. The latter view was most openly defended by human rights NGOs. Most of society inclined to the former position. Since the Orthodox Church was overwhelmingly the most revered institution in Georgia, no politician would openly oppose its demands. Importantly, while the status of the mainstream Church and of religious minorities dominated the public agenda, the Church and other religious organizations were not active in those other areas of public policy to which their Western counterparts paid a great deal of attention. For instance, the Church never tried to raise the issue of abortion, and there is hardly any public discussion on this issue in Georgia.

The adoption of the *Constitutional Agreement between the state of Georgia and the Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Georgia* (informally referred to as the Concordat) in October 2002 was another compromise between these two positions. This was preceded by several years of public discussions in which human rights groups first resisted the very idea of the Agreement, and – after they saw it was unavoidable – tried to prevent any formulations that would restrict freedom of conscience.

President Saakashvili's new government put an end to religious violence by imprisoning Basil Mkalavishvili and some of his associates. This is often described as the new government's greatest achievement after independence in the sphere of human rights. The issue of religious pluralism became less acute but still controversial. Much of society is still ill-disposed towards religious pluralism and views religious minorities as a threat. Even though physical safety is no longer a major concern for the minorities, other problems, such as the construction of new places of worship for them, persist.

In all major state ceremonies, the Catholicos-Patriarch of the Georgian Orthodox Church stands next to the President as the spiritual father of the nation. At the same time, there are serious disagreements within the Church because the strong conservative wing openly resents liberalism as hostile to the Church. This makes religious circles potentially the main stronghold of anti-Western sentiment in Georgia, though officially the Church never questions Georgia's choice of European and Euro-Atlantic cooperation.

Independence and the Pro-Western Orientation: the National Consensus

There are cleavages and divisions in every society, but a political nation cannot be viable unless there are points of consensus that unify a sizeable majority of the people. The existence of such a consensus on specific issues can be measured by surveys of public opinion, but the behaviour of rival political parties can also be a valuable indicator: if there are issues on which other-

wise strongly oppositional political parties vote in unison, they can be viewed as points of national consensus.

One such point is obviously national independence. Both the new Georgian national agenda and the political elite have developed around the struggle for independence from the Soviet Union. There has been no political party in Georgia that has openly contested this standpoint. Parties can only accuse each other of not supporting the idea of independence strongly enough.

There is no sizeable opposition in Georgia to the agenda of joining NATO and the European Union

Naturally, the agenda of territorial integrity is part and parcel of the project of the independent state. The existence of breakaway regions like Abkhazia and South Ossetia demonstrate that the business of creating an independent state is still unfinished. But there is no agreement on how the problem should be solved. Georgians may be divided on the issue of whether or not military means should be rejected outright or may still be used if negotiations fail, the international principle of the non-use of force notwithstanding. However, nobody denies that the problem should be solved, and 'solution' means the effective extension of Georgia's jurisdiction over these territories[44].

In the Georgian case, the agenda of independence strongly correlates with the project of joining the West and accession to major Western institutions such as NATO and the European Union. This agenda, popular with the vast majority of Georgians,[45] is not contested by any influential political force. Presumably, one cause of such near-unanimity is that joining NATO and the European Union is a rather distant prospect involving organizations about which people know very little. Experience of the post-Communist countries of East-Central Europe has shown that as soon as joining NATO and the EU became the immediate issue, the opposition to joining also strengthened. However, the present desire to become closer to the West gives a general sense of direction to Georgian policies since such a move is considered the best way to guarantee Georgia's security and consolidate the country's political institutions while putting Georgia firmly on the map of modernity. No political force of any significance – even the most nationalist figures that are

[44] According to a public opinion poll conducted by IRI in June 2005, only 1.5 per cent of those polled accepted Abkhazia and South Ossetia being independent or part of Russia, while 93 per cent insisted they should be part of Georgia.

[45] According to the IRI poll conducted in October-November 2005, respectively 76 and 81 per cent of those polled supported Georgia's accession to NATO and the EU; only 8 and 3 per cent respectively opposed.

the Georgian equivalent of what is called "extreme Right" in Europe – advocates a change of direction.

This orientation negatively correlates with relations with Russia. There is no detectable animosity in Georgia to Russian culture and ethnicity; Russians have never been major targets of Georgian ethnic nationalists even at the peak of the struggle for independence. Georgians would certainly welcome good neighbour relations with Russia, especially because it is crucial for the development of the Georgian economy. For example, a prominent Russian industrialist of Georgian origin was given a portfolio for economic reforms in the post-Rose-Revolution Georgian cabinet.

Nevertheless, due to a number of factors (of which the most important is the alleged Russian support for the secessionist movements in Georgia) the Russian state is considered the main threat to the implementation of the Georgian national project. This attitude is strengthened by the fact that many Russian public figures do not hide their resentment towards Georgia's aspirations to integrate into Europe, which they consider a challenge to Russia's interests. Therefore, the strong wish to reduce the dominating Russian military and political influence in Georgia constitutes one more point of political consensus. Draft resolutions demanding the withdrawal of the Russian military bases or – more recently – Russian peacekeepers in Abkhazia and South Ossetia – are passed unanimously in Parliament. This does not exclude some politicians questioning the political expediency of challenging Russia under certain circumstances, but these doubts concern elements of political strategy rather than the goals this strategy is designed to pursue.

Ethnic minorities may not subscribe to some elements of this agenda. Minorities felt threatened by the Georgian movement to independence in the late 1980s since this period also saw the zenith of ethnic nationalism, characterized by deep distrust towards the minorities. Yet no minorities save for the Abkhaz and the Ossetians in South Ossetia challenged this agenda openly. Georgian integration into Europe is welcomed by the minorities as well since they hope that such integration will make Georgia more liberal and hence more respectful of the minorities' rights.

There is some contradiction, however, between the prevailing Georgian security agenda and the sentiments of the Armenian minority. The latter are unhappy about Georgian-Russian tensions and blame the Georgian government for this. Specifically, the local Armenian community in southern Georgia opposes the withdrawal of the Russian military base from Akhalkalaki, though most Georgians strongly welcome this development[46]. The main reasons for this are solidarity with the state of Armenia, which relies on Russian support in its conflict with Azerbaijan, and deeper collective sentiments

[46] According to a poll conducted by IRI in October-November 2005, 74 per cent of those surveyed thought the Russian bases had a negative influence on Georgia and 8 per cent assessed their influence as positive.

that cause Armenia to fear Turkey, the country with which the Armenian-populated regions in Georgia border. However, as the process of the withdrawal of the Russian military from Akhalkalaki started in summer 2005, there were no strong expressions of protest in the region.

Commitment to Georgian culture and identity is an important element of the pro-independence agenda that unifies most of society. Among other things, it underpins the status of the Georgian language as the only official language of the country (save for Abkhazia where the Georgian constitution also recognizes the official status of the Abkhazian language)and emphasizes the central role of the Orthodox Church in Georgia's moral and spiritual life, as was discussed above.

Attitudes to democracy

So far, Georgians have not succeeded in developing stable democratic institutions. However, different data show that they are committed to democratic values. A comparative research project carried out by John S. Dryzek and Leslie T. Holmes in a number of post-Communist countries showed that there is no significant anti-democratic discourse in Georgia (see Post-Communist Democratization: Political Discourses across Thirteen Countries, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002, pp. 147˜157). In other words, few people in Georgia favour anything other than a democratic political system.

In their investigation of different political opinions in Georgia after the Rose Revolution (the research was sponsored by International IDEA) Marina Muskhelishvili and Louise Arutiunova also found a degree of consensus on core liberal-democratic values such as: democracy requires pluralism of opinions; the country's constitution will secure conditions for democracy and political competition; the authorities should observe the constitution in the same way as ordinary citizens do.

In two International Republican Institute polls conducted during 2004, 70 and 71 per cent of those polled agreed that it is important for Georgia to have a political opposition, with only 10 per cent against. (The approval rating of the government was rather high at that time).

In research carried out by the Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development and the Arnold Bergstraesser Institute in 1997, 69 per cent of respondents said that democracy would be better for their children than communism – and this rating was about 80 per cent among young respondents. Seventy-five per cent (and a larger majority among younger people) agreed that it was "normal for people to have different opinions and pursue different interests as long as they respect the rules".

Citizenship and clanship

Democracy is only viable when the institution of citizenship is sufficiently developed. A citizen may be defined as a person who is a member of a political community and is involved in its governance. The strength of citizenship depends on many factors. On the one hand, the state constitution should allow its citizens to be genuinely involved in governance: that is, it should provide for political rights. For instance, it should guarantee the right to create and be active in political parties – a topic that was discussed in the previous chapter. On the other hand, people should be willing and able to take part in public affairs; they should feel responsibility for the state of their country and feel an obligation to be involved in it.

How active are Georgians as citizens? Democracy activists in the country often complain that most Georgians are passive and display a low level of involvement in public affairs. These concerns are understandable but somewhat exaggerated. The Rose Revolution is the most vivid example of Georgians being ready to defend democratic values in their country. The organized and peaceful character of the Rose Revolution was an important indicator of the quality and not just intensity of civic participation. The level of participation in elections is usually reasonably high. The lack of reliable voter registries and frequent ballot-stuffing in the past have made voter turnout figures unreliable, but public opinion research and long queues at polling stations show that people care about participating in elections[47].

However, as research also shows, a large majority of Georgians tend to use limited forms of political participation, such as elections and occasional public protests, but not other participatory forms.[48] There are almost no mass membership organizations in Georgia, such as trade unions or large issue-based associations[49]. A number of non-governmental organizations have developed certain skills and exercise some level of influence, but they only exist at the level of the elite and depend on donor assistance. Various efforts to develop community-based organizations, on the other hand, do not appear to have been particularly successful so far. Neighbourhood communities are rarely successful at drawing together resources for solving issues of common interest.

[47] According to an IRI poll held before the 2003 parliamentary elections, 73 per cent of those polled intended to vote, even though only 21 per cent expected them to be free and fair.

[48] Nana Sumbadze, Civic Participation in Public and Political Life, in; International IDEA, *Building Democracy in Georgia*, Discussion Paper 7: Developing a Democratic Community in Georgia, May 2003, pp. 29-35.

[49] According to 2003 IRI poll, about 3 per cent of those polled were members of political parties, and 0.3 per cent were members of non-governmental organizations.

A large majority of Georgians tend to use limited forms of political participation, such as elections and occasional public protests, but not other types.

There may be different reasons why people do not exercise their citizenship rights in full. Some of them will be discussed below.

Clans and networks. When Georgians speak of features inherent in their social structure which hamper their efforts to create a modern democratic system, words like "clans" and "clannishness" are used most often. This means that in public life Georgians tend to stick to "clan" loyalties at the expense of formal institutions and transparent procedures. However, the word "clan" may be misleading here because what Georgians have in mind does not usually mean anything like Scottish clans, that is, groups united by common ancestry, but rather informal personalistic networks centred on one or several leaders who enjoy formal or informal authority. Kinship is one but not the only element around which such networks are built; what counts is personal loyalty, which may be based on ties of personal friendship or gratitude for benefits received.

Social Capital

Democracy requires not only the proper design of state institutions, but also certain social or cultural preconditions. The American sociologist James Coleman coined the term "social capital", which refers to people's ability to work together for common purposes. Such ability requires a high level of trust. In every society, people tend to trust members of their families or close friends; it is the level of trust towards people with whom one has *no* personal connection that counts for the development of successful social institutions and organizations – large businesses, public associations, and political parties. Those societies where the social capital of trust hardly transcends a small circle of friends and relatives are often called "clan societies" or "familistic societies". In such societies, people depend more on state intervention, since they are less able to create large organizations on their own. In his book Trust: the Social Virtue and the Creation of Prosperity, Francis Fukuyama divided societies into high-trust and low-trust societies and highlighted the importance of this factor for the ways different nations develop their political and economic institutions.

Another way of describing these attitudes in terms of social psychology may be that Georgians have a narrow horizon of trust, which makes them oriented towards small groups. This means that they lack the social capital that would allow them to create effective and large organizations. According to this view, Georgians' attempts to create large-scale organizations (including political parties) fail because, in effect, they develop into a network of small groups dependent on personal trust rather than on common values and formal rules.

Scepticism towards the state and anti-political attitudes constitute another trait that strongly correlates with the former, as was demonstrated by most public opinion research during the 1990s. The period after the Rose Revolution gave some grounds for optimism since it led to a notable surge in trust towards the government agencies. (see Table 2). While three-quarters of the population did not trust the executive, Parliament or the police during the unpopular government of Eduard Shevardnadze, now overall trust towards institutions has risen sharply.

However, optimism needs to be tempered, as the same survey showed that three times as many people considered a criminal boss to be a more "prestigious position" than a policeman[50]. Notably, in late 2005 the Georgian government started a public campaign against organized crime that included not only new legislation and reforms in the penitentiary system, but also strong rhetoric about the necessity to fight both the "criminal mentality" and favourable attitudes towards criminal bosses in society.

The level of trust towards state institutions has increased after the Rose Revolution but there are still grounds for concern

Most notably, the mistrust towards the state expresses itself in a strong reluctance to cooperate with the law-enforcement system. Many crimes could not be prosecuted in Georgia because no one would volunteer to testify against criminals, even when crimes were committed in public in the presence of numerous witnesses.

While some individual politicians at particular times may enjoy a hero-like status, the political class as such is largely despised, and politics is usually referred to as an arena of unbridled ambition and greed[51]. The public debate is usually not between supporters of different political platforms or

[50] 18.1 per cent of those polled considered criminal boss a "very prestigious" occupation, whereas only 6.2 per cent said this of a police officer.

[51] In a 1997 poll by CIPDD and the Arnold Bergstraesser Institute, 78 per cent of those polled agreed that "if you keep out of politics you have peace and a clean conscience". – Theodore Hanf and Ghia Nodia, *Lurching to Democracy. From agnostic tolerance to pious Jacobinism: Societal change and people's reactions*. Baden-Baden, Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 2000), p. 105.

creeds; rather, it is the government on the one hand and society on the other. Therefore, increased criticism of the government does not always translate into support for the opposition.

Such a nihilistic attitude towards the state and the political sphere is sometimes explained by the fact that the modern state is seen as having been imposed on Georgia by an external force (Russia). On the other hand, the Communist state alienated citizens even more because it represented falsehood and repression, while only the trusted network of friends, relatives and neighbours represented solidarity and authenticity. In this sense, post-colonial and post-Communist attitudes merge[52].

Anti-political attitudes combined with reliance on small groups based on personal trust are at the heart of what many political scientists call neo-patrimonialism, or privatization of the state by small clientelistic networks. If judged against the standards of modern statehood, such an attitude to the state is usually branded 'corruption'. The problem of corruption writ large and the privatization of state institutions by "the clans" was the most salient political issue in Georgia in the last period of Eduard Shevardnadze's tenure. The political agenda of the anti-Shevardnadze opposition, and afterwards of the new government, was dominated by the idea of overcoming "clannishness" and corruption. Naturally, there are different opinions as to how successful this government has been in implementing this agenda.

Georgian society is in no way unique in these characteristics. The diminishing role of political institutions and public confidence in them is noticeable in many societies. In different ways, these trends express themselves in developing countries that are only starting to build democratic institutions and in consolidated democracies in Western countries, as has been the case in the last decade with the rise of anti-politics or neo-populist movements against European integration, globalization, migration, etc.. The dynamics of the last fifteen years may in general be considered positive in the Georgian case where awareness of civic and political rights has tended to rise and the quality of participation has increased, as demonstrated by the example of the Rose Revolution. A further increase in the intensity and quality of citizens' participation requires the development of civil society institutions, including political parties.

[52] Some authors consider anti-political attitudes generally typical of the post-Communist world, but also of post-colonial societies like those in Africa. Such an approach, in which post-Soviet and African states were compared, was used, for instance, in Mark R. Beissinger and Crawford Young (Eds.), "Beyond State Crisis: Postcolonial Africa and Post-Soviet Eurasia in Comparative Perspective", Woodrow Wilson Center Press: Washington, DC, 2002.

The old and the new elites

While a large part of society is relatively passive in exercising its political rights, and economic or ethnic cleavages do not play a central role in defining the identity of major political players in Georgia, rifts within elites may become highly salient as well as politically relevant.

One way to define the schism between elite groups in Georgia is through their linkages with the institutions of the old and the new political regimes. This cleavage developed in the years following the Soviet Union's break-up but it still retains some relevance today. The difference between the two elites can be described in objective terms, and it is also vividly present in public discourse. By "old elites" we understand networks formed around institutions of the Soviet regime: the old Communist Party and Komsomol *nomenklatura* (leadership), managers of Communist enterprises, and intellectuals who rose to high status in the academic institutions and "creative unions" of the Soviet era. These were the people who dominated the Soviet regime in terms of power and status.

Revolution as elite change

In his classic book[53], the renowned Italian political sociologist, Vilfredo Pareto, understood revolutions as primarily changes of elites. While analysts often argue whether the Rose Revolution was a true revolution or not, Pareto's theory can be relevant to this debate. According to him, a dominant group only survives in power if it allows the best people of different backgrounds to join it and if it does not hesitate to use force to defend its privileges and rewards. As the dominant elite loses its capacity to recruit the most able members of society and loses its nerve in defending its dominant position, it also "tends to increase its unlawful appropriations and to indulge in major usurpations of the national patrimony", which increases resentment against it. This is the moment when the most able and motivated members of the society are concentrated in an alternative elite and mobilize public sentiment for ousting the old one. The difference between the Georgian case and those Pareto had in mind is that the identities of rival Georgian elites were not linked to social classes such as the bourgeoisie or the working class, but rather to different sets of institutions.

[53] V.Pareto. The Rise and Fall of Elites: an Application of Theoretical Sociology. Transaction Publishers: New Jersey, 1991.

The new elites initially defined themselves through their opposition to Soviet rule, but also through participation in the new institutions that emerged as a result of the political and economic transformations that started in the period of Gorbachev reforms and continued in independent Georgia. These included anti-Communist movements and political parties, independent media, private business, non-governmental organizations, and Western and international organizations which were established in Georgia and recruited Georgian staff. All these were institutions that simply did not exist under Communism.

In the countries of Eastern Europe such a division was of central importance for political party formation in the period of democratic transition and the early 1990s and it continues to be relevant today. While in the late 1980s, alternative elites ousted the Communists from power, the latter redefined themselves as social-democratic parties and, in several countries, came back in the second post-Communist elections. They fitted well into the democratic power game and recruited many younger people, but their origin in the old power elites, as opposed to the parties rooted in the anti-Communist movements, continues to be an important marker for the identity of different political parties there (even though the importance of this marker tends to diminish with time).

Unlike Eastern European countries, no such successor party to the Soviet-era Communist organization was created in Georgia. When the anti-Communist Zviad Gamsakhurdia was ousted from power and was replaced by Eduard Shevardnadze, the former Communist leader in Georgia, it superficially resembled the return of reform Communists to power in Poland or Hungary. To be sure, Shevardnadze's return to power served as an informal exculpation of the old Communist-era elites, and many former Communists returned to the state apparatus. However, the Citizens' Union of Georgia, the party created around Shevardnadze, could not be considered a successor to the Communist party whether formally or informally. Nonetheless, the party tried officially to become a social-democratic party and in that sense showed a shift similar to that of the transformed former Communist parties in Eastern Europe. Several groups of people had been central to its creation, some of them rooted in the old elites, some with a background in the national independence movement.

Therefore, in the Shevardnadze period, one can speak rather of the *mixing of the elites*[54]. Former Communist elites did not have separate political tools for articulating their interests and attitudes in the new environment. All publicly active people declared their allegiance to the institutions and values associated with the new Georgia, such as independent statehood, democracy, human rights, and the market economy. However, the "old elite" persisted as a recognizable and relatively distinct informal network, while the "new" peo-

[54] See on this Theodore Hanf and Ghia Nodia, *Lurching to Democracy* (2000), pp. 52-55.

ple still defined and legitimized themselves through their opposition to the old one. The old elite represented such qualities as experience, moderation, being closer to cultural traditions, but also – as viewed by its opponents, – corruption, opportunism, and hidden resistance to democratic values. The new elites claimed to be true proponents of democratic reforms, but were portrayed by their opponents as dangerous radicals who were not sufficiently dedicated to national traditions.

It would be difficult to understand the processes that led to and have developed since the Rose Revolution without taking this hidden opposition into account. The Rose Revolution is often understood as the second attempt to break away from the Communist past. Its leaders themselves often portray the Rose Revolution, and the events that followed it, as a belated replica of the 1989 "velvet revolutions" in the East-Central Europe. However, despite the strongly anti-Communist rhetoric of Zviad Gamsakhurdia, many top leaders in his government were former high-ranking Communists. It was only as a result of the Rose Revolution that the former Communists were genuinely ousted from power. While several key leaders of the Rose Revolution have also served in the Shevardnadze government, nobody with any links to the Communist-era institutions continues to hold high positions of power[55]. On the other hand, the higher education reform, which is often considered one of the most important undertakings of the new government, also highlights an important aspect of the change of elites since universities are often seen as the last strongholds in which the Communist-era elites are entrenched. These reforms are seen as an attempt by the new elite to take over the universities and are often resisted.

The generation gap is the most obvious – even if somewhat superficial and often misleading – marker distinguishing the old and the new elites. The fact of having been socialized under the Communist regime (which also symbolized foreign domination) is often considered a kind of contamination stigmatizing the elder generation, something that is even acknowledged by some of the latter. Being "old" is often associated with entrenchment in Soviet-style practices unsuited to the new realities. It was said in the 1990s that for the sake of progress in Georgia, the new generation that had been socialized after independence should take the lead. Within Eduard Shevardnadze's government, a latent conflict between the so-called "young reformers" led by Zurab Zhvania and Mikheil Saakashvili and *nomenklatura* people rooted in the Communist and Komsomol networks developed into the major political

[55] Out of twenty ministers who held their positions in November 2004 three had served as ministers under Shevardnadze (two for a very brief period) and two had served as deputy ministers (one as Saakashvili's deputy of during his tenure as Justice Minister). Fourteen were born in 1961 or later, six had either worked or studied abroad, and eight had previously worked for Georgian NGOs or international donor organizations. Jonathan Wheatley, *Georgia from National Awakening to Rose Revolution: Delayed Transition in the Former Soviet Union*, Ashgate: Burlington, p. 200.

intrigue of the late 1990s. It was the story of the hidden conflict between the "old" and the "new" that culminated in the Rose Revolution. The government that came to power as a result of the revolution is very young: Saakashvili was thirty-seven when he was elected President; many ministers are around or under thirty. This is not a coincidence: the age and biographies of the new leaders are supposed to signify a radical (if somewhat belated) break from the (Soviet) past.

New elites

The new Georgian elites may be most clearly defined in the context of globalization. In the Communist era, the language of advancement was Russian, which gave access to resources controlled by the imperial centre in Moscow. Therefore, Russian is still perceived to be the language of the old elites. The new people, on the other hand, have access to resources provided through contacts with the West that opened up after independence. First of all, this involves a knowledge of English (as well as – to a lesser degree – other Western languages), giving priority to advanced means of communications (the Internet) and an ability to use the global "language" (or rather jargon) used by actors identified as the "international community". To use popular shorthand, these are people who have knowledge of "English and computers".

In Georgia such people also happen to be young. This may in fact be the principal social cleavage of the globalized world, one that has simply extended itself to Georgia. After the Rose Revolution, the new government made a serious effort to attract Georgians who had studied and worked in the West and had experience of working in international organizations or Western-funded NGOs to high and middle positions in the government. The generation that had mastered the language of globalization came to power.

It is true that this cleavage is often oversimplified – and, in this simplified form, greatly resented by the older generation. Values and attitudes are not automatically linked to age or even biography, and there are different people in every age group. However, the fact of the matter is that the Rose Revolution made being young an important asset in itself. Admittedly, the transfer of power from Shevardnadze to Saakashvili was symbolic of a whole generation being left out of the political process. This generation is constituted of people who were too young during the time of the Communist gerontocracy but may feel almost redundant when they see people in their twenties become ministers.

However, since the new generation that speaks the language of globalization came to power, the social cleavages may be redefined. As time passes and the Communist regime becomes a memory of the distant past, the issue of the difference between the old and new elites is bound to fade. One could already say that the main social rift in Georgia is between those who can take advantage of the benefits of globalization and those who are harmed by policies inspired by global blueprints.

Since the new generation that speaks the language of globalization came to power, the social cleavages may be redefined

One might expect that at the political level this rift would lead to competition between the liberal Westernizers and those promoting nostalgia for the Soviet past – or, alternatively, anti-Western nationalists. However, despite the deep economic crisis that followed the Soviet demise, nostalgia for the Soviet past is not strong in Georgia – at least, no political party has been successful in capitalizing on it. So far, there is no distinct anti-globalization movement in Georgia either.

On the other hand, there are many among the opposition leaders and supporters who also belong to the "new elites" as defined above. Economic protectionism and cultural traditionalism may be ideas that political groups can use if they want to capitalize on the disadvantages suffered by those people who consider themselves losers in Georgia's greater integration – or attempts to integrate – into global political and economic space. But this need not challenge Georgia's general orientation towards modern Western models of building political and economic institutions.

Main findings

- **Around fifty per cent of Georgians live below the poverty line**. Despite relatively high economic growth in recent years, the poverty indicators remain dramatic;
- **Ethnic minorities are weakly integrated into civil and political life**. About seventeen per cent of the Georgian population (excluding people living in the breakaway territories of Abkhazia and South Ossetia) belong to ethnic minorities. Many of them do not speak the Georgian language and their level of civil and political participation is lower than that of the Georgian population;
- **Religion is important**. Since independence, there has been a steep increase in religiosity. This has bolstered the authority and status of the Georgian Orthodox Church and has led to debates and divisions with regard to the status of the dominant church as well as the rights and status of religious minorities;
- **Public support for democracy is high**. Despite severe problems and obstacles in building sustainable democratic institutions in Georgia, such as deeply-felt anti-political attitudes and low levels of social trust, the majority of Georgia's population strongly supports the democratic direction of the country. This correlates closely with a broad consensus around the desire to join Western institutions such as the European Union and NATO;
- **Citizenship is of low intensity**. The domination of personalistic networks in the social sphere, scepticism towards political institutions, and the failure to create broadly based civil organizations has led Georgian society to take a generally passive stance, save for special episodes like the Rose Revolution;
- **Cleavages within the elites are more politically relevant than broader economic and ethnic divisions**. There is a salient rift between the old and new elites that may be defined through linkages to the Communist institutions and related networks in the case of the former and the globally connected new institutions which emerged after the independence in the case of the latter. The Rose Revolution led to the domination of the new elite. It is still uncertain how this will redefine the existing social cleavages.

2. The Institutional Development of Political Parties

This section covers the current condition of political parties in Georgia. It is based on an interactive assessment with the six leading political parties in Georgia: the Conservative Party of Georgia, Industry Will Save Georgia, the Georgian Labour Party, the New Conservative Party of Georgia, the Republican Party, and the United National Movement. Their active participation in assessing their situation took place through multiparty and individual meetings in different parts of the country.

Conservative Party of Georgia – Head office, Kakheti regional organizations, Didube district organization, Gori district organization;

Industry Will Save Georgia – Head office, Kvemo Kartli regional organization, Gldani district organization, Terjola district organization;

Labour Party of Georgia – Head office, Dusheti district organization, Varketili district organization, Batumi organization;

New Conservative Party – Head office, Gori district organization, Gldani district organization, Kutaisi organization;

Republican Party – Head office, Tbilisi organization, Poti organization, Batumi organization;

United National Movement – Head office, Mtskheta district organization, Tbilisi organization, Gurjaani district organization.

While the state, society, and the international community represent the external environment in which political parties operate, parties also constitute an environment for each other. By definition, parties operate in competition with other parties. Therefore, this chapter starts by analyzing the *political party system* in Georgia. Since independence this system has been characterized by the presence of a single dominant party and a multitude of much weaker opposition parties. The party system is weakly institutionalized; parties mainly depend on the personalities of their leaders, or small groups of leaders, and they are easily formed and dissolved. Coalitions tend to be tactical and unstable, and the list of major contenders can change dramatically before each election. The political system combines a high concentration of power with a strong fragmentation among the opposition. The level of ideo-

logical polarization is low. Cooperation mainly takes place between opposition parties, while the level of confrontation is high and often takes bitterly personalistic forms. Therefore, the further development of political parties in Georgia will probably be linked to general changes in Georgia's political system.

At the same time, a strong democratic political system depends on the capacity of individual parties to be robust institutions that adequately represent citizens' interests. For this parties require a number of qualities. The first of such qualities is a distinct **identity**. The public needs to know what each political party stands for. Party identities are supposed to be defined through allegiance to certain values and principles, specific ways of achieving the public good, and/or linkages to the interests of specific social groups. Such party profiles are often referred to as "ideologies". Most political parties in Georgia have distinct ideological labels, though they are often criticized for depending more on the personalities of their leaders than on principles and policies, or else for being opportunistic in the application of those principles. However, the political parties also recognize this problem and try to develop more distinct and sustainable identities beyond the personalities of their leaders.

Political Parties that participated in the interactive assessment

Conservative Party of Georgia (CPG)
Georgian Labour (Shromis) Party (GLP)
Industry Will Save Georgia (IWSG)
New Conservative Party of Georgia (NCPG)
Republican Party (RP)
United National Movement (UNM)

Parties are also competitors for power in the public space. In order to win public support – and elections – they need to convey their messages to the public. Public relations and election campaigning are the central activities of any party. In this second section, attention is also paid to the methods that Georgian political parties use to win the support of an electorate that is increasingly experienced and sophisticated.

Running campaigns and doing other political party work requires resources – organizational, human and financial. This implies, first of all, the setting-up and management of party organizations. Resources in all parties, even relatively strong ones, are always limited, so effective management of the available resources is crucial to a party's success. Another chapter in this section analyzes what resources the Georgian political parties have at their disposal and how successful they are in making the most of them.

All Georgian parties agree that human resources are their most important assets. These involve national or local leaders and networks of dedicated activists, that is the rank-and-file members of the party. But what does membership mean? Are members sources of financial support, do they just follow

the orders of the party leadership, or are they the true backbone of political parties who define the party's identity and policies? Are parties that claim to fight for democracy also internally democratic? A special chapter tackles those issues.

In order to be internally strong and win public support, it is important for political parties to reflect the diversity of social interests, and represent them within their own ranks. In this context it is extremely important that women – more than half of the population – take an active part in party political work. There are a number of notable female political leaders in Georgia, and the contribution of women is also very important for the success of party work at the grass-roots level. However, more can and should be done to involve and empower women in politics since they are an important resource for the further development of political parties in Georgia.

Leading political parties in Georgia have been involved in international contacts with like-minded parties or party networks, and with international organizations that assist the development of political parties. All Georgian parties are enthusiastic about such contacts and consider them an important resource for their development. But what specifically have the Georgian parties gained from international contacts and what can they hope to gain from international cooperation? This is the theme of the last chapter in this section.

Each of the seven chapters opens with a "What to do" box where the main recommendations are outlined with regard to the future development of political parties in Georgia. These recommendations are further elaborated in the next pages with facts, figures and analyses of the current state of development of Georgian political parties, highlighting their achievements and challenges and the attitudes of the parties themselves to problems of party development in Georgia. Each chapter ends with a "Main Findings" box.

2.1 Introduction: Origin and Functions of Political Parties

Changing, but not disappearing

The character and function of political parties and of party systems have been changing continuously during the centuries. From ancient Greece to today's universally more Western type of mass consumption societies, political parties have been through radical changes but they have not disappeared. Their functions in representative democracies have remained. They also varied in different periods of Georgia's history such as the brief interlude of Georgia's independence in 1918-21 or the very first years after the break-up of the Soviet Union. The current situation of Georgia's political parties can be better understood if it is placed in an international and historical context. The context in which political party systems emerged in the nascent Western democracies of the 19th and 20th centuries is naturally different from the context of post-Communist Georgia at the beginning of the 21st century. The local origins of the Georgian case are important to have in mind. On the other hand, Georgian political parties have developed since the break up of the Soviet Union in a globalized world and are being influenced by it. They also display some similarities with and important differences, from comparable processes in the countries of Eastern Europe.

How political parties emerged in the West and elsewhere

Political parties in the broad sense of the word already existed in ancient Greece. There, at public meetings in Athens, they were what can be defined as confrontational groups involved in fighting for power over a long period of time, and in that power-game they acted as the representations of different groups of citizens divided according to their social status, place of residence and attitudes towards certain public isues and figures[56]. But together with this *representative function*, the political party as we known it today with also its *institutional function,* emerged with the establishment of constitutional

[56] Hans Daalder, "*The Rise of Parties in Western Democracies"*, in *Political Parties and Democracy*, ed. by Richard Gunther, Larry Diamond, the Johns Hopkins Univ. Press: Baltimore, 2001, pp.40- 51

governments and the introduction of legitimate elections[57]. It became "an organization linking the governors with the governed, ensuring representation and obtaining power through the nomination of candidates during elections". The further development of political parties into wider public organizations came with the introduction of universal suffrage [58].

When the predecessors of modern political parties (Whigs and Tories in England, Liberals and Conservatives in South America) appeared, the right to vote was the privilege of a small elite. It did not take much effort for a candidate to become a member of a legislative body; it merely depended on his personal reputation or that of his family. Once in parliament, its members established factions based on their common interests or personal relationships. But at the same time, at the end of the 18th century there occurred what the Scottish philosopher David Hume described as "the most unaccountable phenomenon that has yet appeared in human affairs, factions from principle."[59] Later, the English philosopher and politician Edmund Burke provided a more accurate definition of those factions or parties: "a body of men united upon a particular principle to promote the common good of men".[60] This definition of the political party includes one of its most important characteristics: a co nviction, set of ideas or ideology shared by its members and supporters.

The development of political parties and the different party systems in the period after the introduction of universal suffrage is part of the institutional development of democracy. Notwithstanding the differences that do exist between the different types of political parties (elite, mass, cadre, network, etc...[61]) when seen from a functional point of view, political parties are supposed to contribute to the democratization process by *seeking legitimation* for their exercise of power, by *showing inclusiveness* and integrating all people into the political process, by *being programmatic* and elaborating plans for stable and efficient governments (or executing their checks-and-balance role from the opposition), and by *canalizing and solving by peaceful means the conflicts* of interest that are inherent to any society.

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[57] Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*: *A Framework for Analysis*, Cambridge Univ. Press: New York, 1976.

[58] For a very complete overview of the different classifications of political parties see Richard Gunther, Larry Diamond, "Types and Functions of Parties", in: *Political Parties and Democracy*, ed. by Richard Gunther, Larry Diamond, the Johns Hopkins Univ. Press: Baltimore, 2001, pp.9-30.

[59] Daadler, op. cit., p. 40.

[60] Daalder, op. cit., p. 41.

[61] See Alan Ware, Political parties and party systems. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

How political parties emerged in Georgia

In Georgia, political parties first emerged and developed in early 20th century. At that time, Georgia was part of the Russian empire and had no separate political or even administrative status. While this was the period when the Russian empire started experimenting with representative institutions (such as the state Duma), there were no local representative bodies like Georgia on the outskirts of the empire. . Therefore, political parties were mainly involved in extra-parliamentary activities. After the break-up of the Russian empire lead to a brief interlude of Georgia's independence in 1918-21, a spectrum of parliamentary parties emerged.

The creation of parties in Georgia was preceded by the development of groups (today we would say, civil society groups, though nobody used that language at the time) promoting different social and cultural agendas. These groups emerged in the second half of the 19th century and their members came mostly from the educated strata: nobility with university education, schoolteachers, clerks working for the Tsar's administration. These groups were formed mainly around newspapers and journals in which their agendas were promoted. Despite differences, most of these groups were influenced by liberal ideas, inherently (later, openly) opposed the Tsarist autocracy, and saw their greatest priority in educating the Georgian society, that is exposing it to the progressive ideas of the time. However, groups differed on what issues they gave preference to. Some focused on the "national" issue, that is the agenda of preserving Georgian ethno-cultural identity against the assimilationist policies of the Russian empire, known as 'Russification'. Others rather highlighted the "social" issue in line of the left-radical ideas of the time. This difference became later the main division within the pre-Soviet Georgian political class, that between the nationalists and the socialists.

The development of new civil society groups can be traced back to the activities of *Tergdaleuili,*[62] a group of young Georgians who returned to their homeland after being educated in Russian universities and who became involved in activities aiming at reviving the Georgian culture. Ilya Chavchavadze was the most prominent figure among them and he became the symbol or icon of the idea of the modern Georgian nationhood.

The second group led by Niko Nikoladze and Giorgi Tsereteli was closer to the radical progressive ideology that was developing in Europe and the Russian empire at the time. Another notable group was *Xalxosnebi* who followed the lead of the Russian *Narodniki* (the Populists). They were inspired by the idea of educating the lower classes and exposing them to the progressive ideas. In 1892, the more to the left oriented part of Georgian civil

[62] Literally "those who drank [the water of] Tergi", the river on the border between Georgia and Russia.

society organized itself in the *Mesame Dasi* [the Third Company]. It became the immediate predecessor of Georgian social democracy.

In the early 20th century, these groups started to organize themselves into political parties. The first and the strongest of them were the Social Democrats who were established in Georgia in 1900. However, this was not really a strictly Georgian party but rather operated as a local committee of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party.[63] It included groups of the intelligentsia, workers and peasants, and had branches or committees in towns and even in some villages. The intense and fairly well-organized activities of this party enabled it to win large numbers of members and supporters. Over a short period of time it had achieved the reputation of being the main force of opposition against the unpopular and as unjust perceived Tsarist regime, and became the most popular political movement among the largest stratum of Georgian society, the peasantry. The Social Democrats, in Russia as well as in Georgia, soon split in Mensheviks and Bolsheviks, respectively the more moderate and more radical factions. In Georgia, there was a strong predominance of the Mensheviks.

This success of the Social Democrats gave an important impetus to the creation of other parties. At the congress that took place in Geneva in 1904, the Georgian Revolutionary Socialist Federalist Party was founded. This party had its ideological origin in the Xalxosnebi (Populist) movement. Its core was made up of representatives of the intelligentsia who supported the platform of moderate populist socialism altough they were more nationalist-oriented. Its main policy aim was to achieve Georgia's autonomy. Unlike the Social Democrats, the Federalists, as they got to be known, were an independent Georgian party rather than a local branch of the imperial organization. The party was not as successful as the Social Democrats, but it could count on the solid support of the middle classes and gentry, concerned as they were with Russia's assimilation's policies. In the climate of Tsarist autocracy, political activities were often clandestine and took the form of illegal, sometimes violent actions. This trend and party activism peaked during the 1905-07 revolution. Party propagandists were active in different parts of the country. Wide parts of society took part in the armed struggle against the regime under the leadership of the political parties, foremost the social-democrats. Members of the socialist parties carried out a number of attacks against high-level officials of the imperial regime and other opponents of the revolution.

The defeat of the revolution and post-revolutionary persecutions by the authorities dealt a significant blow to the Georgian political parties. Many of their leaders were arrested or emigrated. Political activities were again lim-

[63] One should note that quite a few Georgians played a prominent role in the Russian Social Democratic at the imperial level.

ited to small groups of the intelligentsia and consisted mainly on publishing periodicals.

The two Russian revolutions of 1917 that made an end to the Tsarist regime and brought radical Bolsheviks to power radically changed the environment for the political struggle in Georgia. The prospects of establishing in Russia a democratic republic based on federalist principles vanished. That brought social democratic and nationalist goals closer to each other and both movements found a common denominator in the idea of creating a democratic Georgian republic independent of Bolshevik Russia. Consensus on these issues in the period 1917-1919 manifested itself through the coordinated activities of all main parties, namely the Social Democrats, the Social Federalists, the Socialist Revolutionaries, and the newly created party on the right, the National Democrats. In this period, first the short-lived Transcaucasus Federation was created, to be succeeded by the independent Georgian Republic in May 1918.

Thus started the second period in the development of Georgian political parties, focused in the establishment and functioning of a parliamentary republic. The henceforth strongest Social Democratic party, now independent of its imperial centre, emerged as the dominant political force behind the process of creating the new state. Its higher level of organization and overwhelming popularity among Georgian peasants marked the difference with other parties. This was the only really mass-membership party in Georgia. According to some data, its membership in independent Georgia reached 80 thousand (Georgia's population at that time did not exceed 2.5 million). The nobility, army officers and national minority groups did not share the enthusiasm for the Social Democrats, and the National Democratic Party, an ideological heir of Ilia Chavchavadze's liberal nationalism, emerged as the strongest among these groups. The small but troublesome Bolshevik party represented the greatest danger for the emerging democratic system as it did not share the new national consensus in favour of independence, but actively proclaimed joining Bolshevik Russia and chose for the illegal armed struggle against the Georgian republic.

In the first Georgian elections to the Constituent Assembly, the Social Democrats won 108 of the total of 130 seats. Without alsmost any experienced personnel for the burocratic apparatus (very few Georgians had any experience of working for the Russian Tsarist state), the Social Democratic Party became the backbone of the new state structures. At the same time, while the Georgian army had only existed on a very small scale, the National Guard, which effectively was the armed brunch of the Social Democratic party, acted as the main military force of the Republic. In other words, there was a kind of "party-based state", and the structure of the political party system looked very much like the one we can find in contemporary Georgia: a single dominant party that is hard to distinguish from the state apparatus

and a multitude of small opposition parties, none of whom serves as a realistic contender for power. At the same time, since during the brief interlude of independence the very existence of the Republic was continuously challenged, there were no important political differences between the parties.

Occupation by the Russian Bolshevik Red Army soon brought an end to political pluralism in Georgia, although the Bolsheviks could not enforce full control overnight and some parties could retain legal status before being forced to announce their dissolution and declare their loyalty to the Bolshevik authorities. Those parties that continued to operate did that as underground resistance parties. In 1922, they founded the so-called Damkomi or Independence Committee. The Damkomi was the main organizer of the 1924 anti-Soviet rebellion and ceased to exist after the rebellion was quashed. Its leaders and most participants were arrested or emigrated. From then on Georgia had only one and hegemonic Communist party. Small groups tried to create opposition organizations but were soon arrested and their members imprisoned. The Republican Party, still active today, was one of such organizations created in 1978.

International context

Social changes after the World War II considerably affected the development of political parties in Western democracies. Rising overall welfare and educational standards, the individualization and in some countries secularization of society made more diffuse the boundaries between different social strata and their alleged interests. A more educated and well-off citizenry, most of whom considered itself middle-class, had a wider and more complex array of challenges and (political party) choices.

Blurring of ideological boundaries, and thus rearranging the structure of political agendas, was one of the principal outcomes of the new environment. Political agendas grew closer to each other. This opened the way to cooperation between political parties that had previously been seen as irreconcilably opposed to each other. The party scene was also significantly influenced by media developments. While in earlier times parties connected to their electorate mainly through local organizations and the party press, now the independent media and particularly the electronic media became the main tool for reaching out to society. This naturally lead to a diminished importance of party membership. Reductions in numbers of party members were the most obvious outcome of this. Party leaders began to focus more on directly addressing the electorate rather than maintaining a strong corps of regular members. Moreover, as political leaders entered the citizens' living-rooms through their TV sets, their personal attractiveness became an increasingly crucial factor.

As a result of all these changes existing parties changed and new parties emerged. Their most common feature became their focus on winning elections and *catching* the vote of the majority of the population. Almost all parties without any exception become so-called "catch-all" parties. These changes in party structures and activities triggered debates about their role in society. The emergence of social movements and one-issue organizations appeared to be a serious threat to political parties and to some political scientists and analysts the beginning of their apocalypses. But reality demonstrated that parties were changing, their importance in the eyes of ordinary people diminishing, but their *institutional* relevance in representatives democracies certainly not decreasing. Parties may have a lesser role when it comes to representing the variety of social interests and parties face harsh competition in carrying out this function against interest groups and social movements. But they are the only organizations able to *aggregate* those interests. Parties are also machines for the *recruitment* of political personnel. Political parties remain the indispensable intermediary layers between society and the state [64].

Functions of political parties in a democratic society

The activities of political parties can vary from one country to another. They may be involved in creating combat units, providing social assistance to lower strata of the society, or owning media sources. These, however, are hardly the functions that are specific to political parties. What are those functions that are common tor different political parties, and that constitute the main purpose of this political institution? What makes them indispensable for an effective democratic system?

Previoulsy we mentioned four important contributions that parties can make to the democratization process. It is possible to say that these contributions take place at two levels. On the one hand, parties normally have their origins in society; they operate within and work with society. On the other hand, by being in power or in the opposition, they influence political decision-making and constitute part of the country's political system. At each of these two levels, the parties perform different functions. With regard to society, the parties have the function of articulating (expressing) and aggregating (that is, accumulating and balancing) different interests; they pass political information to the public and supply the information from the public to the authorities; they serve as agents of political socialization. With respect to the government, the parties perform two main functions. They recruit and breed future politicians, nominate their candidates in the elections or appoint them

[64] Giovanni Sartori, *Parties and Party Systems*: *A Framework for Analysis*, Cambridge Univ. Press: New York, 1976

to political positions; they also formulate policies and implement them in the event of coming to power.

Articulating (expressing) and aggregating (balancing) interests. One of the reasons to create political parties was to protect the interests of different strata of society. From this point of view, parties are similar to interest groups and social movements. Parties try to represent the interests of their voters and take appropriate stands on relevant political issues. What make them different are the methods of implementing these interests. While one-issue or particular interest groups and social movements try to achieve their goals by exerting pressure on political institutions, the parties achieve these goals from "inside" of the political system. In that sense they are also indispensable vehicles for interest groups.

The desire to win votes in the elections pushes the parties to include the interests of different social groups in their campaign promises. This is how yet another function which we have mentioned, that of aggregating (balancing) interests, is performed. Unlike social movements and interest groups whose activities are focused on one particular social group or even a single issue, the parties try to include in their programs diverse, at times very different interests. The need to perform this function may at times lead to contradictions with the party's ideological stand. The parties usually want to preserve their identity that is linked to their ideology but at the same time make it flexible enough in order to incorporate a variety of social interests. Creating party coalitions is another way of aggregating different social interests. *Supplying information to the public*. One might say that the parties perform the function of politically educating society. They regularly raise different issues thus influencing public opinion. This function of the parties is deemed so important in some European countries that it constitutes one of the major arguments in favour of state financing for the parties. *Political socialization*. The parties bring together different groups of their supporters that may come from various social strata. As the parties abide by the rules of the game which are prescribed by the political system of a country, they thus contribute to shaping the citizens' loyalty to the political system. The existence of stable groups of supporters of different parties in a society is conducive to its political stability. The long-standing allegiance to an established political organization makes it less likely that a citizen will cross over to some populist leader or an extremist group. The existence of such stable attachments among the voters makes the outcome of the elections more predictable than it would have been otherwise. It is also an important incentive for a citizen to go to the ballot box on the election day and thus connect to the system of governance.

The existence of parties has yet another significant purpose. It provides the possibility of shifting the brunt of the citizens' displeasure from the po-

litical institutions (the state or its different agencies) to the ruling party. In this case, change of the parties in power is not associated with the change of the political regime in the country. *Attracting and breeding political leaders, taking part in elections and appointing to political positions*. Joining a party and getting involved in its activities is the best way to get a chance of obtaining a political (rather than a civil service) position in the government. "Given that in most countries with a representative parliamentary democracy nearly all the holders of political posts are nominated by political parties, this should be considered one of the most important functions of the political parties"[65]. Not only do the parties attract future statesmen, they also take part in training them. Before taking a position in government, most politicians go through a long party career, during which they acquire skills that are required for leadership.

Democratic elections imply making a choice between the parties or the candidates that are nominated by them. This means that the parties structure the elections: this is one of their main functions. The existence of political parties makes it easier for the citizens to choose between different groups of politicians and political views, whether the choice is between party lists or individual candidates. The parties compile different ideas into a general program under a common name and give the voters the possibility to decide whom they should support. The decision which was made once helps the citizens to take some position on different issues in the future. In the newly democratic countries, both the emergence of the parties and their establishment as a central element of the political landscape is mainly associated with the introduction of free and fair elections. Should they win the elections, the parties appoint their members or supporters to a number of positions. This expedites coordination between the legislative and executive branches of power and ensures the legislative branch's support for the government. The identification with the same party and party discipline also facilitates coordination between the members of the parties which are represented in the government. Parties bring order in the system. *Policymaking*. The parties formulate government policy and, when they are in opposition, develop alternatives to this policy. When the parties are disciplined enough, their policy is based on the campaign programs, although these are often so general that the party has a wide leeway for manoeuvring after coming to power. When several parties take part in forming the government, the government policy is formulated by negotiations between these parties. On the other hand, the opposition parties push the government to take into account alternative policy options and, sometimes, modify their decisions respectively. The government does this because the failure to adopt the most effective

[65] Russel J. Dalton, Martin P. Wattenberg, "Unthinkable Democracy: Political Change in Advanced Industrial Democracy," in: *Parties without Partisans*, ed. By Russel J. Dalton and Martin P. Wattenber, Oxford University Press: New York, 2002, p. 7.

policy may cost the party success in the next elections. Thus, party competition leads to a higher quality of policy decisions.

Criticism of parties

Political parties and the political class in general are popular subjects of criticism in many countries. Some critics reject the value of political parties in public life altogether and consider them merely the instruments for pursuing the interests of a limited number of party leaders.

Criticism of political parties is as old as the institution itself. Advocates of the traditional dynastic system disliked the parties because they undermined the established rule and traditional values. On the other hand, some early democrats also considered political parties and the spirit of "factionalism" that comes with them as dangerously divisive and the upholding of selfish group interests against the general interest. For instance, such an attitude towards political parties could be extracted from the farewell speech of the first president of the US, George Washington. In his case, the negative tone with regard to parties was based upon widespread ideas of the time about direct democracy, general will and social harmony. As American political scientist William Crotty assumes, such attitudes to political parties are not unusual in countries attempting to form a democratic government for the first time.

People living in contemporary Western democracies have other reasons to feel less positive about political parties. Presumably, the changes that were described above, such as weakening ties between parties and particular social groups, blurring ideological boundaries and the readiness of political parties to combine different agendas for electoral purposes have led to a somewhat pejorative view of the political class as the corps of political entrepreneurs who are primarily motivated by the greed for power rather than allegiance to certain values and social interests. Moreover, during the last 40 years of the 20th century, the ongoing individualization of people led to a more and more independent attitude towards authorities.

The authoritarian or totalitarian experience that some countries have gone through may have contributed to the perception of the state as a predominantly oppressive institution, which obviously has a negative effect on the attitude towards parties as well.[66] From a completely opposite point of view, parties have been criticized precisely because of their attempts to include a wider public in politics. According to this elitist approach, ordinary people have no essential capacities to participate in politics; consequently, ,they are prone to be manipulated by skillful political entrepreneurs. Parties are only instruments for this manipulation.

[66] Daalder, Op. cit., p. 44.

Parties in Eastern Europe and Georgia

Are parties and party systems that emerged after the demise of the Communist rule any different from those in other countries? In any event, the evolution of party systems in the new democracies of the Eastern Europe is the most natural point of comparison for the Georgian political party scene. If at the dawn of democratic transformations a number of political scientists thought that parties in this region would follow the route of their Western predecessors, it later became obvious that the process exhibits significant differences from the party development in the West.

Parties emerged in Eastern European countries as a result of the overthrow of Communist regimes and the establishment of political pluralism. On the first stage of this process, their political scenes were dominated by broad movements whose main purpose was to mobilize the public against the Communists (such as the trade union Solidarity in Poland, the Civil Forum in the Czech Republic, the Popular Fronts in Baltic States, etc.). As their main goals were achieved, significant disagreements as well as organisational problems arose within these movements. In the beginning of the 1990s, new political parties emerged on the basis of either existing movements or parts of them. Thus, a short while after toppling Communist regimes, political parties became the major participants of political processes in Eastern European countries[67]. However, the new party systems were not as stable and well-institutionalized as they were in Western countries. There were frequent divisions and regroupings between the parties, and they lacked wide support among the population. That explains why the volatility and change of preferences of voters between elections is higher and more frequent in Eastern European countries than in the West.[68] Unlike parties in established democracies, Eastern European parties do not have roots in particular social groups. The identification of voters is conditioned largely by attitudes to the past (opponents of the Communist nomenklatura and its supporters), the attitude towards Western values, and personal sympathies and antipathies. Linkage between voting patterns and social strata have certainly gradually emerged, and the voters with less income who have suffered more from market reforms tend to support the left-wing parties stemming from former Communist networks, while more successful citizens support liberal and centre-right oriented parties [69].

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[67] Tomasz Kostelecky, Political Parties after Communism: Developments in East-Central Europe, Woodrow Wilson Center: Washington, DC, 2002, p. 158.

[68] Schmitter, op. cit., p. 75.

[69] Political scientist Herbert Kitschelt thinks that there are two main trends of development of parties in Eastern European and post-Soviet countries: they are either clientelistic or they are the so-called program parties, see Herbert Kitschelt, "Divergent Paths of Postcommuist Democracies", in: *Political Parties and Democracy*, ed. by Richard Gunther, Larry Diamond, The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press: Baltimore, 2001, p. 302.

There are a number of similarities and differences between political party developments in new democracies of Eastern Europe and Georgia. The Georgian movement against the Communist political regime tried but failed to create an umbrella organisation like the Popular Front and, despite having a common agenda, it was split among numerous mutually hostile organisations. However, like in Eastern European countries, Georgian political parties never aimed to represent the interests of particular social groups. They put forward their claims through the confrontation with the Communist government and emphasized nationalist interests. Some of these parties proved successful at mobilising a fairly large number of supporters for street actions (those united into the Round Table coalitions proved the most successful among them). On the other hand, there were a number of small club-type parties that mainly united intellectuals and tried to disseminate their ideas among the elite groups (Republican Party, Dasi, Christian Democratic Party, the Free Democrats, etc.) The closed nature of these parties which emerged by the end of 1980s as well as the absence of internal democracy hindered their relations with the wider public[70]. Almost all of them were markedly personalistic.

Unlike the parties in Eastern Europe, the Georgian parties failed to establish themselves as principal players in the political life of the country after the demise of the Communist regime. They played only a secondary role compared to the dominant power structures. The latter included paramilitary groups like Mkhedrioni (until the destruction of the group in 1995) or oligarchic networks that moved around personal powers of Eduard Shevardnadze or Aslan Abashidze. As one political observer stated then, social life was "...characterized by the drastic reduction of the political party role"[71]. Georgian political observers agree that ideological orientations have played a minor or no role in the life of Georgian political parties. Since gaining independence, the most successful parties have been the ones with no clear ideological stand and those who have targeted at all social strata. This includes all parties that have been in power in different years: the bloc Round Table – Free Georgia, the Citizens' Union of Georgia, the Union of Revival, and the United National Movement.[72] In contrast to the Eastern European party scene, in Georgia the former Communist nomenclatura failed to create a reformed left-oriented political party to attract the voters especially harmed by democratic and market reforms. Some observers considered the Citizens

[70] Ghia Nodia, *Political Parties in Georgia*, in: International IDEA, *Building Democracy in Georgia*, Discussion Paper 7: Developing a Democratic Community in Georgia, May 2003, p. 10

[71] David Losaberidze, *Self-Government in Georgia: Development Trends*, CIPDD: Tbilisi, 1998, p. 50.

[72] Jaba Devdariani, *Georgia: The Rise and Fall of Facade Democracy*, in: "Demokratizatsya", winter 2004, available at
http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa3996/is_200401/ai_n9358373 .

Union of Georgia to be such a party because its leader, Eduard Shevardnadze, had been a prominent Communist in the past. However, in fact the Citizens' Union included people of different social background among its leaders, including reformist Westernizers, and it rallied around the personality of its leader rather than the interests of a social group. Nonetheless, the Citizens' Union attempted to become a social-democratic party and was officially linked to the Socialist International as an observer-party[73]

By the end of the 1990s, a trend towards greater linkage between political parties and particular social interests started to develop. Parties like Industry Will Save Georgia and the New Conservatives gave priority to promoting business interests, while the Labour Party was considered to be the advocate of the interests of the most vulnerable social groups that did not benefit from market reforms. Obviously, the phenomenon of clientelistic parties present in Eastern Europe is characteristic of Georgian political life as well. The Citizens' Union of Georgia could be considered an example of this. "Only the governing party, which can use the instruments of attraction through force or economic benefits, has a lot of members and supporters," wrote a Georgian observer at the time of the CUG being in power.[74] As other parties remained weak, the clientelistic party could retain power over a long period of time.

On the following pages we will focus on the current state of affairs of political parties in Georgia.

[73] Nick Crook, Michael Dauderstädt, André Gerrits, *Social Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe,* Friedrich Evert Stiftung, Alfred Mozer Stichting, Wiardi Beckman Stichting, 2002, p. 43.

[74] David Losaberidze, *Self-Government in Georgia: Development Trends*, CIPDD: Tbilisi, 1998, p. 51

2.2 The Political Party System

What to do?

- Develop clear and viable policy profiles and coherent party policies;
- Put peoples' interests first when designing party policies;
- Transfer from personality-based to policy-based competition;
- Re-evaluate the importance of parliamentary and extra-parliamentary opposition;
- Work together when policy choices make case-by-case cooperation necessary;
- Develop and implement democratic codes of conduct by parties in government and opposition;
- Parties with similar programmatic and ideological goals establish more stable partnership.

Weak multiparty system and the high death rate of political parties

Different indicators may be used to describe a political party system in any country. The most general principle is a quantitative one. Three categories are usually distinguished in this case: one-party, two-party, and multiparty systems. In a one-party system, only one strong political organization functions legally and it is in full control of the government. Such a system does not allow real political competition; in fact, strictly speaking, one cannot even speak about a party system here. The two remaining categories do involve competition. In a two-party system, there are two political organizations of approximately equal strength. In such systems, the legislation does not restrict the establishment of new parties but in practice other parties have only a slim chance of competing with the two main players. Analysts speak of a multiparty system when there are at least three strong political actors.

The number of registered political parties in Georgia exceeds 180. This, however, is not unique to Georgia. In much older and more consolidated democracies the number of registered parties can also be very high. But in the Georgian case diversity does not automatically mean multiparty. In multiparty systems, public support is usually distributed among several parties in such a manner that the winning party is compelled to create a coalition

with other parties to form a government.[75] By contrast, in Georgian elections, winning parties tend to reach landslide victories and enjoy comfortable majorities in Parliament without the need to cooperate with other parties.

In Georgian elections winning parties tend to reach landslide victories and enjoy comfortable majorities in Parliament without the need to cooperate with other parties

Based on the experience of the last fifteen years, the Georgian political party system may be described as what some analysts call a "loose multiparty system"[76]. Another name for it could be a dominant political party system. In such a system, a single political party achieves outright victory in parliamentary elections and takes full control of government agencies. There is no clear distinction between the government and the ruling bureaucracy. There also exists an opposition that participates in elective bodies, raises political issues, and criticizes specific government actions. In this way it exercises a limited influence on the political process, but none of the opposition parties can be considered a viable contender for political power. Parties in such a system tend to form and dissolve coalitions and alliances easily and without adherence to firm principles.

The domination by a single political party within a formally multiparty system has been common to many countries, especially at the early stages of the development of democracy. Such systems can be both stable and unstable, depending on the ability of the ruling politicians to reach compromises with others and incorporate different political players into the power system.

The emergence of dominant-party systems, whether stable or unstable, may correlate with the issue of presidential versus parliamentary models of democracy. Multiparty scenarios are more typical of parliamentary systems. Presidential systems are notable for their high level of concentration of power in a single person, and this is reflected in the arrangement of political parties. All three dominant parties in Georgia were presidential parties and depended on the personal charisma of their leaders.

[75] Robert Jackson and Doreen Jackson, *A Comparative Introduction to Political Science*, Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, 1996, p. 323

[76] Robert Jackson and Doreen Jackson, ibid., p. 323

The Mexican Institutional Revolutionary Party

In Georgian political discussions, the example of Mexico and the Mexican Institutional Revolutionary Party is sometimes invoked as a model of a dominant political party system that could be compared to the Georgian situation. But the differences are considerable and the example not advisable. The PRI ruled in Mexico for more than 70 years without interruption and showed itself to be a very strong institution not dependent on any particular leader and with regular successions of leadership. But the price of such a system in terms of corruption and democratic rights and values was very high. In Georgia, three dominant political parties have been in power within a period of fifteen years, all of them revolving around single leaders. Two of them (the Round Table bloc and Citizens Union of Georgia) did not survive the exit from politics of their leaders.

The type of political party system also strongly correlates with the mode of change or alteration of holders of power. The *multiple transitions to democracy* in Georgia have not been within the normal constitutional process; rather they have happened through extreme confrontation of political forces and a high level of explosive public mobilization. The outcome of the struggle is that the winner takes all and the loser loses all (which could include property and freedom). The emergence of a single dominant party is merely a logical outcome of such a struggle.[77]

Further development of the political party system in Georgia may follow the established pattern or break with it. It may lead to the institutionalization of a dominant party system (which would bring Georgia closer to the examples of Mexico or other countries with the same defects in terms of democratic governance), the gradual emergence of a multiparty or two-party model, or some other scenario. Much depends on the parties themselves and their mutual relations. The levels of institutionalization, fragmentation, and polarization within the party system are valid indicators for describing the political scene in Georgia.

Institutionalization

The stability of the actors in inter-party competition is the main evidence for a highly institutionalized party system. In the Georgian case, the evidence on this account is negative: the Georgian political party system is very weakly

[77] On the influence of the presidential system on the instability of power change, see Juan Linz, "The Perils of Presidentialism", *Journal of Democracy*, 1 (1990), pp. 51-69

institutionalized. A large number of parties and blocs have taken part in all the parliamentary elections held in Georgia since independence, but only a few of them will take part in the next elections. For example, 24 parties and blocs gained seats in the 1992 parliamentary elections. However, only eight of these parties participated in the 1995 elections and only one of these – the National Democratic Party – managed to gain representation. A similar relationship exists between parties that took part in the 1999 and 2003 parliamentary elections respectively.

The Georgian political party system is very weakly institutionalized

The case of the repeated parliamentary elections held on 28 March 2004 is especially notable. They were scheduled after the results of the elections of 2 November 2003 had been declared invalid. Of the 20 parties that participated in these elections, however, only four had also run in the November 2003 elections. This does not mean that 80 per cent of participants completely changed in five months; rather, parties created coalitions or changed partners, individual politicians may have moved from one party to another. But the extreme instability of the party system is still evident.

Of the individual parties that have been more or less successful in recent years and are the protagonists of this report, only three – the New Conservative Party, Industry Will Save Georgia, and the Labour Party of Georgia, had experience of taking part in parliamentary elections independently before 2004. The United National Movement and the Conservative Party of Georgia, in their present form, were created after the Rose Revolution. The Republican Party has been a rather stable entity over the years, but it always took part in parliamentary elections in blocs, and these blocs kept changing from one election to the next.

None of the parties can count on a solid and relevant base of electoral support. Pedersen's index of electoral volatility, which measures changes in voters' attitudes in periods between elections, reached 75 per cent between the 1992 and 1995 parliamentary elections and went down to 46 per cent between the 1995 and 1999 elections.[78] These percentages are much higher than in other countries in Eastern Europe and show the difficulties for party formation in Georgia.

Frequent changes in election legislation (see more on this in the *Parties and State* subchapter) may be contributing to the instability of the political party system, but these changes are not fundamental enough to serve as the primary explanation for the instability of the party system.

[78] Jonathan Wheatley, *Georgia from National Awakening to Rose Revolution: Delayed Transition in the Former Soviet Union*, Ashgate Publishing Company, Burlington, 2005, p. 158. A higher percentage implies higher volatility in voters' attitudes.

Ties with society

Parties can be said to have good ties with society if they have close contacts with their constituencies and are successful in articulating and promoting genuine public interests. Most analysts are sceptical in assessing this aspect of Georgian political parties. The instability of the political party system indirectly confirms this scepticism: had the major political parties been more rooted in social interests, it is less likely that so many political actors who had played prominent roles before would have disappeared altogether or been completely marginalized.

Gap between political and civil society

Most analysts believe that Georgian political parties are weakly linked to social groups and that they are rather vehicles serving the interests of relatively small groups. Jonathan Wheatley believes that Georgian political parties aspire to get into Parliament only for the personal gain of the leadership, in order to lobby certain business interests and get hold of the legislative mechanisms required to this end. "In this context the publicly espoused political platform of parties should be understood as no more than window-dressing, devised to convince the population that the party really cared for them or to show Western governments that Georgia really was a democracy.[79]"

Public opinion research also demonstrates the low level of people's association with political parties. According to research carried out by GORBI in 2001, 4.4 per cent of those polled said that they were members of a political party. Half of them presented themselves as members of the Citizens' Union or Revival[80] - the party that had disappeared after the Rose Revolution. According to an International Republican Institute (IRI) study of Georgian national voters in June 2004, those who declared themselves members of a political party fell to 2.6 per cent. This also raises the question of what membership in a party really means – this is discussed in the following chapters.

Political parties are weakly rooted in social interests

Parties themselves consider their lack of connection with society to be a problem but believe that it is primarily conditioned by problems prevalent in

[79] Jonathan Wheatley, *Georgia from National Awakening to Rose Revolution: Delayed Transition in the Former Soviet Union*, Ashgate: Burlington.
[80] Ghia Nodia, *Political Parties, Democracy Building in Georgia*, p. 47.

society itself. According to one of them, public interest groups are poorly developed and, correspondingly, it is extremely difficult to reveal what public demand actually is. Parties have therefore to take political decisions and risks completely independently.[81] Citizenship of low intensity (discussed in the *Society and Citizenship* chapter above) is of course not sufficiently stimulating, and parties need to become architects of an active society as an ally in the development of democracy. Political parties also need the practical knowledge of specific social groups in order to design efficient policies.

The legitimization of the electoral system and parties

This indicator is closely linked to the previous one and is measured by the level of public trust in political parties and in the fairness of the electoral process. The level of trust towards political parties tends to be low both in absolute figures and in comparison with other civil institutions[82].

People express trust in particular political figures and cast their vote based on their attitude to the leader. According to several public opinion polls conducted by IRI in 2003-5, about two-thirds of the population voted for a party because they liked its leader. Although the same survey shows that public trust in political parties increased from 19 per cent in 2003 to 37 per cent in 2005, they are still among the least trusted institutions in Georgia.

The level of public confidence in the fairness of the electoral process is also quite low. This reached its nadir in the November 2003 elections, though it improved substantially thereafter. International and local observer organizations have often assessed the elections held in Georgia as unfair; the assessments tended to worsen up until November 2003. Parties themselves often express no confidence in the electoral process, pointing out numerous violations by the government. Such distrust was especially widespread under the previous regime but it has remained, albeit on a somewhat smaller scale, since the Rose Revolution. Opponents usually do not charge the new government with direct fraud but with pressuring voters or misusing state resources for party ends.

[81] Republican Party member.

[82] The research conducted in 2004 by the Caucasus Research Resource Centre revealed that 41.4 per cent of those polled distrusted political parties and only 27 per cent trusted them. In 2005, the indicator changed to 38.1 and 18 per cent respectively (the "neutral" attitude increased). This indicator was worse than any other comparable civil (political and social) institution, including Parliament, police, the court system, etc. In surveys conducted in 2003, 2004, and 2005, the IRI studied the characteristics of politicians and parties which people found unacceptable. The characteristic respondents found most unacceptable was making false promises and lying.

Excerpts from the OSCE/ ODIHR report on the extraordinary presidential election in Georgia in January 2004 and the parliamentary election in March 2004

"The 4 January 2004 extraordinary presidential election in Georgia demonstrated notable progress over previous elections, and in several respects brought the country closer to meeting OSCE commitments and other international standards for democratic elections. In contrast to the 2 November 2003 parliamentary elections that were characterized by systematic and widespread fraud, the authorities generally displayed the collective political will to conduct a more genuine democratic election process."

"The 28 March partial repeat parliamentary elections in Georgia during the pre-election period demonstrated notable progress and were the most democratic since independence. In this respect, the election process was brought to closer alignment with OSCE commitments and other international standards for democratic elections. However, developments during the post-election period, including irregularities observed during the tabulation of results, implausible voter turnout, the mishandling of some complaints and the selective cancellation of election results posed a challenge to the integrity of election results in some districts."

Even citizens' decision to participate or not to participate in the elections is conditioned by the fear that the elections will not be fair. According to the 2003 IRI poll, 26 per cent of those wishing to participate in the elections said they wanted to go to the polling station just in order to prevent the expected vote rigging. On the other hand, among those who planned to abstain, 32 per cent explained their decision by saying that they were certain the elections would be rigged anyway and could see no point in participating. Prior to the 2003 parliamentary elections, 65 per cent of those polled were sure that the results of the 2002 local government elections would be rigged, and 50 per cent expected that the results of the upcoming parliamentary elections in 2003 would be rigged as well. People usually laid the blame for election rigging on the ruling party and the government[83].

[83] No similar research data were available with regard to popular trust towards the electoral process, given the fact that no similar research into public attitudes was conducted in 2004 and 2005, but as the level of trust towards government institutions increased considerably, one can presume this extends to higher trust in the fairness of the electoral process. It has to be noted, though, that all major elections after November 2003 (presidential elections in January 2004, parliamentary elections in March 2004, elections to the Supreme Council of Achara in June 2004, took place in the context of post-revolutionary

The institutionalization and stability of the party system is largely conditioned by the internal strength of party organization. If parties have a stable organizational structure, if they have sufficient material, human, and professional resources, are not excessively dependent on their leader and have workable mechanisms of resolving internal disagreements, this increases their capacities in terms of viability, mobility, and adaptation. Eventually, this contributes to the overall stability of the party system. This factor will be discussed in detail in a separate sub-chapter below.

Fragmentation

The degree of fragmentation of the political system significantly influences the nature of relations between political parties. This can be measured by the number of relevant parties in Parliament and outside[84]. A political system is considered fragmented if that number is high. In Georgia, the political opposition to the dominant government party is divided between several political parties whose level of support is roughly even[85]. The big picture is that of a high degree of *concentration* of votes and post-electoral political power. This is not conducive to coalition- and consensus-building. In the period between elections, given the high volatility, it is hard to predict which party will emerge as the ruling party and which one as the major opposition force. However, it would be misleading to link the level of fragmentation to the high number of registered parties (over 180), as a large majority of them do not effectively participate in the political process.

The Georgian political system is noted for its high degree of concentration of votes but also for the high degree of fragmentation on the opposition side

The parties themselves consider the situation to be problematic. They believe that votes of social groups with similar interests are divided between a large number of small parties. This weakens each party and leads to disproportionate representation between different social groups. There is no agreement as to what number of political players would be optimal for Georgia. Most do not agree that a two-party political system would be appropriate

euphoria and were not genuinely competitive in nature. It remains to be seen whether the electoral process will be fair if the UNM faces a realistic threat of electoral defeat.

[84] See Rae´s index of fragmentation and IMDA Framework for Democratic Party-Building, p. 14-15.

[85] According to results of the poll conducted by GORBI in December 2005, the Conservative Party was the most popular among the opposition parties with six per cent support. The Labour Party was in third place with five per cent. It was followed by the Republican Party - four per cent, and the New Conservatives Party, and Industry Will Save Georgia with three per cent support.

here. It is often said that there is no point in discussing this issue and that the number of parties the society needs has to be regulated by the "political market."

An electoral threshold in proportionate elections is one of the means of regulating the level of fragmentation. As a high level of fragmentation is a concern within the political elite and society, the threshold was gradually increased and reached seven per cent in 1999. Later on the opposition called for it to be reduced, but all parties seem to agree that the threshold should not be lower than 4 or 5 per cent. It is recognized that a lower barrier would encourage excessive fragmentation of political organizations.

Polarization

This indicator is usually measured by the degree of difference and incompatibility between the ideologies/values of different political actors. If values and principles of the political actors differ radically, the party system is characterized by a high degree of polarization. In such systems, co-operation between the parties is difficult. Correspondingly, such systems are characterized by a lack of stability and are considered to be "risky." The polarization of the political party system can be considered as its most relevant determinator[86].

The Georgian political system is characterized by a low degree of polarization, at least in terms of formal ideological differences between the relevant parties. Most relatively strong political parties consider themselves to be centre-right ideologically, and only the Labour Party clearly positions itself on the left. At the same time, the specific demands of the centre-right parties are often no different from those of the left, and cooperation between them is not hampered by ideological differences. In fact, there are many common elements in the views and social identities of the parties. Moreover there exists a record of successful tactical cooperation between parties that claim allegiance to different ideological principles. Interestingly, leaders of political parties themselves sometimes prefer to play down their ideological differences.[87]

The Georgian political system has a low degree of polarization in ideological terms

[86] Giovanni Sartori, Parties and Party Systems, 1976, New York: Harper and Row

[87] A representative of one of the most successful leftist parties in Georgia says that "in the era of space research, it is hard to talk about a clear-cut difference between the parties. Not only states but party ideologies within countries are getting closer in the process of globalization. Today, both the leftist and rightist movements have moved to the centre and meet at the centre."

People also find it difficult to distinguish between the parties based on their ideological differences. In research conducted in June 2004, the IRI asked respondents to categorize parties in terms of right-wing and left-wing orientation. Approximately 39 per cent of those polled found it hard to answer this question and marked "do not know" on the questionnaire. Twelve per cent of respondents said that the New Conservative Party and the Industrialists, which are considered to be the parties with the most pronounced right-wing orientation in Georgia, were left-wing.

The social characteristics of voters of different parties do not demonstrate a high level of party polarization either. Table 8 below, based on IRI research, gives a socio-demographic breakdown of voters of two parties that notionally find themselves on the opposing wings of the left and right spectrum.

	Labour Party of Georgia	New Conservative Party
Male	49	45
Female	51	55
Age 18-29	14	22
Age 30-49	41	42
Age 50+	45	36
Secondary Education	60	42
High Education	34	56
Lowest Income	29	18
Medium Income	44	45
Highest Income	27	37
Tbilisi Inhabitant	35	43
Big City Inhabitant	15	16
Small City Inhabitant	8	13
Rural Inhabitant	42	28

Table 8. Social profiles of voters

Despite the low level of polarization on ideology and policy issues, Georgian political life is certainly characterized by a high level of polarization in terms of *confrontation*, usually between the government and the opposition parties. This will be discussed in greater detail below.

Specific features of relations between political parties in Georgia

There are some specific features of the political party system in Georgia which deserve special attention. This includes the relations between the dominant political party and the opposition, the lack of trust between the parties, and the primacy of personal relations for contacts between them.

The dominant party and the opposition. The main political division in the country is that between the ruling party and the opposition. This has been

the case both before and after the Rose Revolution. In all Georgian Parliaments, the pro-government party has enjoyed a comfortable majority and usually has no difficulty passing legislation without having to co-operate with other parties.[88] While there have always been a fairly large number of independent MPs from single-mandate districts, they usually tend to vote with the ruling party on major issues. The ruling party is the main resource for staffing agencies of the executive. While Georgian legislation distinguishes between political appointments and non-political civil servants, in practice this difference is rarely observed. Moreover, local government bodies have extremely limited powers and resources and cannot be considered a counterweight to the ruling party. Such pre-eminence of a single party gives it a free hand to carry out reforms needed in the country.

Representatives of most parties believe that the benefits of a dominant party system cannot outweigh the negative results associated with it since the high concentration of power poses a threat to the development of democratic institutions in the country.

Extra-parliamentary activities of opposition parties

While the ruling party enjoys full control over political power in the country, the functions of opposition parties become similar to those of non-governmental human rights and other social organizations which study the problems prevailing in the society and try to raise awareness about them. This may be true of opposition parties who have or do not have seats in the legislative body. One of the main responsibilities of these party organizations is to study people's problems and hold consultations with citizens. The opposition representatives often act as third parties in the court hearings defending citizens filing lawsuits. The parliamentary opposition is also active in criticizing action taken by the government and raising public concern on the negative outcomes of governmental initiatives.

Government representatives often accuse the opposition of being "unconstructive," that is, only criticizing government policies without proposing viable alternatives. The opposition retorts that the ruling party has a two-thirds majority, and with that a constitutional majority in Parliament, and under these conditions it is useless to act in Parliament as the opposition.[89]

[88] Formally, the 1992-95 Parliament was an exception: there was no established pro-government party that had a majority, but there still existed a loose pro-government majority coalition.

[89] Member of Parliament, the Conservative Party of Georgia.

The predominance of a single party vis-à-vis a weak and fragmented opposition arises particularly around the issue of political responsibility. The opposition holds the ruling party solely responsible for the developments in the country and does not think that it shares any responsibility. This was also confirmed by an MP from the party in power: "This is a ruling party and it is held responsible for every step taken by the government. The voters think that if the bureaucracy is working badly, this is the fault of the party for which they voted and from which they demanded change."[90]

This situation rules out cooperation between the ruling and the opposition parties, as political actors do not think they need each other. "President Saakashvili came to power with 97 per cent support. He does not need to cooperate with the opposition, so he does not. For the ruling party, we are an organization that has no influence. The cooperation between us will be possible only when the mutual need arises."[91] Opposition parties perceive the strength of the ruling party as a threat. They assert that the government influences the court, the media, and the election administration. Opposition parties see the main ways to reduce this danger in strengthening democratic institutions, decentralizing power, and establishing the balance between different branches of authority. In their opinion, this will provide equitable conditions for the development of political parties.

Opposition parties try to cope with the dominant position of the ruling party by uniting and pulling in resources. For example, during by-elections held in five single-mandate districts in 2005, four opposition parties organized primary elections and confronted the ruling party with their joint candidates (though to no avail). While the opposition parties remain weak, ideological differences between them become less relevant.

The dominant party system rules out cooperation between the party in power and the opposition

Lack of trust between parties and the primacy of personal relations for mutual contacts. Another important peculiarity of the political arena is the lack of trust between the parties. In general, parties usually express readiness to cooperate with all political organizations: "We have normal relations with all parties. We do not have antagonistic relations with anyone and we will cooperate with everyone with great pleasure."[92] However, in their public speeches, they often accuse each other of being unprincipled. A low level of mutual trust is especially obvious between the ruling and the opposition parties. But opposition parties tend to mistrust each other as well. Opposition party leaders often question other parties' true adherence to their ideo-

[90] Member of Parliament, United National Movement.
[91] Member of Parliament, New Conservative Party.
[92] Member of Parliament, Industry Will Save Georgia.

logical principles and accuse each other of secret collusion with the ruling party.[93]

Most relatively strong Georgian political parties have "faction origins" which determine the special character of their relations with each other. As a rule, parties are created around leaders or groups within the legislative body. They get into Parliament through the winning party's list and later, claiming disappointment with the policies of the ruling party, defect from it and create an opposition faction that eventually develops into a political party. Among the parties participating in this research, the only exceptions are the Republican Party and Industry Will Save Georgia (although in March 2004, the Republicans also got their parliamentary representation through the party list of the United National Movement, and moved to the opposition in the summer of the same year). Defections also take place in other directions. For instance, several members of the Labour Party elected to the Tbilisi City Council in 2002 soon moved to the National Movement faction (which was then still in opposition at the national level). Such changes of party affiliations are perceived as betrayals, and their memory poisons relations between political parties.

Frequent defections from political parties sour relations between them

Since parties are dependent on the personalities of the leaders or a small group of leaders, making and breaking coalitions between them largely depends on relations of personal trust within the narrow circle of party leaders. Clashes of personal ambitions may hamper establishing coalitions between otherwise like-minded political groups, and they may need some "neutral" figure to facilitate the coalition. For instance, the Conservative Party of Georgia and the Republicans succeeded in creating a unified faction in Parliament in the autumn of 2005 (the Democratic Front) after a neutral figure, David Zurabishvili, a recent defector from the United National Movement, emerged as its leader.

[93] Jonathan Wheatley believes that it is virtually impossible to achieve a high level of trust between the Georgian political parties. In his view, political competition in Georgia is conducted according to the rules of a zero-sum game: one group's coming to power through elections or other means is perceived by the rest as a threat to the very existence of the party and the liberty and property of their members.

Cooperation and mergers between political parties

The United National Movement was established as a result of a merger of the National Movement and the United Democrats. The Conservative Party of Georgia was established as a result of a merger between the United Conservative Party and the Alliance of National Forces. Two other parties among those involved in this research, the New Conservative Party and Industry Will Save Georgia, created a bloc before the 2004 parliamentary elections and continued to co-operate in Parliament. A merger between them was considered a possible outcome. However, in February 2006 they created two separate factions in Parliament.

In the autumn of 2005, two parties involved in this research, the Republican Party and the Conservative Party of Georgia, together with some independent MPs, jointly established a faction called the Democratic Front.

Personal attitudes are important not only at the level of national party organizations, but also for regional branches. Members of local party branches often choose to develop relations with other parties based on personal preferences. If a leading party member in the local party chapter finds it uncomfortable relating to representatives of other parties, this may seriously hamper cooperation between these organizations in a given region.

Cooperation and confrontation between the parties

Forms of Cooperation. The most widespread forms of co-operation between political parties are the creation of blocs and alliances before elections. Such alliances may be tactical and temporary, but mergers between the parties sometimes occur as well. One of the strongest incentives for the creation of such alliances is a high electoral threshold (seven per cent). Few parties can be confident of being able to overcome the threshold independently. Electoral blocs may be created between parties that have comparable electoral prospects. Sometimes, however, small political organizations often gather around strong parties and appear as their satellites. For instance, before the 2003 elections several small parties allied with the Citizens' Union of Georgia, the ruling party at the time, to create the For a New Georgia bloc. In this way strong parties gain additional human resources and/or specific electable public figures, while for small organizations such an alliance represents the only chance to get into Parliament.

Major political parties in Georgia look favourably on electoral alliances. The Labour Party of Georgia is an exception in this regard. The party members believe that an electoral bloc is "a result of the mercantile deal" and is doomed to break up after the elections (even if it succeeds). "In civilized countries, the creation of a bloc is a normal occurrence that does not pose a threat, but here it is unacceptable even from a moral viewpoint."[94] Correspondingly, the creation of coalitions is acceptable to this party only after elections, in order to form the government.

Another form of cooperation between parties is the creation of a single faction in the legislative body. Parties are pushed to do this because the law does not allow formally establishing a parliamentary faction – and becoming eligible to certain privileges and resources that accrue – unless ten MPs join it.

Parties often create tactical, issue-based alliances, that is, they join forces to promote specific issues. Usually, such alliances are established between opposition parties. At the end of 2005, for instance, all major opposition parties made a unified stand in support of direct elections of Tbilisi's mayor (the legislation sponsored by the United National Movement and enacted by Parliament envisages election of the mayor by the city council). Opposition parties often organize joint protest actions against specific decisions of and steps taken by the government.

In the autumn of 2005, four opposition entities (the Conservative Party of Georgia, the Labour Party, the New Conservative Party and Industry Will Save Georgia bloc, and the Freedom Party) experimented with a new form of cooperation between parties: preliminary elections (primaries). The primaries were held two weeks before parliamentary by-elections in October 2005, when five seats were contested. Each party could nominate a candidate for primaries, while the winner ran against the candidate of the United National Movement.[95] In electoral terms, the experiment was unsuccessful: the opposition candidates lost in all five districts. With the exception of one district (Isani), despite the agreement with regards to the primaries, the parties that were defeated in the primaries did not make any real effort to support the joint candidate of the opposition. However, this mechanism still increases the chances of opposition candidates in majoritarian elections. It is yet to be seen whether the opposition parties will use this form of cooperation again in the future.

[94] Member of the Labour Party of Georgia.

[95] The Labour Party of Georgia participated in the organization of primaries between the parties too. It did not nominate its candidates but promised to support the winner of primaries in the elections.

Seeking consensus

At the end of 2005 the United National Movement tried to initiate a document with a national agreement between different Georgian parties, whether in government or opposition, regarding the basic values and interests of the country. The opposition parties, however, declined to cooperate, saying it was just a publicity stunt on the part of the ruling party.

The parties came closest to finding consensus between both government and opposition parties when a Code of Ethics of Members of the Georgian Parliament was signed in October 2004 (see the text in the Appendix). However, individual MPs rather than parties were the signatories.

In the past, ideological principles espoused by the parties have often not been the decisive factor in choosing political partners. Currently, one of the most important factors that facilitates or impedes the formation of political alliances is a party's attitude towards such a seminal event as the Rose Revolution. Among the opposition parties involved in this research, the Republicans and the Conservative Party of Georgia took an active part in the Revolution, while the others abstained from participation. The dividing lines created then continue to be valid today. Representatives of the Conservative Party of Georgia believe that "different organizational structures and attitudes to the Rose Revolution impede integration between the parties with a similar ideological outlook."[96] The New Conservative Party representatives also perceive attitudes towards the Rose Revolution to be a serious problem: "We may have a lot in common with other right-wing forces but we were on different flanks when the revolution took place. This issue is still topical and very important."[97]

A further obstacle to cooperation or integration between parties with similar political views is their strategic preferences. As one of representative said, "We often agree with other parties on the what, that is to say, what needs to be done, but there are great differences in terms of the how."[98]

Competition and confrontation. Political competition is a necessary part of party politics. It peaks in pre-election periods, when the parties compete for votes; but it may also be fierce in periods between elections, when it expresses itself in policy debates, more often within the elective bodies or in the media.

[96] Member of Parliament, Conservative Party of Georgia.
[97] Member of Parliament, New Conservative Party.
[98] Member of Parliament, New Conservative Party.

As a general characteristic of the Georgian political system, competition takes place mainly between the ruling and opposition parties. The opposition parties tend to play down their differences in public. In fact, of course, they also compete with each other for public support. One of the spheres of competition is criticism of the government: parties hope to attract greater support through finding better ways to criticize government actions. Experience gained in previous years suggests that an opposition party's presentation of itself as an implacable opponent of the government may boost the party's popularity.

Emotional politics

Physical violence between political parties became a common feature in the final year of Eduard Shevardnadze's mandate. This trend abated after the Rose Revolution, but in the second half of 2005, the Georgian public witnessed a new escalation of serious confrontations between the ruling party representatives and the opposition. Several brawls broke out in Parliament and in the Tbilisi City Council. Notably, bitter personal confrontation and fistfights occurred more often between erstwhile political partners and personal friends, who claim allegiance to rather similar political principles.

All parties admit that such actions are unacceptable and are to be condemned. They also note that there is a low level of political culture and insufficient experience of orderly political competition in Georgia. Some have attributed it to the especially fiery temperament of Georgians. The public considers venomous and often physical altercations between politicians to be the most detestable characteristic of Georgian politics. According to the IRI 2003 research, 27 per cent of those polled named fighting in Parliament to be the most unpleasant trait of politicians and parties. In the 2004 poll, it came second in a list of dislikable features after issuing false promises. However, following a new outbreak of inter-party brawling in the summer and autumn of 2005, inter-party fighting regained its status as the feature of the Georgian politicians least appreciated by the public.

Since independence, Georgian politics has been notable for an extremely confrontational style in relations between political groups. It is notable for frequent personal attacks that are usually focused on issues of character rather than policies. Participants in political debates, whether in legislative bodies or TV talk shows, accuse each other of dishonesty, incompetence, betraying the interests of their country, using criminal methods, and so on. Verbal insults sometimes lead to physical abuse. Such debates usually take

place between representatives of the ruling party and the opposition, though opposition groups may target each other as well.

Because violent brawls are considered a common feature of party confrontation, some parties have groups of young men in good physical shape who are ready to engage in such confrontations. Their main function is to provoke opponents and settle scores by physical means. Some of these people have a criminal background. Such groups were created in the period preceding the Rose Revolution but continue to exist. In the internal party jargon, they are called "Sonderkommandos". Parties assert that the majority of political organizations have such teams. Parties consider having them a necessity since otherwise they would feel unprotected. In particular, they think that at election time, the existence of such groups of young men may be important for protecting them from electoral fraud.

Notably, however, bitter personal confrontation is more typical of relations between party leaders. Even while such relations are rather tense, rank-and-file members of the parties, including members of electoral bodies, may engage in quite civil and even friendly relations with each other.

Main findings

- More than 180 political organizations are registered in Georgia but only a small part of them are politically active. The party system cannot be fully classified according to conventional types of one-, two- or multi-party systems: it is a loose multiparty system with a single dominant party. Political competition occurs mainly between the party in power and the multitude of opposition parties. This has been a characteristic of the Georgian party system since 1990, despite the change of political leaders;
- The political system is weakly institutionalized. The map of major political players undergoes dramatic changes in periods between elections. Parties are weakly linked to social groups and the level of legitimization of the party system is low. Political parties are one of the least popular social institutions in Georgia. Public support for a party mainly depends on trust towards its leader, and the public is fickle in its preferences;
- While political power is concentrated in a single ruling party in power, the degree of fragmentation among the opposition parties is rather high. Ideological polarization, on the other hand, is low;
- Cooperation between political parties takes the form of creating electoral blocs, common factions in Parliament, and tactical alliances around specific issues. The latter usually occurs between opposition parties and there is little cooperation between the party in power and the opposition. Organizing primary elections to define common candidates of the opposition has been the new feature of party cooperation first tested in the 2005 by-elections to Parliament;
- Confrontation between political parties is high (usually between the party in power and the opposition) and often takes the form of bitter personal attacks which occasionally escalate into violent brawls. Debates about general policy issues are weakly developed. Relations between the parties largely depend on personal relations between their leaders rather than policy issues.

2.3 Party Identities and Policy Development

What to do?

- Highlight ideological profiles of political parties and overcome excessive reliance on the leaders' personalities;
- Get involved in broad strategic dialogues on party policies involving a greater number of party activists and consultations with international and local civic organisations, as well as like-minded parties abroad;
- Train a larger number of activists of political parties, especially in local organizations, in developing policy-making skills;
- Opposition parties should give greater priority to developing and promoting alternative public policies;
- Do research on the policy behaviour of different parties in order to help parties rethink their identities.

Political parties' attitudes to the issue of ideology

In a multiparty system, each political party needs to define how it differs from others. The most common way to define the party identities is through values, principles and the policies that they promote and enhance through their activities. When these elements are closely interlinked in a coherent and close or *dogmatic package* then we talk about *ideologies*. Ideologies as such have not disappeared but have certainly gone through processes of *change* in the last quarter of the 20th century. Now they may be defined in relative terms (such as *left, right, centre*), or substantive terms (*conservative, liberal, socialist*, etc.). The central importance of ideological tendencies as we had better call them now, or party *identities*, is that they make it possible to distinguish between the different parties. As these identities are often linked to the interests of specific social groups or classes, making reference to a social group may be considered equivalent to the ideological definition of a given party (such as in Labour or Workers' parties, Peasant parties, etc.).

The importance of political ideologies for their identities is widely recognized by the Georgian political parties. Out of six parties involved in this research, four (Conservative Party of Georgia, New Conservative Party, Labour Party of Georgia, Republican Party) have ideological brands in their

names, while Industry Will Save Georgia refers to the social group that it represents (they often refer to this party as "the Industrialists").
At the same time, a certain vagueness and inconsistency can be perceived in the ideological positions of Georgian political parties. This has different expressions. It is a commonplace and hardly contested view that identities of Georgian political parties are primarily defined by their leaders (this may imply an individual charismatic leader or a small group). People usually join a given party or vote for it because they trust the leader(s), not necessarily because the party represents specific political principles, or interests of a distinct social group with which a given citizen identifies him/herself. Furthermore, blocs and alliances between the parties do not necessarily follow the logic of political principles.

Georgian political parties are criticized for vague and inconsistent ideological positions

There may be a number of parties that can hardly be distinguished from each other by their stated ideological identities, but they nevertheless fail to merge or even cooperate. There may be a discrepancy between formally stated principles and stands taken by a party on a given issue;it often happens, for instance, that centre-right parties defend principles that are conventionally considered issues of the left. Respectively, mutual accusations of ideological opportunism are common in the Georgian political arena. When asked how they are different from parties who have a similar ideological stand, or why they do not cooperate with such parties more closely, the most popular answer is that they are more consistent in upholding their ideological principles. It has happened quite a few times that parties that consider themselves rightwing and leftwing have created a single electoral bloc.[99] Moreover, significant ideological differences nature may be noted between leaders or members of the same party.

Representatives of the parties themselves often admit that these problems exist. Some of them even consider using the party's international contacts to resolve them. Sometimes the easiest way to define the ideological identity of a given party is to ask which of the well-known parties in the West they feel closer to, or which of them they would prefer to see as their partners. "One of the things that we want to ask of those international organizations we cooperate with is to help us in ideological self-identification because even the basic fundamental issues are unresolved in Georgia, which results in wrong perceptions," a Republican Party leader said.

[99] Most notorious is the example of the Revival bloc that ran in the 1999 parliamentary elections: it included the ideologically amorphous and personalistic Union for Democratic Revival, the Socialist Party and two rightist parties, the Union of Georgian Traditionalists and the Popular Party.

It has to be noted, however, that there are different attitudes within the Georgian political elite to the very idea of how much a party needs a distinct ideology. Some parties particularly stress that they have a clearly defined ideological position. The New Conservative Party is a good example of this. Their representatives take pride in the fact that, despite the popularity of leftist slogans in the country, they have gone against the predominant sentiments and have consistently defended centre-right positions.

Georgian parties and the Rose Revolution

Even now, two years after the Rose Revolution, attitudes towards this event still draw a dividing line between different parties in Georgia. While some leaders and parties that are now in opposition led or took part in the revolutionary events of November 2003, others were strongly against a revolutionary change of government. Despite a relatively high level of cooperation between the opposition parties, this division expressed itself in their parliamentary arrangement. Former activists of the Revolution have joined the "Democratic Front" faction, while those who opposed it, the New Conservatives and the Industrialists, have created the "Rightist Opposition" bloc. In February 2006, the latter two parties created separate factions.

In some cases parties intentionally maintain vague ideological positions for electoral reasons[100]. This is more or less true of all the parties that have played dominant roles in different periods of recent Georgian history. Their names - the Round Table-Free Georgia, the Citizens' Union of Georgia, the Union of Revival of Georgia, the United National Movement - display conscious or implicit efforts to avoid conventional ideological definitions (the United National Movement denies that the word "national" in its name has anything to do with the ideology of nationalism, and that it merely implies the party of and for the whole nation). One of the leaders of the United National Movement said: "I do not like the word ideology because it denotes a false world outlook."[101]

Apart from ideological principles, attitudes to seminal political events such as the Rose Revolution are relevant for defining party identity. Out of the six parties involved in this research, three were active participants in the Rose Revolution (United National Movement, Conservative Party of Georgia, and Republican Party), while three others (New Conservative Party, the Industrialists, and the Labour Party) opposed it. Even beyond these six parties,

[100] *Georgia: Rise and Fall of Façade Democracy*, Jaba Devdariani. " Demokratizatsia", Winter 2004.

[101] MP and prominent operator within the UNM.

there is no correlation between being on the right or the left and taking or not taking part in the Revolution.

The importance of wrong colours in politics

Most more or less influential political parties in Georgia that do underline their ideological identity tend to define themselves as centre-right parties. This has been the case throughout the recent Georgian history, and continues to be so. An obvious explanation for this is that the political party system in Georgia emerged in opposition to the Communist rule. Full domination of the Communist party throughout several decades of the Georgian history has discredited not only radical Communist ideology, but even social-democratic policies. The fact that the social-democratic government of the independent Georgian Republic of 1918-21 did not succeed in maintaining Georgia's sovereignty is sometimes blamed on a perceived insufficient commitment of the social democrats to the idea of national independence in the first place. This strengthened scepticism towards leftist ideas even more.

"In Georgia, to have the word "rightist" in the name was a positive thing," one of the New Conservative leaders noted.[102] Being on the political right was associated with democratic institutions, market economy and protection of human rights. As one of the leaders of the Republicans noted, when they were an underground party in the Soviet Union, their positions could be called moderate social- democratic, but in the period of open fighting against the Soviet regime their positions shifted toward the right. Being on the left, on the other hand, was often associated with being nostalgic towards the Communist past (whether or not a given party really tried to capitalize on nostalgic feelings for the past that are shared by some people).

As time has passed, the importance of the opposition to Communism is waning. However, the tendency to claim centre-right orientation remains strong among the political elite. That makes Georgia different from many Central and Eastern European countries. It has no strong party that can be considered heir to the old Communist party or to have presented a softer version of its ideology. There were some attempts to create such a party in the early 1990s but without any success. Personal networks established around the Soviet Communist party and its youth branch, *Komsomol*, persisted and were particularly strong under the previous government, but their members almost never advertised their affiliation with the previous regime

[102] Literal translation into English of the name of this party would be "the New Right". However, as in the West this word is often associated with extreme right-wing parties, the party prefers to be referred to as "the New Conservative Party" in English.

as a positive thing. Apparently[103], there is electoral space for a centre-left party that would pursue social-democratic policies, and several political organizations have tried to occupy that political niche. However, the dominant part of the political spectrum is still centre-right.

Most more or less influential political parties tend to define themselves as centre-right parties

The pre-eminence of centre-right ideas within the political class can be considered paradoxical in a country where more than half of the population lives below the poverty line, and most people expect the state to take care of their welfare. Nonetheless, some parties that generally can be labelled as conservative often appear to be defending typical leftist causes, presumably because this is what actually attracts votes.

Grouping the Georgian parties

According to their stated ideological principles, the six political parties involved in this report can be grouped into three main categories. Four of six parties, the United National Movement[104], Conservative, the New Conservative Party, and the Industrialists, can be labelled as centre-right conservative. The Republicans could have been called liberal in the American sense of the word or social-democratic in European terms, but from the very beginning they have usually been considered centre-right as well. Therefore they fit more into the centre-right liberal label in German terms. However, since trying to put parties into these categories tends to be too simplistic and confusing, later in the chapter another two-dimensional classification will be proposed.

Parties on the left and right

Centre-right conservative:
United National Movement
Conservative Party
New Conservative Party
Industry Will Save Georgia

Centre-right liberal:
Republican Party

Centre-left:
Labour

During the last ten to fifteen years there have been a number of parties that tried to occupy the left flank of the political spectrum. They view them-

[103] Some polls indicate that a large number of people in Georgia rather espouse values that can be identified as centre-left. It could be suggested that more research in this topic should be done.

[104] As the party of government the United National Movement has manifested itself as a supra-ideological party, meaning a nationwide oriented movement, but after its decision in 2006 to join the European Peoples Party it can be positioned in the centre-right.

selves as centre-left parties and identify themselves with European social democracy. Such was the case in Georgia with Shevarnadze's Citizens' Union and is now the case with the Georgian Labour Party. Some smaller parties, like the Socialist or Social-Democratic parties of Georgia are also trying to occupy the same position on the left-right scale.

All these parties try to stress their ideological identities through participation in international networks of like-minded parties. Parties on the right or conservative centre-right strive to cooperate with the International Democratic Union and European People's Party. The Republicans have stressed their liberal credentials through becoming the main partners of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation (linked to the German Free Democrats), and – contrary to their name – have decided that out of the two major US parties, their positions would be closer to those of the Democrats. The Labour Party cooperates with the social-democratic European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity (See more on this in subchapter 2.8).

An apart category is constituted by the parties in government and their claims to be above ideologies and to combine centre-right and centre-left in their policies and rhetorics. Today the United National Movement fits into this category. It positions itself as the party of the nation, the unifying force that serves all social groups and aims to strengthen the state in general. This party claims to respond to the people's demands: some of them call for more leftist policies, while others push the party to take centre-right stands. Nevertheless, the party's decision to join the EPP means that it must be positioned in the category centre-right conservative.

None of the relevant political parties in Georgia can be seen as belonging to the extreme right or extreme left. Such political groups do exist, but they have never played an important role in Georgian politics after the independence. This does not mean, however, that ideas that are usually associated with the extreme left or, especially, extreme right, have never had currency in the Georgian political agenda. Political parties themselves occasionally accuse each other of promoting "fascist", "fundamentalist" or "neo-Bolshevik" ideas.

Economy and culture: Consensus and differences between Georgian political parties

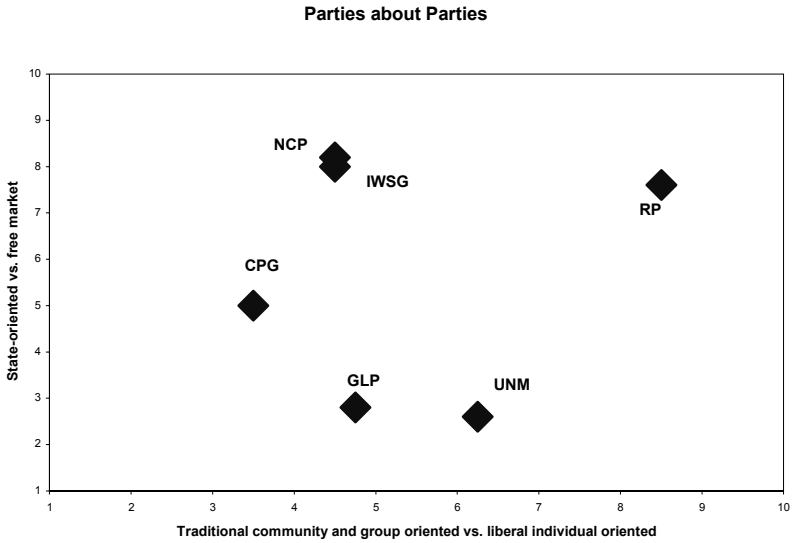
While denominations like "left" and "right" continue to be valid for describing the ideological orientations of political organizations, they may also be misleading as in different contexts these terms have acquired a variety of meanings. Values and principles defining identities of political parties are easier to identify around concrete issues of public life. One of those issues, taken in black and white terms, is individual rights versus traditional communitarian values. While most parties would say that they respect both, in

making real political decisions and in debates or campaigns aimed at attracting voter support, they will inevitably have to give priority to one or the other. Therefore, the parties can be ranked according to where they stand in an imagined space between these two poles.

The second issue is related to the economic policies of the state and economic globalization. A political party may promote liberal economic policies that imply minimal state intervention in economic life and free trade,that is exposing the economic life of a given country to unhampered international competition. On the other hand, a political party may think that the state should play an active role in economic life. In this case, the principal aims of this public intervention are usually fairer redistribution of wealth and/or protection of local business from international competitors.

The combination of these two problems allows us to construct a two-dimensional space in which each party may be assigned a certain position. We asked two groups of respondents, representatives of political parties involved in this research and independent analysts, to assess the stands of the six political parties according to these two issues on the scale of one to ten. Their findings are shown in two graphs. Graph 1 presents the positioning given by the political parties, while Graph 2 presents those by the analysts. The horizontal axis reflects the assessment of the parties with regards to their attitudes to cultural issues (1 denotes commitment to traditional communitarians and 10 – to liberal individualism), while the vertical axis represents their stands on economic issues (1 stands for an state-oriented or etatist/protectionist position, while 10 represents support for liberal free market principles.

These two graphs and comparison between them gives ground for some general observations. Obviously, there is a strong difference between mutual perceptions of political parties on the one hand and their assessments by independent analysts on the other. The Republican Party may be the only one that is perceived similarly both by its opponents/competitors and outside observers.



Graph 1. Ideological positioning by parties themselves (horizontal axis attitutes to cultural issues, vertical axis attitudes to economic issues)

In other cases, discrepancies are rather substantive. This may be explained by a possible bias in assessing one's opponents or competitors. On the other hand, however, one can interpret this as another confirmation that images of political parties have not stabilized in Georgia. It is also notable that some respondents had difficulty in deciding what to take as a ground for positioning political parties: their stated values or their real political positions.

	Cultural Values		Economy	
	Experts	Parties	Experts	Parties
GLP	2	3,5	2	5
CPG	2,8	4,5	3,5	8,2
IWSG	3,2	4,5	3,8	8
NCP	3,4	4,75	4,7	2,8
UNM	5,2	6,25	5,3	2,6
RP	6,8	8,5	7,2	7,6

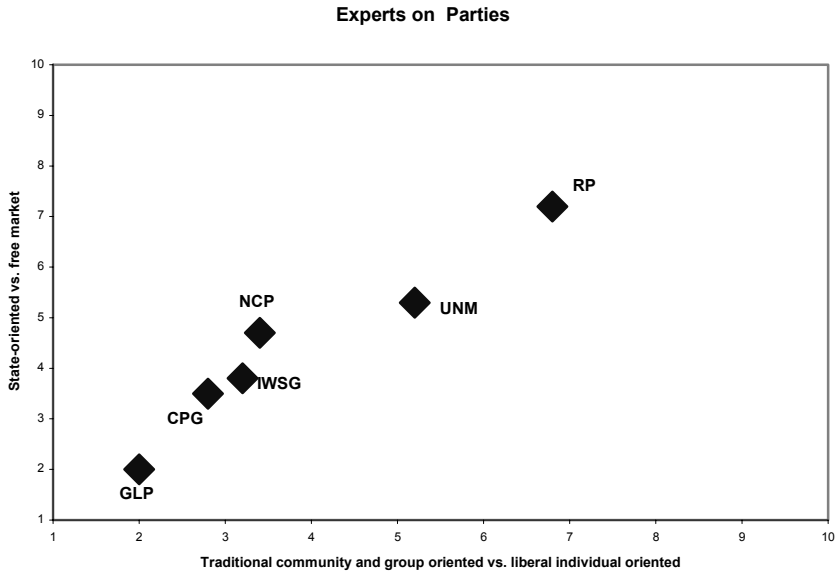
Table 9. Discrepancies between evaluations of party positions by independent analysts and parties

While political analysts in Georgia often make dismissive comments about political parties saying that they are ideologically opportunistic and all that matters about them are the personalities of their leaders, the picture based on their own assessments shows quite a distinct ideological spectrum. The absence of certain ideological configurations is especially notable; for instance, there is no party that would be leftist in its economic policies but take

more progressive/individualist stands on cultural issues – something that would be considered a normal combination in Western parties (in our graph, such an attitude would be placed towards its lower right corner).

In Georgia, economic leftists tend to be cultural conservatives at the same time

In Georgia, economic leftists tend to be cultural conservatives at the same time. Georgian independent analysts and political party representatives also could not find economic libertarians holding culturally conservative positions (the upper left corner in our graph). This would not be an impossible combination in developed Western countries either.



Graph 2. Ideological positioning of parties by experts.

This allows us to conclude that the perception of ideological issues in Georgia still largely depends on attitudes towards the Communist past on the one hand and values and institutions of the modern West on the other. It is the Communist past that symbolizes the combination of economic leftism and cultural conservatism. Progressivism, on the other hand, implies movement towards both cultural and economic liberalism. This is what in Georgia is symbolized by the concept of the "West". One could say that the more a Georgian political party moves to the upper-right corner of the graph, the more it distances itself from the Communist past and supports Westernizing attitudes. At least in the view of the non-party experts, the two-dimensional scheme is thus transformed into a one-dimensional one.

The perception of ideological issues in Georgia largely depends on attitudes towards the Communist past and the values and institutions of the modern West

At the same time, these two issues allow us to define quite a broad space of ideological consensus in Georgian politics. When it comes to economic issues, there is no more or less important political party in Georgia that openly challenges free market principles.[105] The most leftist among them, the Labour Party of Georgia, also declares loyalty to the market economy and as one of its representatives described, they differ from the parties of the rightist orientation because "...the leftist parties are more socially oriented than the parties on the right. The latter claim that all economic problems will be resolved by business, whereas we think that it is the state who should be responsible for resolving social problems." Labour also disagrees with privatization of those state assets that it considers "strategic" (this especially includes the infrastructure). Labour leaders mainly emphasize social problems in their speeches and consider the population, which indeed is in a difficult economic situation, as their target group. At the same time, the party leaders position themselves in the moderate wing of the leftist spectrum and attribute the radicalism of some of their statements to the political situation in the country. To them the popularity of the leftist slogans is directly linked to the widespread poverty. Labour claims that its existence prevents the rise of a hard-line Communist party in Georgia.

Similarly, no strong political party in Georgia does openly challenge the liberal principles of individual liberties and human rights. However, most parties try to combine this with demonstrating support to traditional cultural values. For instance, no political party would openly challenge the privileged position of the Georgian Orthodox Church as compared to other religious institutions in Georgia. Although this is a highly debated issue in the society, the overwhelming majority of Georgians support preserving or even strengthening the special position of the Georgian Orthodox Church. Therefore, even the most liberal politicians would consider the political price for taking a too liberal view on the issue of the position of the Church as too high[106]. The parties' programs extensively treat the issues of protecting the Georgian language, the Orthodox faith and traditional family values.

It is notable that, according to the analysts' estimates in Graph 2, the Labour Party outperforms on this account right-wing parties (and is positioned

[105] Several Communist parties that haved been created since independence have never enjoyed mass support from the population.

[106] For instance, the December 2005 statement of Sozar Subari, the Public Defender, that the Constitutional Agreement between the state and the Georgian Orthodox Church put other churches at disadvantage, was sharply criticized by representatives of all political parties in government and in the opposition.

quite closely to them in Graph 1, which represents the parties' mutual perceptions). Another interesting conclusion from the comparison between the two graphs is that independent analysts tend to assess the Georgian political parties as more culturally traditionalist than the parties themselves do. Conversely, the political observers think Georgian parties are less committed to personal freedoms than they themselves claim to be.

No strong political party in Georgia challenges the liberal principles of individual liberties and human rights

Another feature revealed in Graph 2 (but not in Graph 1) is that analysts consider the Republican Party and even the United National Movement more economically libertarian than the New Conservative Party and Industry Saves Georgia, the parties that are widely perceived as the parties of the business sector and businessmen. This may reflect the fact that under the new government, representatives of these parties have taken part in some social protest events and have criticized privatization deals or some other steps taken by the government that may be considered economically liberal. Consequently, they are sometimes criticized in the Georgian media for not being consistent with their creed in their actual policies. A discrepancy between the stated values and public image of these parties may be also explained by the fact that promoting economic liberalism does not help to increase party ratings in Georgia; therefore, these parties prefer to advertise cultural conservatism and even social protection as more popular items on their agenda.

In any case, the analysts positioned three main conservative parties quite closely to each other on Graph 2. It is interesting to see how these parties themselves describe their own party positions and their differences. As a New Conservative Party representative said, their conservatism is particularly well-manifested in giving primacy to issues of tradition, religion, ethnic identity, and scepticism about human capabilities. Representatives of the Conservative Party of Georgia and the Industrialists held similar views. The opinion that globalization poses a threat of sorts to the Georgian cultural identity is also common to them. Representatives of the Conservative Party of Georgia state that the struggle for the establishment of liberal institutions in the country's political and economic system should be combined with efforts to preserve the country's cultural originality. In the words of a New Conservative Party activist, "our priority is harmonization of national values, originality, and identity with the requirements of modern life and civilization."

However, different conservative parties also have different priorities. The New Conservatives clearly stand out for their emphasis on the market economy and the protection of private property rights as preconditions for mak-

ing other public benefits possible. Their former partners, the Industrialists, also underline their commitment to the same principles, but their main emphasis is on promoting the development of the local manufacturing sector. The most notable difference concerns attitudes towards free trade. The Industrialists promote economic protectionism and they call on the state to protect the Georgian market from being flooded by imports. This party is the most outspoken critic of the IMF-promoted policies of economic globalization, as they threaten the development of the Georgian manufacturing sector. As one the leaders of the Industrialists affirmed "...what may be the difference between us and the NCP is that we want the Georgian people to be first and foremost pro-Georgian and only then have good relations with America and others." The Industrialists and the Conservatives also put greater stress on the combination of free-market principles with social safety nets than do the New Conservative Party. The latter underlines not caving in to popular moods.

Interestingly, when asked about role models in the West, the United National Movement representatives mentioned the US Republican Party and Tony Blair's (but not traditional) Labour Party in the UK. The leaders of the party say that the reforms which they have initiated are of a liberal nature. Arguably, the main direction of the National Movement policies may be compared to the "Third Way" associated with the New Labour in the UK. It was mentioned above that, as a party in power, the United National Movement presents itself as the unifying force and tries to combine both leftist and centre-right policies. But most of their real policies put them closer to parties in the centre-right; this includes giving priority to strengthening the police and the army, ambitious programs of privatizing public assets, aggressive cuts in the state bureaucracy, adoption of a liberal tax code and an extremely pro-business labour code.

When it comes to cultural issues, the United National Movement – as do other Georgian parties – tries to combine cultural traditionalism with support for liberal principles. Apart from a conscious effort to find a balance between the two principles, there is debate on these issues within the party as well. One of the leaders of the party described the internal party debates on the reform of secondary education as that between supporters of libertarian and paternalistic positions. He also stated that while all the party members recognize the principle of freedom of religion, there is no common view on how to handle the special status of the Orthodox Church.[107]

To sum up, there are points of consensus and divergence in Georgian politics. On the one hand all parties pay allegiance to the principles of the free market, but try at the same time to combine them with policies aimed at

[107] In December 2005, this became manifest in sharply different reactions of different MPs from the UNM towards the Public Defender's criticism of the privileged position of the Georgian Orthodox Church.

some social welfare for the population. On the other hand, everybody agrees that Georgia needs democratic institutions and protection of individual freedoms (including religious freedom, even though this is the most controversial issue of all). Everybody also agrees that some measures should be taken to preserve the Georgian cultural identity. However, parties differ as to which issues take priority in their party programs, party statements or specific political decisions.

All parties agree that some measures should be taken to preserve the Georgian cultural identity

There is a certain discrepancy between general principles which all Georgian parties avow, such as the liberal principles of the free market and personal freedom, and those issues that, they believe, are more popular and give the parties more votes, such as state intervention to protect social welfare and traditional cultural institutions. This tension can be linked to another point of consensus in Georgia, one that is perhaps the most important but has not been discussed in this chapter so far: that of Georgia's European and Euro-Atlantic orientation. As has already been said, Georgian political parties do not challenge the idea of joining the European Union and NATO (the Labour Party was to a certain extent an exception but never made it a central part of its discourse). Liberal ideas of the free market and personal freedoms are associated with this Georgian fundamental choice, and they are not challenged either, at least as general principles. However, the Georgian political market forces the parties to put social and cultural protectionism in their public performance.

Defining political priorities

In analyzing the parties' activities, it is important to understand how a given party formulates the course of its policies. Do the policy options correspond to the ideological values that it says it stands for – if there are any? How do they define their priorities? Do the opposition parties propose to society their own agenda and policy packages or are their activities merely reactions to those of the authorities? The latter, of course, is essential in a democratic society.

The Georgian public often associates parties with the specific issues that they promote rather than with more general ideological profiles. One could call these the "trademark issues" of Georgian political parties. For example, the Industrialists are associated with demands for the promotion and protection of the local manufacturing sector. "The only reason why we joined politics was to use the parliamentary forum to change the economic policy in the country," Gogi Topadze, the leader of the party, has said. He meant support

for policies that would protect local manufacturers and resist the influence of the IMF that the party considered harmful to the Georgian economy. The Republicans are best known for safeguarding the principle of supremacy of law, that is criticizing the government for cutting corners with existing legislation. The New Conservatives claim to have a similar image. The Conservative Party of Georgia is most known for its campaigns to exempt small business from taxes, to issue pensions to senior citizens according to the work record,[108] and to defend the right of depositors who lost their savings in Soviet banks.

Such "trademark issues" were important in previous years as well. The Labour Party put great emphasis on fighting the American energy distribution company, the AES, for increasing electricity tariffs. The National Movement built up its support on exposing corruption and lobbying for the law that would allow seizing property of civil servants if they could not document their revenues.

The public often associates parties with the specific issues they promote rather than with general ideological profiles

Parties insist that their trademark issues correspond to their stated values and goals and that at times they promote certain issues even if they are unpopular. The New Conservatives claim that they supported the authorities on the land privatization bill even though the majority of the population felt negatively towards it. However, the parties often accuse each other of promoting specific causes that put them at odds with their general principles and values. In particular, it is often said about conservative parties that they promote leftist causes because this is a better way to boost their ratings.

The party leaders well realize the need for a permanent rapport with society when setting goals and priorities. For this, Georgian political parties widely use public opinion research. Most parties often conduct opinion polls on their own to expose problems that exist in society. They also use the results of opinion calls conducted by other organizations.

Local branches play an important role in helping the leadership to identify the problems that concern people most. New Conservative Party members say that regular meetings with party activists and local residents in different parts of the country bring many new problems to the attention of the party leadership. The Conservative Party leaders said that, when choosing their policy priorities, they are mainly guided by how large a social group is affected by a given problem. Yet another criterion, they added, is the existence of a realistic way to tackle it.

[108] Today, the Georgian state gives a flat amount to all Georgian senior citizens as a retirement pension.

Party leaders point out that the policy they formulate must coincide with the prevalent mood among the population. Party representatives understand that such an approach may lead to populism, or accusations thereof. Therefore, they argue that, whenever necessary, politicians should go against public opinion out of ideological or long-term pragmatic considerations. "If you are a politician, you must be able to go against public opinion if the public is mistaken," one of the leaders of the United National Movement said. Moreover, representatives of this party maintain that precisely this principle may ensure the party's popularity in the long haul.

Another pitfall in relying too much on public opinion research when selecting party agendas is that people's sentiments are fickle and difficult to gauge accurately. This might be connected with the absence of stable and consolidated societal groups and, as a Republican Party leader said, "We have to incur political risks here."

Republican Party: ideological profile

The Republican Party is one of the oldest Georgian parties. Its origin goes back to 1979, when members of dissident circles initiated the creation of an underground party with this name. The political outlook of its leaders was similar to the views widespread among part of the Georgian intelligentsia of that time: general commitment to democratic values, anti-Communism and moderate nationalism. With regards to these points the party's ideology have not undergone drastic changes. Some analysts link the stability of the party's principles to the social profile of its members, with middle-class intellectuals having been dominant until recently.

Today the party positions itself as the main party of the liberal centre, while most of the other parties sharing a liberal agenda tend to be more conservative. Positions of different members of the party may fluctuate more to the left-of-centre, center-right or neo-liberal directions. According to one of the founders of the party, even social-democratic ideas were originally close to them, but the rising national movement pushed them to the right. As it appears from program documents as well as from interviews with party leaders, left-of-centre positions are closer to them.

Most opposition parties focus their activities on criticizing policies of the party in power rather than proposing comprehensive policy alternatives. The United National Movement stresses this point, saying that the opposition is not "constructive", but some independent analysts also hold this opinion. The opposition, however, retorts that the ruling party simply ignores their opinion and blame the latter for the absence of constructive policy dialogue.

"This parliamentary majority has two-thirds of the votes and that is the constitutional majority. This is why it is pointless for us to propose any specific initiatives in writing," one of the leaders of the Conservative Party of Georgia said. Accordingly, the opposition parties tend to focus on monitoring the authorities' actions and criticizing them. Sometimes opposition parties do raise specific legislative initiatives on their own, but this is infrequent.

The excessive dependency on the personality of the leader

As has been said, the voters first and foremost associate the parties with their leaders and only after this with their policies, values or ideologies. One of the leaders of the Labour Party said that "it depends on the leader what 95 per cent of the Georgian population thinks about the party". According to the Conservative Party, opinion polls show that many people are familiar with the activities of their leaders Koba Davitashvili or Zviad Dzidziguri, but they have heard nothing about their party. This problem may be more natural for this relatively new party, but representatives of other parties say the same. "No one can deny today that what unites [our] party is its leader and that the party is associated with him," one of the leaders of the United National Movement said.

The leader not only attracts voters and members, but also, to a significant extent, secures the members' loyalty to the party. Activists of the parties' local organizations note that the number of admissions of new members to the parties increases particularly after the leaders' public speeches. The party leaders themselves realize that their disproportionate role constitutes a major problem. In conversations, they give numerous examples of parties' having dissolved following their leaders' departures from the political arena. Many of them agree that in the event the incumbent leaders left their parties, this would deal a severe blow to these organizations as well.

Some parties, however, say that they are in a better position on this account. For instance, representatives of the New Conservative Party recognize that they went through a difficult period after the Rose Revolution when many party supporters and one of the principal party leaders, Levan Gachechiladze, left the party. However, the party managed to overcome the crisis quite soon and it was the only opposition party to get over the threshold in the March 2004 parliamentary elections.

Main findings

- Identities and support for Georgian political parties depend more on the personalities of their leaders than on political principles, agendas, or representation of distinct social interests;
- Most political parties have a distinct ideological self-identification and position themselves on the right or the left flanks of the ideological spectrum. The party in power avoids clear ideological denomination and positions itself as a unifying force serving society as a whole;
- The Georgian political spectrum is notable for the general pre-eminence of centre-right parties. This may be explained by the fact that the left is still to some extent tainted by association with the Communist past;
- No parties espousing extreme right or extreme left ideologies play a significant role in Georgian politics;
- Economic and social liberalism tend to go together in Georgian party platforms, while attachment to social welfare policies is often combined with cultural traditionalism;
- General acceptance of the European and Euro-Atlantic choices by almost all major political parties constitutes a major point of consensus in Georgian politics. This implies general support for liberal principles of the free market and personal freedoms, though parties try to combine this with popular demands for social welfare and Georgia's own cultural identity;
- Public images of political parties often largely depend more on their specific "trademark issues" than on their general ideological preferences;
- Parties recognize the excessive dependence on the personalities of their leaders to be a serious long-term challenge and try to develop strategies aimed at reconstituting their identities in less personalistic ways.

2.4 Human and Financial Resources

What to do?

- Delegate more rights and responsibilities to local branches of political parties;
- Develop clear procedures that ensure equitable distribution of rights and responsibilities among internal party positions;
- Ensure members' active involvement in party life during non-election periods;
- Establish clearly defined formal mechanisms and procedures for different functions of party life, such as recruitment and internal conflict resolution;
- Establish effective information-sharing mechanisms within parties, most notably between their national and regional offices.

Basic organizational structures

All six political parties surveyed have head offices in Tbilisi, the capital, as well as territorial branches (see box on p. 39). The territorial structure of the parties coincides with the country's municipal division and electoral administrative units. In every party, the basis of the structural pyramid is created by primary organizations (in some cases they are called 'clubs'). Geographically, their distribution coincides with the areas with polling stations. A primary organization is established when a party has at least three local activists living in the area. No party has established primary organizations in all of the approximately 3,000 electoral districts that currently exist in Georgia. However, every party aspires to reach this goal and considers it a part of its strategic development plan. The United National Movement claims to have primary organizations in each of the around 2884 poll stations in Georgia.

No party has established primary organizations in all of the approximately 3,000 electoral districts that currently exist in Georgia

While no party has branches in every locality (district level representation), all six parties are represented in all or most of the provinces (*mkhare*). This does not include the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, where Georgian jurisdiction does not effectively extend and whose *de facto* authorities consider themselves independent from Georgia. The *de facto* authorities

in these regions do not allow elections to government bodies of the Georgian state to be held (save for some villages in South Ossetia populated by ethnic Georgians) and would presumably be hostile to attempts to establish branches of Georgian political parties there. If Georgian political parties were to conduct activities in these regions, they would have to go underground.

While all parties are represented in almost every region of Georgia, the strength of their organizations varies widely from one region to another. These variations depend on various factors, occasionally including the origins of party leaders and concentration of a loyal electorate.

Primary organizations are led by chairpersons that may be locally elected or selected by the party leadership (see more on this below in this chapter). The main function of the primary organizations is to work with people and attract supporters at the grass-roots level. Their activities greatly intensify during the election campaign. In these periods, apart from working with local communities on their own, they organize pre-election meetings of their candidates. On election days, they ensure the active participation of party supporters. In the period between elections the activism of the primary organizations dies down. Their main function then is to register new members and supporters and inform the local communities of the decisions and activities of their parties. In the event that a party initiates some massive social campaign, primary organization activists are responsible for mobilizing local support and for collecting signatures from local citizens.

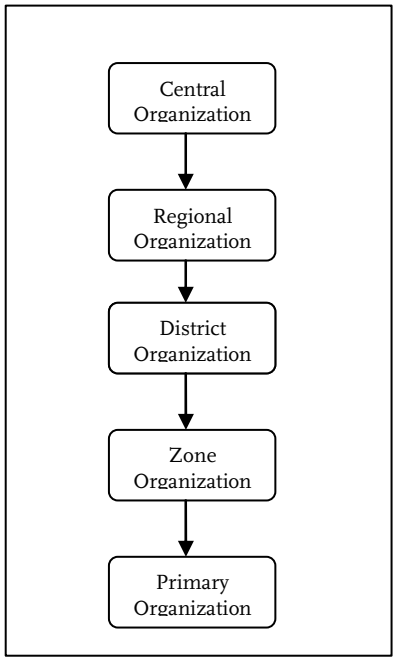
Almost all the parties have intermediary units between the primary and district organizations, at least in the larger districts. These are called zone organizations and their function is to ensure better coordination between primary territorial organizations. Such units are created as a matter of expediency and they are not usually regulated by party statutes. Each zone comprises from 8 to 12 primary organizations and has a coordinator responsible for mediating between the district and primary organizations and coordinating the party's activities within the respective area. Typically, a district organization comprises four or five zones.

Primary organizations come together in district *rayon*) organizations. Their areas also coincide with electoral districts.

Territorial structure of political party organizations

Head Offices: Provide general leadership and management, define party ideology and policies and manage fundraising and spending priorities.
Regional (*mkhare*) Organizations: Responsible for supervising the work of district organizations and implementing party policies at the local level.
District (*rayon*) Organizations: Responsible for carrying out recruitment policies, planning and implementing specific local activities, collecting membership fees and registering new members.
Zone Organizations: Intermediary organizations between primary and district levels. They are established in large districts to ensure better co-ordination between territorial units.
Primary Organizations: The primary level of the parties' structural pyramid. They are responsible for recruiting members, working with the public, carrying-out grass-roots campaigns and mobilizing supporters during the election period.

District-level organizations are managed by chairpersons. In addition, they have boards or bureaus that serve as administrative agencies involved in decision-making and problem-solving processes at the local level. The number of members of bureaus/boards and the staffing regulations vary from party to party. Typically, bureaus/boards have from five to nine members. Their responsibilities include recruiting and registering members and supporters, collecting membership fees (if such fees are stipulated), planning and carrying out cultural and sports activities and co-ordinating activities related to other party initiatives.



A major responsibility of district organizations is to draw up electoral lists with the help of primary organizations. The reason for this is that political parties do not trust lists compiled by the electoral administration and try to rectify mistakes through their own censuses. "In our own files we register local citizens who have the right to vote. We ask them to give us their passport information and age and

ask about the party they intend to vote for (answering this is optional). Thus by the election period we have a clear understanding of the electoral feelings at the local level," a member of Industry Will Save Georgia said.

The work of district organizations is coordinated by and their relations with the head office are mediated by the regional (*mkhare*) organization. Their geographical borders coincide with the administrative divisions of the country. Although so far there have been no elections at the *mkhare* level in Georgia, district organizations play an important role in the administrative distribution of power, and parties consider it necessary to have offices at this level as well. Usually, establishing regional organizations and determining what functions they will carry out are the prerogative of central administrative bodies. In most cases, general procedures are defined in the statutes. The structure of regional organizations is similar to that of district units: their work is managed and led by the chairpersons, who are assisted by regional bureaus or boards.

The work of territorial branches is supervised and governed by the head office. Whereas party statutes may be rather general when it comes to regulating party positions at the local level, the statutes of every party strictly define the rules for filling positions in each body of the national party organizations.

The distribution of rights and responsibilities in the national-level party offices differs from one party to another, but each of them includes at least three main units:

1. The supreme legislative body – party congress/conference;
2. The executive body – political boards, chairpersons and secretaries;
3. The structural branch responsible for inspecting/auditing activities of the party organization as a whole – inspection committee.

Functional – youth and women's – organizations

Almost all Georgian parties have youth party organizations while only some of them have set up women's party organizations as well. All parties give priority to creating youth branches because young activists play a very important role in grass-roots campaigns, especially during election periods. These functional organizations have their own structures and are represented in head offices and at the regional and district levels of their party organizations.

In addition, all parties have youth organizations. Generally, there are no formal restrictions on those wanting to join, although one of the parties does

limit the membership to those who are "under the age of 35"[109]. The youth organizations have their own organizational set-ups. Typically these structures mirror those of the principal organizations, and the former are represented in the latter. In most parties, bureaus or boards of the territorial party organizations include the leaders of the respective youth organizations.

These organizations follow the main policies of the parties but do so from a youth perspective. They are all primarily concerned with the promotion of a healthy life-style among young people; they play an important role in initiating and organizing cultural and sports events. Parties make extensive use of the energy and enthusiasm of their young activists in canvassing activities, public opinion surveys, recruitment, gathering signatures, handing out leaflets, etc.

Most parties have women's organizations as well. Like youth organizations, they are established both in the centre and in the regions. Most of them are charity-style organizations and their activities are mostly targeted at the socially vulnerable strata of society. Many initiatives of the parties' women's organizations aim to help families with many children, as well as disabled people. They register socially vulnerable families, study their problems and, if possible, give out free meals and medical aid vouchers, and distribute financial and other material support. Those women's organizations that have links to international organizations involve their members in different educational programmes, such as leadership trainings. However, the latter projects are not regular and they are usually limited to the organization's leaders. Moreover, they are initiated and run by international organizations rather than by the women's organizations themselves.

Leadership positions at the three levels of party organization (primary, district and central levels) may be filled in three different ways: they may be elective, elective with subsequent approval by superior bodies, or appointed by the latter. In Georgian political parties, the latter two methods of selecting party leaders of the territorial branches are more common. In most political parties, leaders and heads of different structural organizations are elected by members of the respective organization, and the appointments are subject to the approval of the superior bodies. Members of primary, district and regional organizations are free to elect their chairpersons, but the bureau of the superior body makes the final decision.

Some parties prefer leaders of local party organizations to be appointed by the national bodies. The statute of the United National Movement states: "Candidacy to the post of structural sub-unit leader shall be nominated by the party's General Secretary and shall be confirmed by the party's Political Committee"[110]. The Labour Party of Georgia follows a similar principle, namely, the party's structural units are "directed by the coordinators who are

[109] Article 15.2, Statute of the Conservative Party of Georgia.
[110] Article 8.1, Statute of the United National Movement.

nominated by the party leader and approved by two-thirds of the political committee members"[111].

It is unusual among Georgian political parties for leaders of local branches to be elected by their own members. In fact, no reasonably successful party has used this method to date. In 2004, it was introduced by the Conservative Party of Georgia, and the party statute formally established this as the principle of party organization. According to the statute, all internal party positions are elective and the term of office extends to the next elections. Until then, leadership positions may be terminated only if holders choose to resign or if they violate the party statute. The idea behind this is that intra-party relations should encourage competition within the party. Party leaders hope that a competitive environment within the party will help to produce strong leaders and create robust local party organizations.

The rights and responsibilities attached to different positions within the parties are generally determined by party statutes. However, these documents describe in detail only the functions of a handful of senior positions. Almost all parties have chairpersons, deputy chairpersons and general secretaries of the parties, who are responsible for determining party policy, planning and conducting all party activities, appointing and dismissing the heads of structural units, making decisions on the creation or winding-up of local offices, signing all official party documents and representing the party in external relations. However, party statutes or other party documents do not define as clearly the rights and responsibilities of other party branches and their officers.

Unequal and unclear distribution of functions at the lower levels of the party hierarchy leads to diminished effectiveness and efficiency. For instance, the functions of heads of district organizations and zone coordinators overlap with regard to cooperating with local bureaus/boards and coordinating the activities of different groups within the party. In some parties, the duties and responsibilities of chairs and deputy chairs of party organizations of different levels are so similar that it is almost impossible to differentiate between them. Regional and district organizations of the United National Movement may be considered an exception, as they maintain three positions (chair, executive secretary and organizational secretary) for managing party work in their organizations, and the distribution of tasks between these three party officers is fairly clear-cut. Most parties recognize that their system of distributing tasks between different levels of party organizations and their officers is inadequate and that this limits their flexibility and effectiveness in responding to emerging challenges; some of them suggest specific solutions to this problem, but these ideas have yet to be finally shaped.

The only structural unit whose scope is strictly defined in all parties is the inspecting/auditing body. It is responsible for auditing all financial docu-

[111] Article 5.1, Statute of the Labour Party of Georgia.

ments, reviewing activities carried out by structural units and monitoring and assessing internal party elections (if applicable). In every party, members of inspection committees are elected and their right to occupy any additional position within the party is restricted.

Most parties have not established effective mechanisms for sharing information within their organizations. This causes serious gaps between different levels of the structural pyramid. The flows of information tend to be one-sided. Delivering messages from the central office to territorial organizations is fairly easy and is usually done by cell phone. However, members of regional and district organizations have much greater difficulty in reaching leaders of the national organization. They are obliged to write down their statements and send mails to the central office. This mechanism, however, does not work effectively and is rarely used.

Excessive centralization of party management

Political parties in Georgia are overly-centralized organizations. Moreover, the more successful parties tend also to be more centralized than the others, while experiments at delegating more tasks to local branches are restricted to parties that have not had electoral successes so far. All major resources, financial and professional included, are concentrated in the national offices. The head offices make all major decisions with regard to party policies. They plan, manage and supervise the implementation of all party work. The range of responsibilities of heads of central organizations varies from appointing/approving chairs of district organizations to drawing up lists of candidates for parliamentary elections. In most cases party leaders are simultaneously ideologists, decision-makers, managers and representatives of their parties in external relations.

In most cases party leaders are simultaneously ideologists, decision-makers, managers and representatives of their parties in external relations

All the tools of fund-raising and expending party finances are controlled by the central administrative bodies of the parties, both according to their statutes and in practice. The statutes of almost all parties assign the responsibility of drawing up a budget and determining priorities in expenditures to the central administrative body. The Conservative Party of Georgia is the only exception in this regard. Expenditure priorities are similar for all parties: office expenses, the expenses for party events, remuneration of office-holders within the party, support of socially vulnerable strata and technical equipment for offices.

Unequal and unclear distribution of functions at the lower levels of party structures leads to diminished effectiveness and efficiency

Most district and regional offices of the parties are free to cooperate with local businessmen and raise funds from them, but this level of fund-raising is limited in scope and is always coordinated with the centre. The involvement of party members in fund-raising activities may be controversial in that donations to political parties are presumed to imply some reciprocal benefit; party members think that if they accept financial aid, they by implication are obliged to grant some benefits and privileges to party sponsors. But they do not have a strong enough mandate to make such decisions. As a result, the local structural units prefer to avoid the responsibilities implicit in fund-raising and cede them to the head offices. In case of need, structural units address the centre with a written request for financial support.

The mechanism is different in the Conservative Party. Here, the local structural units are given freedom to fundraise from business organizations. There are only two restrictions: they cannot accept financial donations from illegal businesses and they must transfer 20 per cent of the collected amounts to the head office. As with the structural units of other parties, they can also turn to the head office if they are unable to cover the office expenses or finance party events themselves. The head office will consider their request and make a decision about whether or not to release funds.

Intellectual and professional resources are also concentrated in head offices. Analytical bureaus, professional groups and services operate only at the highest level of institutional pyramids. They determine party ideology, policies and programmes to be carried out in different areas of public life, identify recruitment priorities, draw up questionnaires for different surveys, etc. Professional groups specializing in public relations are also concentrated in the head offices. Owing to lack of influence and professional resources, district and regional organizations depend on the press services of central offices for promoting their activities. Considering the specific characteristics of different localities, regional structural units may act at their own discretion as well, but this is only possible within strictly limited frameworks.

To sum up, the function of head offices is to come up with strategies and decisions, while territorial organizations are there to implement them. It can be argued that concentrating all leadership functions in a single head office makes it easier to make decisions and manage party organizations more effectively in the short term. However, such excessive centralization limits the effective allocation of resources, stifles local initiative and impedes the development of local party branches in the long term. While carrying an enormous amount of responsibilities, leaders of party organizations in the centre run the risk of failing to judge public needs adequately, evaluate organizational resources and find effective responses to emerging challenges.

Development strategies of party organizations

One of the main challenges that parties face in the process of further developing their organizations is the absence or unclear formulation of party strategy. As the parties are aware that excessive dependence on the personalities of one or several leaders is a strategic weakness, they are focused on how this problem can be overcome.

Most parties are trying to respond to the new challenges of the new situation in the country and are undergoing an overhaul of sorts (see more on this in the last part of this chapter). Apart from streamlining their parties' organizational structures, they are trying to rethink the general vision of what kind of parties they are and what they want to achieve in the long term. For this, some of them may seek assistance from various non-governmental organizations and international partners. In this sense, the identities of some political parties in Georgia can be said to be under construction.

At present, no political parties involved in this research save for one have comprehensive written strategy documents. In some parties, work is underway to draw up such documents, while within all of them various issues of party strategy are actively being discussed.

Most parties are trying to respond to the fresh challenges that the new situation in the country poses and are undergoing an overhaul of sorts

The only exception is the United National Movement, whose leadership developed a document entitled "What our organization will be like in 2010". The document lists the goals which the party hopes to achieve in the course of its development. The party leaders say that the document aims at overcoming the problem that is common to the Georgian political parties, that of excessive dependence on one single leader. They say that the party is striving to rally a large group of honest individuals who care about the country's development, and they expect that the party will eventually be associated with this group of individuals and the goals that the party has set rather than with the personality of its leader. Other goals listed in the document include creating a strong party structure, ensuring stable public support and achieving adequate representation in state institutions. However, the document is still quite general; it sets out goals to be achieved but does not contain a specific action plan of how to achieve them. The plan assumes that the party will stay in power until the end of its mandate (2010).

While other parties do not have written strategies of development, their leaders follow certain sets of guidelines with regard to the development of party organizations. One example may be the Republican Party. Its influence peaked in 1995, when it played an important role in elaborating the Georgian

Constitution. Later, however, its political influence waned significantly. The party had several prominent civil society figures that became well-known to the public in that capacity, but as an organization it had an image of a loose intellectual club rather than a serious political player. It never depended on a single leader, and it was proud of being different from other parties on that account, representing a genuine political team. But lack of clear leadership could also be considered a cause of its organizational weakness. It returned to the fore when it took an active part in the Rose Revolution, and in 2004 several of its members gained parliamentary seats as part of the United National Movement list. However, even after this it was associated with several well-known names but almost no party organization had been established. In 2005, the party elected Davit Usupashvili, a prominent civil society activist, to be its chairman in the hope that he might succeed in building up a strong political organization. The new leadership of the party has set a goal of becoming a strong and independent political player rather than of having to rely solely on forming coalitions with other parties (something that it has been doing throughout its history). It also urged members who had joined civil society organizations to come back and help to build up the party.

The Labour Party shares this sceptical attitude towards coalitions and expresses it even more forcefully. Its representatives say that the party refuses to follow the pattern that has established itself in Georgian politics of forming coalitions without regard for ideological principles. New Conservative Party leaders, on the other hand, believe that they can create a firm electoral support base for the party on the right despite the popularity of leftist slogans in the country. Moreover, they believe that this goal has already been largely achieved and the party has a stable group of voters that will gradually expand.

Formal and informal regulations of party work

In all parties, relations between party members are based on informal bonds of personal trust rather than on allegiance to common principles or commitment to established formal procedures. Most members of parties say that their relations are similar to those in a family. In many organizations, cultivating these informal relationships is also a matter of policy. The parties' district and regional organizations keep records of their members' birthdays and office workers call them every year to wish them well. They also regularly extend their best wishes to party members on public holidays. "Such gestures are quite effective, because people like it when there are signs of being appreciated," a Labour Party member said.

Most members of parties say that their relations are similar to those in a family

Parties make wide use of informal connections in the process of recruiting new members as well. When asked about general mechanisms of attracting new members, party representatives typically say that they rely on the public statements made by their leaders. Presumably, responses to them define the area of potential supporters of a political party. However, when it comes to more proactive methods of recruiting new members, political parties usually work through personal networks, such as friends, family members, relatives and neighbours whom they trust and believe in. "Today the majority of the supporters of our party are close relatives and friends of ours who respect and hold us in high esteem," a member of the Industrialists' party said. Political parties usually do not try to define any specific social groups where they are more likely to find supporters on account of their ideology or agenda. Nor do they treat the religious and ethnic minorities, women or other groups differently. Thus wider social groups are not singled out as potential areas of recruitment for political parties.

The only social group beyond personal networks of trust that the parties do try to attract is the youth. Carrying out special cultural and sport projects for young people is the main method of engaging with this group.

The success in recruiting new members mostly depends on the party leader's image

According to the parties' own observations, roughly two-thirds of the successful recruitment of new members depends on the leader's image. The remainder is attributable to the successful work of party members within their personal networks of trust.

This dependence on informal personal relations continues after new members join party organizations. Of course, parties have statutes that are major documents regulating the functioning of the organization, the relations between the structural units and the distribution of rights and responsibilities among them. However, statutes are considered to be very general documents that are adopted in order not to violate the Law on Political Associations of Citizens which states that all political organizations are obliged to adopt statutes at their first conference[112]. The law also determines the major issues that should be included in the document: the goals of the organization, procedures for accepting and expelling members, the rights and responsibilities of members, organizational structure, division of responsibilities among governing bodies[113], etc.

While defining the general goals and tasks of a party, in most cases the statutes leave it to different structural units to adopt their own rules and regulations. However, none of the parties' organizational units have addi-

[112] Article 12, Law on Political Associations of Citizens.
[113] Article 13, Law on Political Associations of Citizens.

tional regulatory documents, save for the United National Movement. In the second half of 2005, the United National Movement adopted "Ten Main Principles of the Organization's Functioning" and "Five Main Rules for Party Members". The first document identifies the values determining the party's activities and the second sets out the principles to be followed by party members in their work.

Informal mechanisms are crucial for resolving conflicts within parties. A statute is the only formal document that indirectly deals with the issue of conflicts. In particular, it identifies the grounds on which a party can expel its members. A party member can be expelled if he or she change their political views and beliefs, fail to obey the decisions taken by superior bodies, do anything damaging to the party image, etc. "If anyone disagrees with a decision taken by the party and finds that decision contrary to his/her personal principles, this person should leave the party," a member of the United National Movement said.

The statute does not cover other problems that may arise between party members and does not provide any procedures for their solution. Therefore, parties rely on informal ways of resolving internal conflicts. It is an established practice that in case of any kind of disagreement between members, parties call the opposing sides for a dialogue. Such dialogue usually takes the form of an informal discussion with the participation of party leaders. More formal methods of conflict resolution, such as discussing these issues on the bureaus/boards of the respective organizations, are almost never used. All parties found it difficult to name an internal conflict that had been regulated formally. They could not even recall an example of a member being formally expelled, save for the Industrialists who had the experience of officially terminating the membership of those charged with dishonest behaviour in one district-level organization. While differences of opinion are quite common in parties, such differences almost never go beyond informal discussions. If the two sides fail to come to an agreement, the side with the least support has to leave the party.

There are no formally established methods of conflict resolution within the parties

The principles of relations or codes of conduct inside a party structure are dictated by the members who enjoy the highest authority within the party. Therefore, such codes are very stable and those members who disagree with them usually leave the party of their own accord so as not to undermine unity. Although such mechanisms are quite effective in ensuring party unity in the short term, they may be less than productive for a party's long-term interests: if particular individuals lose their authority within a party, it may become impossible to deal with conflicts and overcome lesser obstacles.

Some parties consider the lack of formal conflict regulation mechanisms to be a handicap. For instance, due to its different principles for structuring the organization, Conservative Party of Georgia members foresee that they may face conflicts that are dissimilar from those of other parties. In particular, they expect that internal elections will become a source of conflict. Every party member who intends to seek a position within the party should be ready to compete with fellow members, be defeated and accept that other candidates are legitimate competitors rather than enemies. However, they admit that in order to regulate possible conflicts they might need to establish additional articles in the statute or to adopt separate regulatory documents.

Party finances

Material and human resources are crucial to a robust party organization. All the parties suffer from lack of resources, although they also have problems in efficiently using the resources they actually have.

The main material resource party organizations need is office space. Parties do not usually own their offices but rent them. Central, regional and district administrative bodies of all of the parties use their own offices. Office space is not provided to primary and zone organizations. The latter are given financial support to open an office only during election campaigns. All the offices except for the head office have from two to three rooms, one of which is used for meetings.

There is usually little technical equipment at party offices. District offices of all the parties except the New Conservative Party and United National Movement have only the most basic office furniture (tables and chairs) and the telephone is the only means of communication. The district and regional offices of the New Conservative Party as well as the regional offices of the United National Movement are equipped with computers. Owing to the lack of finances, other parties have computers only at their central offices. They see equipping their offices as a major priority if and when they attract sufficient financial support.

The principal source of funding for parties is donations made by party members and their friends, as well as by private businesses

The main sources of income for parties are membership fees and donations. The money collected from membership fees is often too little to cover even the expenses of district offices. The principal source of funding is the donations made by party members and their friends, as well as by private businesses. Raising funds from businesses is the prerogative of head offices, while local branches are free to fundraise only for sport and cultural activities at the local level. On the one hand, this concentration of fundraising activi-

ties at the head offices relieves local branches of the necessity to concern themselves with financial problems. However, this also limits their possibilities of further development.

Party	According to votes received in the last elections	According to seats in Parliament	Total
United National Movement	1 203 076	300 000	1 503 076
Conservative party of Georgia	79 542	9 600	89 142
Republican Party	59 657	9 600	69 257
Industry Will Save Georgia	113 313	14 400	127 713
New Conservative Party	113 313	19 200	132 513
Labour Party of Georgia	179 962	2 400	182 362
Freedom Party	131 313	- - -	131 313

Table 10. State funding (in Georgian laries) to be received by political parties in 2005

In addition to the above-mentioned sources, parties can receive financial and material support from the state. From 2006 on, public financing for parties will increase considerably. Whereas earlier modest funding was allocated only on the basis of parliamentary seats, from now on, those parties that received at least five per cent of the vote in the last parliamentary elections will receive additional funding higher than before.[114] Table 10 shows how much public funding seven Georgian parties will be eligible for. However, even this increased funding will cover only a small portion of party expenses. As for international support for political parties, the law limits this to technical equipment, literature, seminars and other educational activities.[115]

[114] See more on rules for public funding for political parties in Section One, chapter on *Parties and State*.
[115] Article 26, Law on Political Associations of Citizens

Parties exercise a wavelike recruitment policy. The party activists attract their friends, neighbours and relatives, who in turn involve people close to them

In this area as well, the Conservative Party of Georgia has tried to innovate. In 2005, it was the first in the Georgian political environment to arrange a fund-raising dinner and thus initiate a new transparent mechanism for attracting funds.

Human resources

All parties agree that able and committed human resources are their main asset. These include first of all party leaders: they are the magnets for attracting both rank-and-file members and voters. But no party can achieve success unless it has a well-organized network of activists who do party work at the grass-roots level. Working with human resources consists of at least two major elements. First, a party needs to attract activists; then it must use them as efficiently as possible.

Attracting new members is the duty of primary and district organizations, while the leaders of the party define the general policy of recruitment. Most parties exercise a so-called wavelike recruitment policy. The party activists attract their friends, neighbours and relatives, who in turn involve people close to them. According to a member of the New Conservative Party, "In the first place one relies on one's friends, who rely on their friends. This is a wavelike process passing from person to person and finally covering quite a large area." Others maintain a special formula for recruiting new members called "n+1". This means that each member has to attract at least one new member every month. This formula is not formally set out in statutes or other documents, but the parties believe that it benefits their organizational development.

However, whereas in the first years of their existence parties tend to be primarily oriented towards increasing the number of their members, experience subsequently constrains them to focus more on quality than quantity. "Generally it's impressive when a party has a lot of members, but we don't need those who are members only on paper and who won't perform the tasks given them by the party," a Labour Party member said. In order to solve this problem, many parties try to distinguish between active members (activists) who are actually involved in the party work and supporters who are not (see more on this distinction in the next chapter on *Internal Democracy and Membership*).

In order to make the best use of people they have attracted, parties need an effective and efficient system of assessment, management and distribu-

tion of their human resources. First of all, they need information. For this purpose, every party requires its members to fill in an application form, indicating, in addition to personal information, their education, profession and interests. Typically, these data stay in files kept in district organizations and are rarely used. As a result, decision-makers within the party cannot effectively make use of the knowledge about their party's human resources. Only the New Conservatives maintain a computer database, which easily allows them to update information, to measure human resources according to age, gender and profession, and to take advantage of those resources more effectively.

Human resources and their management

The New Conservative Party has taken steps towards introducing a more efficient system of human resources management. It is the only Georgian party so far that has managed to create a computer database of its members. This database contains detailed information about party members, including their educational background, working experience and areas of interest, which enables the party to manage and direct all human and intellectual recourses effectively. In order to fill in information regularly, the party charter obliges party organizations to update information annually.
The party considers even details such as service in the army. As its representative said, "We require such information about our members in order to take it into account in our activities. In particular, the party gives short-term tasks to those members who have not yet served in the army as they may be conscripted". According to the Georgian legislation, entering military service leads to automatic termination of party membership.

Apart from having adequate information on the capacities of their members, efficient use of human resources within political parties depends on the rational distribution of tasks between party officers and activists. Most parties face difficulties in carrying out their activities due to the unequal distribution and overlap of responsibilities between different positions within the party. This is true at the national level, and it can also be seen in the division of tasks between the different levels of territorial organizations.

Most parties face difficulties due to the unequal distribution and overlap of responsibilities between different positions within the party

The ongoing process of restructuring

All Georgian parties find themselves in the process of restructuring their organizations. While all parties have followed quite different trajectories since their establishment, after the Rose Revolution they faced a radical change of political environment. In order to respond adequately to the new challenges they have to implement changes within their own institutions as well. However, the type of change varies, as parties have different starting points.

The Republican Party has existed for several decades, but until 2005 it was not strongly institutionalized as a party; even its members and a sympathetic section of the public regarded it rather as an intellectual club that happened to have a statute and the structure of a political party. Therefore, its activities were not very effective or organized. Currently this party is making serious efforts to overcome its image and develop into a well-organized political institution.

The Conservative Party of Georgia and the United National Movement were both registered in 2004. The constituent parts of the latter, the National Movement and the United Democrats, appeared in the political arena a few years ago, but in 2004 they merged and registered as a single party. The Conservative Party's present reorganization has been brought about by its transformation from a party in opposition into one in power. This increased its responsibilities and imposed new duties. Party members think this should lead to changes of its organizational structure as well: "Before the revolution the party's structure was different, now it has completely changed. Today we are the ruling party".

The Conservative Party of Georgia was created as a result of a merger between a group that called itself the National Forces (supporters of former President Gamsakhurdia), which took part in the Rose Revolution together with the National Movement but then broke away, and the Conservative Party. Currently, this party is also undergoing drastic structural changes on the basis of the statute adopted in 2004.

Serious challenges were faced by parties that did not support the Rose Revolution, such as the Labour Party, the New Conservative Party and Industry Will Save Georgia. They lost significant numbers of members but managed to maintain their organizations. Currently, they are in the process of evaluating the new environment and revising some of their principles against the backdrop of new political realities, thus making their agendas more attuned to public needs.

There are a number of changes that characterize most parties. One is a redefinition of the institutions of membership – this will be discussed in the next chapter. The other is a tendency for parties to create additional functional bodies within their organizations. Parties give priority to involving

citizens in different kinds of party work, as it makes parties more responsive to public needs and enhances the quality of their work. Some of major political organizations hope to involve citizens by establishing advisory councils, working groups or shadow cabinets at the level of district organizations. Councils are open structures and do not limit the number of their members, thus anyone interested can participate in their activities. As regards working groups and shadow cabinets, participation is limited to party members and supporters, and their size is also restricted to reasonable numbers. All these bodies perform similar functions in different ways: they act as consultative boards and provide party organizations with recommendations on local and national issues. They can also become instruments for generating new initiatives and ideas, and involve professionals from different fields in the party's activities. More information about each individual party and the files they produced for this research can be found in the Annex.

Main findings

- The organizational structures of Georgian parties mainly follow similar patterns in that the regional structure of their branches mirrors the territorial administrative division of the country as well as borders of electoral districts and precincts. Almost all parties have youth and women's organizations;
- Currently all parties are in the process of restructuring their organizations. This includes, among other things, trying to define more clearly the concept of party membership, creating lists of supporters and establishing new functional organizations within the parties;
- Financial and professional resources of the parties are concentrated in their head offices. Head offices play a dominant role in determining policies, raising and distributing funds and conducting public relations;
- Within parties, informal relations based on personal closeness and trust have priority over those defined by shared goals and formal procedures. This ensures internal cohesion within political parties but limits their possibilities of growth in the long term;
- Parties tend to have insufficiently developed formal institutional structures. The division of responsibilities between the parties' leaders and staff at different levels is often unclear, and there are frequent overlaps; there are no effective procedures for sharing information or resolving conflicts within parties.

2.5 Internal Democracy and Membership

What to do?

- Make information concerning different models of party organization accessible to parties;
- Become more transparent and open to civil society and develop a consistent, coherent and clear policy profile;
- Increase capacity for policy analysis and policy-making at different levels of party organisation;
- Increase the role of members in policy-making and decision-making in political parties.

General approach to the issue of internal democracy

In general, Georgian political parties do not seem to consider the issue of internal democracy to be very acute. Political parties have recently introduced or are planning to introduce considerable structural changes, but these changes do not aim to give their members a greater role in decision-making or increase pluralism within the parties. The main purpose of reforms is to increase the parties' efficiency as electoral machines.

Participants of almost all the meetings held during this interactive assessment characterized the principle of decision-making established in their parties as democratic and oriented towards members' involvement. However, the essence of this democratic principle was seen in the general atmosphere characteristic of relationships and conduct within the parties rather than in a set of established formal rules. On the other, analysis of such rules when they do exist demonstrates that party structures and decision-making are rather centralized.

It is noteworthy that party members during two of the meetings characterized the type of internal management within their parties as "democratic centralism", revoking the organizational model of the Soviet Communist Party. According to them, there is no reason "to reinvent the wheel" and by that they seem to express their belief that this model is pretty much universal. This reflects the fact that most political party members and activists were socialized in the Soviet period and its political culture and today are not well-informed about other models of party organization.

Top-down

The analysis that in all modern societies political power is concentrated in the hands of a small group of party leaders or party oligarchy has been extensively elaborated by different authors, among them the German sociologist Robert Michels in the beginning of the 20th century. According to him, in societies with democratic public politics, those members who are better than the average members at communicating and understanding political issues become party leaders. They create party elites and become autonomous or even independent from the mass of party members.

Michels considered this to be a negative phenomenon, but also an inevitable feature of liberal democracies. The concentration of power in the hands of elites is intrinsically linked to the very nature of democratic arrangements, and interparty relations are merely relations between party elites[116]. Michels was clearly a man of his time and ended rationalizing the reasons of fascism.

In the case of Communist parties, the concentration of power does not follow this analysis. It is rather based on the following idea: in order to implement the far-reaching goals set by the party, such as coming to power and completely transforming society into one based on socialist principles, a total unity of will is necessary. Correspondingly, internal party debates preceding a decision to be made by the party are allowed, but once the decision is arrived at, members are no longer permitted to challenge it. Such an approach, known as "democratic centralism", brought success under specific circumstances. The Bolshevik Party in Russia and Communist parties in Europe stood united against their internally fragmented opponents, the democratic parties, and this gave them some advantage in power struggles. In part it explains the coming to power of Communist parties in some Eastern European countries (such as Czechoslovakia or Yugoslavia) after World War 2. However, this kind of internal arrangement was also the cause of the Communist parties' structural weakness. They did not demonstrate sufficient flexibility in responding to changing attitudes in their societies and failed to adjust their image and policies once the ideology that they had advocated was no longer popular. This resulted in the disappearance of the Communist parties in a large number of countries.

[116] R. Michels, Zur Soziologie des Parteiwesens in der Modernen Demokratie, Leipzig: Klinkhardt, 1911.

Attitudes towards the issue of internal democracy are different among members of the Conservative Party. For them, internal democracy based on specific procedures is an important part of how members perceive their own party. As one party member said, they offer Georgian society a model of the party in which appointments to internal party positions are not based on personal networks. Moreover, party members believe that an internal democratic organization of their party is a precondition for its democratic functioning when in power. Members of this party also hope that internal democracy will inspire greater public trust in the party and, subsequently, greater electoral success.

The Georgian political parties do not consider the issue of internal democracy to be very acute

Many respondents from other parties are aware of this new principle in the Conservative Party's organization, which gives much greater autonomy to its local branches. But this is a relatively recent innovation in Georgian political life, and representatives of other parties do not yet have a clearly defined attitude toward it.

Bottom-up

A more horizontal distribution of power within a party and constant mutual adjustments between different groups in it might best preserve party unity. Members of same party usually aspire to party unity more than to splits. Reconciling different interests inside the party allows unity to be safeguarded. The participation of rank-and-file members in policy and programmatic discussions could give them important motivation, even when the outcomes of these discussions do not influence the conduct of the party to any considerable degree.

Moreover, while such a broad democratic ideal is related to the wider involvement of citizens, excessive centralization of decision-making inside the parties might also prove harmful for a party's image. Therefore, greater involvement of members in making certain kinds of decisions might both improve popular attitudes towards parties and increase motivation of party members; this could happen without the party leadership losing the ability to make the most important decisions that are necessary for the parties' operation. According to some political scientists , improving the public image is an additional consideration for many parties in the West to better develop procedures of internal democracy, and this is characteristic of the recent period of party development.

Members are the backbone of every political party. Analyzing what membership actually means is of utmost importance for understanding the nature of political parties. In many modern Western political parties, the act of joining a party is a unilateral decision taken by an individual and it may be performed by technical means, for instance, on the Internet.

Most Georgian parties take a different approach. For admissions procedures of new members one can use examples of the New Conservative Party and United National Movement. All interested persons who are Georgian citizens with the right to vote and claim to share the views and aims of the party may be given membership status. Such people should submit a written application to a local party office, but this is only the first step. Prospective members are also asked to submit two or three references from existing party members and have an interview with the admissions board in which they must demonstrate their good will and positive attitudes. Similar procedures are in place in most other parties as well.

All successful applicants receive membership certificates and with them are granted the general rights and responsibilities declared in the statutes. These include the right to elect and be elected to certain positions within the party, to receive information on the activities of any of its structural units and submit proposals and initiatives to its governing bodies. In practice, members of most parties are primarily required to pay membership fees, actively participate in the events organized by the party and follow and implement decisions taken by the decision-making bodies.

Usually, formal procedures such as obtaining recommendations and having interviews with admission boards are not viewed as serious obstacles to gaining membership. At the same time, however, the latest trend in most parties, with the exception of the Conservative party, is to make their admission rules stricter. The reason for this is that parties are putting greater stress on the loyalty of their members, widespread defections from parties being one of the most frequently mentioned reasons for this. Those parties that did not support the Rose Revolution lost a number of members afterwards and want to create safeguards against disloyal members. Prospective members are required to be honest, reliable, trustworthy and patriotic. All parties realize that these qualities are rather difficult to assess, but they nevertheless still hope that loyalty may be safeguarded though institutionalizing recommendations for candidates for party membership and investigating candidates' political backgrounds.

At the same time, most parties are planning to clearly distinguish between full members or activists on the one hand and more passive members/supporters on the other. The Conservative Party has already institutionalized this distinction in its party statute. There are two kinds of party mem-

bers - full and associate. The former have the right to be elected to internal party positions and are obliged to assist the party both with financial contributions and though their work. Associate members do not pay membership fees and do not have the right to be elected to a party position. However, they can participate in internal party elections.

The United National Movement has also introduced a special status of 'activist.' It is suggested that those party members who do not pay membership fees and are not regularly involved in party activities will receive the status of supporter or associate member. This will have implications for their rights and obligations.

All the parties except the Conservatives are planning to make their member admission rules stricter

Recently the Republican and Labour Parties have taken steps to formalize this distinction as well. Only dependable activists will be called members, while the supporters are those who have no major responsibilities and are not required to take an active part in the events organized by a party. But they are expected to be loyal to the party and vote for it in elections. Paying fees is optional for supporters. The Labour Party is planning to assign its passive members to the category of supporters; moreover, those who vote for particular parties in the elections but have not made up their minds to join the party will also be included in the list of supporters. Parties draft lists of their supporters according to their residence.

It can be concluded that most Georgian political parties appear to have changed their priorities with regards to membership and recruitment. If attracting a large number of members used to be considered the main priority, currently the stress is on loyalty to the party ideas and policies, professional qualities, a good reputation and active involvement in a party's work, even if this is achieved at the expense of a declining number of members. This approach is close to the model described as "cadre parties" in political science[117]. Only the Conservative Party and, to a lesser extent, the Labour Party seem to be oriented towards mass membership.

Engaging members

Once new members are admitted, parties face the problem of keeping them inside their organizations, especially during periods between elections. Georgian political parties are more successful in recruiting members than in ensuring their active engagement in party work and continuing loyalty after they have been recruited. Some party representatives believe that in order to

[117] R.Koole, "Cadre, Catch-All or Cartel? A Comment on the Notion of the Cartel Party," Party Politics 2, 1996.

solve this problem the parties should provide greater motivation to their members. That is, while the parties require loyalty and activism from their members, they should also give their members the opportunity of self-realization and allow them to satisfy their interests and political ambitions.

Some parties attempt to ensure the active involvement of their members between election periods by creating working groups on different issues. Generally, these are groups working on legal, social and economic issues that usually have the task of issuing recommendations to the party, the general public and institutions of the state and self-government.

Parties are more successful in recruiting members than in ensuring their active engagement once they have been admitted

Some parties try to keep members involved in party work through educational programmes. One party maintains free training courses in computers, foreign languages and accounting for its active young members, while others intend to establish party schools. "We have a special interest in having such schools since those who will study there will later occupy positions within the party and (later on) in the executive agencies of the country," a member of the United National Movement said. The Republican Party introduced a new system of training specialists. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, parties also create shadow cabinets in which their members are involved. These shadow cabinets will enable the interested members to test their abilities in bodies similar to the existing public agencies and to practice their management skills.

To sum up, most parties try to maintain members' loyalty through cultural, educational and sports activities. They are less successful in involving them in the decision-making and policy-defining processes.

Participation of party members and activists in selecting candidates for the elections

The nomination of candidates for elections at various levels is one of the key functions of the party organization and the selection process is an important indicator of how power is distributed within a party. The presence or absence of participatory mechanisms in candidate selection helps to reveal the extent of a party's internal democracy. In different countries, party leaders as well as the leaders at lower levels, party activists, members and sometimes even ordinary citizens without any formal attachment to the party may participate in the selection of party candidates.

Candidate selection procedures in the Georgian political parties differ depending on the level of elections involved. The statutes of some of the parties studied either say nothing about the candidate selection procedure or entrust

this function entirely to the party's central bodies. The Conservative Party's statute is an exception in this respect: it strictly defines the sequence in which party leaders occupy places in the proportional list. It also provides for the participation of the party membership in the nomination of candidates for the presidential and majoritarian elections.

The interviews conducted during the research project demonstrated that rank-and-file members of most Georgian parties take no part in the nomination of candidates for the national elections. The Conservative Party is an exception here, which is related to the internal organization of this party as well as the particular ways in which its membership is defined. Here, the party's majoritarian candidate is established by means of internal elections. The party's full members (activists) as well as its associate members (supporters) participate in internal elections.

Georgian Parties and internal democracy

While Georgian political parties promote democratic agendas, in their internal structures they are largely under the influence of the model of democratic centralism. The parties are strongly centralized, and their members have little say in defining overall party policies. If divisions on serious policy issues emerge, they lead to party splits. This make parties less sustainable in the long run. The disappearance of a large number of Georgian parties from the political arena is also evidence of this.

That is not to overlook the fact that parties need a strong and competent leadership to make timely strategic decisions. The leadership needs to have the room to manoeuvre delegated to it by the party's rank-and-file. Parties need to think about a correct balance between effective leadership and inclusive policy-making. This requires, for example, well-defined formal rules for making decisions within the party.

The situation is somewhat different in the case of local elections. According to the Labour Party members, the party's local activists nominate candidates for the local government elections. An episode in the Dusheti district branch, where this party is particularly strong and controls the district government structures, illustrates the point. Party activists in one of the villages nominated a candidate for the position of village administration head (*gamgebeli*) while the chairperson of the district party organization opposed the nomination. In spite of the opposition, the candidate received support from the district party council and was elected to the position. This example shows that the district party organization may not always follow the will of its leader; but it also shows that the nomination of a candidate for the village-level local

elections ultimately requires the approval of the higher (district) level of party organization.

Leaders of local party branches and most respected rank-and-file activists have a greater say in the process of selecting candidates for the local government and majoritarian elections. It is believed that such candidates have to be able to perform some important services for a given district, have an excellent reputation in the area and have a reliable character. National leaders believe that local party organizations are better judges of such qualities. As one of the leaders of the Industrialists said, "The opinions of the regional leaders on these issues are decisive since they know the people and the situation on the ground better. Due to the trust towards the local leaders, the person the leader selects is trusted by the party leaders as well. The local leader also takes the responsibility for this person. This cannot be done in any other way."

The importance of the local leaders and top activists that constitute the informal core of the district organization is probably connected to the fact that the parties' local branches are often established around existing structures of power, i.e. groups of influential people or informal leaders of the local community in the first place. Giving them a prominent role in selecting local candidates for elections is important for maintaining their commitment to the party as a whole. Otherwise, they might switch their allegiance to other parties.

Which of the party power levels is involved in the nomination of local candidates differs from one party to another and according to the importance of elections. Usually, local party leaders exercise control over the nomination of candidates for local elections. In some parties, nomination of candidates for local elections also requires the approval of the party's central bodies; in others, such approval is not needed. Local branches also have considerable influence on nominations of majoritarian candidates from their district, but the national leaders still have the final say on this issue. As regards drafting party lists for the national elections based on the principle of proportional representation (PR)(which some consider proper “party elections” as opposed to majoritarian elections where personalities are more important than parties), here the role of local party organizations is the least prominent if they can be said to have a role at all. Usually, leaders of local branches can effectively influence the process of drafting national electoral party lists only if they at the same time are represented in a party's central governing bodies.

Leaders choose parties

Rules for selecting leaders for internal party positions constitute another important indicator of internal party democracy. The nature of these rules is often defined by two, sometimes contradictory requirements. On the one

hand, in order to achieve coherent functioning of the party organization at all its levels, party leaders strive to establish control over all appointments to the leading party positions. On the other hand, if one aspires to greater participation of members in the party activities at the local level, it is expedient to allow them to elect their own leaders.

Successful parties must find a way to reconcile both requirements. Political parties functioning in Georgia vary widely in terms of their rules of selection for party positions. The differences reveal what priority they give to each of these goals.

Empowering local organizations

It is understood that channelling the interests of different social groups is an important function of a political party. Without this the party can hardly be popular. Strong ties between local party organizations and local communities are of crucial importance. The function of parties is not only to deliver goods and services to the nation as a whole but also to serve as effective mechanisms for solving particular problems, including those specific to particular regions or localities.

If local party organizations have a greater degree of autonomy, they will have a better chance of devising their own initiatives and serving as intermediaries between their own communities and the party leadership.

For electing their top leaders, Georgian political parties have fairly democratic rules and regulations. The leaders have to be elected by regular party congresses held every two or four years. In practice, however, the process is not competitive and inclusive. As has been stated several times, Georgian political parties are leader-oriented. Most parties were created fairly recently around a popular leader or a small group of leaders. Therefore, the members' and activists' influence on the process of electing the party's highest-level leaders has been rather limited so far. In fact they legitimize the leaders whose identity is well known beforehand. It should be noted that political leaders of parties in most cases also act as their top functionaries.

Founding new parties around popular political figures may be natural for young democracies. More indicative of the internal democratic practices within the party is how the leaders are replaced. Most parties involved in this research have been in existence for a fairly short time and have therefore not had many opportunities to change their leaderships. However, a survey of the history of political parties in Georgia during the last fifteen years shows that there is a very limited record of successful change of top leadership in Georgian political parties. It is rare that electoral failure leads to a change of

leader – something that is standard practice in political parties of developed democracies. If a change does take place, parties rarely survive it. As a rule, the exit of political party leaders from the political scene leads either to the total disappearance of the party (as occurred with the Citizens' Union of Georgia, the Union of Revival and many other less prominent parties) or to a split in the party. This happened to the National Democratic Party, which was one of the most popular parties of the early 1990s. Some time after its leader, Giorgi Chanturia, was assassinated, it split into several independent groups.

The influence of the rank-and-file members on the process of electing the party's highest-level leaders has been rather limited so far

However, there are counterexamples and they are becoming more frequent. For instance, after the poor showing of the Republican Party in the 1999 parliamentary elections[118], Davit Berdzenishvili replaced Ivliane Khaindrava as party leader (with Khaindrava remaining as one of its most important public faces). The Republican Party leadership changed once more in 2005 when Davit Usupashvili became the chairperson of the Republicans – though on this occasion it was unrelated to electoral results. In the summer of 2003 there was a leadership change in the NCP as well when David Gamkrelidze replaced Levan Gachechiladze as the party chairman. More recently, there was also a change of leadership in Industry Will Save Georgia. Giorgi Topadze, who served as a leader of the party before the Rose Revolution, afterwards transferred his day-to-day management responsibilities to Zurab Tqemaladze, who is at present a chairperson of the party. However, this cannot be considered a fully-fledged case of leadership change as Giorgi Topadze formally remained a "leader of the party", a position specially created for this case.

In all these cases, however, the decision to change party chairperson was made within the narrow circle of the party leadership and then legitimized by the broader body of the party without any public competitive process or open discussion. The change could not be explained by pressure "from below", that is, from the rank-and-file members, who scarcely participated in the process. In 2005, the Conservative Party demonstrated a different model. At its congress, two candidates for the position of party chairperson were proposed to the members, and one of them, Koba Davitashvili, narrowly defeated the second, Zviad Dzidziguri (both continue to cooperate closely in the party leadership).

[118] It was in a bloc with the National Democratic Party then.

There is a very limited record of successful change of top leadership in Georgian political parties

To conclude, one cannot say that the process of selecting top leaders in Georgian political parties has been inclusive and competitive so far, although there have been some promising signs recently. The situation is somewhat different at the lower levels of party hierarchies.

Selection of leaders and party personnel at the local level

In most of the parties studied here, the position that is elected by the rank-and-file members is that of a chairperson of a primary organization which is based on the election precinct. In most cases, this position does not attract party activists with higher ambitions. It mainly involves carrying out technical responsibilities such as recording supporters in the election precinct or canvassing.

Internal democracy: the case of the Conservative Party

The Conservative Party of Georgia is the most recently established of the parties involved in this research. It is distinguished from other parties by what is for Georgian politics a novel approach to internal democracy. As its members say, the Conservative Party is currently in the process of building a bottom-up party structure, something that is in part the result of its cooperation with the International Republican Institute. All leaders in the party are elected by members, either directly or indirectly. At the primary level, party members elect chairpersons of local organizations. These take part in electing local (rayon- and region-level) and national leaders. This kind of system is said to not only empower the party rank-and-file, but to create a layer of strong and independent mid-level leaders.

Party members attach both normative and pragmatic importance to internal democracy. If a party is internally democratic, the Conservatives say, it is more likely to govern democratically once it comes to power. Furthermore, internal democracy opens up the party to ambitious people seeking a career in politics. This will bring more dynamism to the young party, but also additional votes. The Conservatives believe that the internal democratic structure will also make the party more popular with ordinary people not interested in a political career. As local organizations enjoy greater autonomy, they have greater chances of putting problems specific to local communities on the party's agenda.

In some cases (for example in the Labour Party's organizational structure), appointments to this position do not require approval by any party structure of a higher level. At the same time, in some parties, chairmanship of a primary organization can be a rung on the party hierarchy ladder. For instance, the district-level leader of the Conservative Party (chairperson of the district branch council) is elected from the precinct chairpersons.

According to all party statutes, chairpersons of the precinct branches are also the main decision-makers in terms of electing district branch leaders through the district conference. Unlike the Conservative Party, the circle of local leaders in most parties is not limited to precinct chairpersons. This allows any active member of the party (wherever he or she resides in the district) to become a member of the district branch leadership. Moreover, it seems that, in effect, in most parties, district branch leaders represent a certain core of the activists rather than people who came from lower down, such as precinct-level leaders. This can be assessed from two different perspectives. The fact that any member of the party can become a leader of a district branch (including those who are not part of the district party organization) gives greater flexibility to the central leadership of the party in terms of appointing the leaders it considers desirable for a given position. However, this is also a feature of greater centralization: in a number of cases, Tbilisi residents have become leaders of district branches without having any direct links with them.

The statutes of most parties stipulate that electing leaders in local organizations requires the agreement of the national office of the party. Since party leaders have the right to veto the choice of the local organizations, the candidacies are often coordinated with the centre in advance. This may explain why there is rarely any difference of opinion between the local and the national leadership regarding the election of chairpersons of a local branch. In some cases, party leaders have the right to dismiss local chairpersons. In cases where the dismissal of a chairperson of a local branch is at issue, his or her popularity among local party members and activists is a factor to be considered, though not the decisive one. What matters most are the party's local election results and the local leader's loyalty to the party (in effect, to its national leadership).

All this does not mean that elections in the parties' local branches are entirely masterminded from the party's national offices. The discussions during the meetings with all six political parties revealed that both party leaders and members understand that the coordinated work of ordinary members, activists and leaders is necessary if local branches are to work successfully. "Locally, the members have to work with the local leader, not the head office," a member of the Labour Party said. This is why, in most cases, the initiative for electing the local branch chairperson lies with the local active members. The institutional procedure for this very functional approach is

election by the district conferences: chairpersons of the precinct branches and members of the district branch councils attend the conference and have the right to elect or approve any member of their party as a head of district organization. The national leadership of the party, in most cases, reserves the right to offer preliminary consultations on specific issues, express support for a specific candidate, or exercise its right of veto. This gives the ordinary members an opportunity to build a party career "from below" and it also has a positive effect on maintaining the local leaders' loyalty to the party.

This can be illustrated by listing procedures for selecting leaders of the local organizations in different parties. As we said earlier, in the Conservative Party, precinct branch members elect precinct chairpersons, who then elect the district branch chairperson among themselves. They also participate in the election of the party leaders. In the United National Movement, chairpersons of the district branches are nominated by the party leadership and then approved by the district conference. In the cases of Industry Will Save Georgia, the New Conservative party and the Labour Party, chairpersons of local party organizations are elected at the conference of the respective level and then approved by the party leadership. In the case of the Republican Party, the election of the district organization chairperson does not require approval from the party's central authority, although, according to the party statutes, the national committee still has the power to annul any decision made by the local organization (supposedly, including that which is connected to the election of leaders of the local organization).

In most cases, the initiative of electing the local branch's chairperson lies with the local active members

Participation in formulating party strategies and political position

The narrow or inclusive character of the policy-making process in any given party is a further important indicator of how democratic its internal structure and practices are. While party leaders may take a lead in formulating the party's agenda, its internal structure can hardly be considered democratic unless rank-and-file activists contribute to the process of defining the party agenda and strategy, rather than merely taking part in its implementation.

What influence do rank-and-file members of the Georgian political parties have on the stance that their parties take on different issues? To begin with, this influence is different when it comes to formulating party policies at the national and local levels. One important aspect of this is the issue of relations, alliances and cooperation with other parties. What is the role of the parties' leadership and of their local activists when a party decides to enter into partnerships and coalitions with other parties?

One generalization that we can make based on the research is that, on the whole, the rank-and-file of Georgian political parties have a rather modest input in formulating their strategies and political positions. However, it does not appear to be a policy by party leaders to restrict the right of members to discuss party issues. But, of course, they may often prefer to make important decisions without having to depend on approval by some larger forum of party members (such as party congress or some other format). Many party members also assume that, by joining a party, a person is making a choice in favour of certain pre-defined policies and his or her role is to promote and implement these policies. This is indirectly confirmed by the fact that, in the event of serious disagreements within the party regarding an important political issue, those dissenting from the general party line simply quit without even trying to initiate a discussion or create a faction within a party. In particular, such episodes occurred in parties that did not support the revolutionary events of November 2003: those who preferred their parties to join the protesters simply had to leave the party. During some of the discussions, party leaders often preferred to refer to the "interests of the people" as determinants of their party policy choices, without mentioning the views of their own members.

Party platforms

When politics are oriented towards personalities, as is the case in Georgia, party platforms are usually of secondary importance. Nevertheless, this does not mean that they are not produced. A number of parties that emerged from the national movement of the late 1980s were trying to emphasize certain programmatic goals, be it liberal values or attainment of national independence. However, they usually made no attempt to connect these goals to the needs of the public. Instead, it was assumed that the role of parties is to propagate certain values throughout the wider society.

One can also argue that parties produced platforms because this made them look serious in the eyes of the electorate. The very presence of strategic documents rather than their content was what counted. Such strategic documents, sometimes drafted by experts who did not necessarily have stable links with parties, were forgotten soon after elections.

In recent years, Georgian parties and politicians have tended to appeal directly to societal interests more often. Sometimes such appeals are not targeted at any particular audience and represent general slogans rather than concrete proposals. However, attempts to create more consistent policy platforms are increasingly being made.

This does not mean that no debates on important policy issues and respective party strategies are held in the local party organizations. Representatives of parties have noted that in many cases, before the party leadership makes an important policy decision, the proposal is submitted in writing to the precinct and district branches, where it is subject to discussion. The Labour Party's campaign on some citizens' lost bank deposits[119] was mentioned as an example of an internal process of decision-making. Activists of a district branch of the Conservative Party also said that they are often involved in debates around issues related to the party platform.

In many cases, before the party leadership takes an important policy decision, the project is submitted in writing to the precinct and district branches, where it is subject to discussion

Apparently, most of such discussions take place at the parties' precinct or district-level organizations. However, party documents do not define how the results of such discussions are supposed to influence the decision-making at the top.

One more mechanism available to a party's rank-and-file to influence their leadership is direct meetings between the party leaders and members. For instance, in the New Conservative and Labour parties, meetings of this kind are held on a regular basis. During such meetings, policy issues are discussed as well as organizational problems,

Local branches of political parties have greater influence when policies at the local level are being defined. What are involved are not necessarily comprehensive policy platforms towards the development of a given area but policies expressing the party's stance in relation to a particular issue. The local branches of political parties are concerned not only with promoting party initiatives designed at the centre (through collection of signatures, public campaigning, etc); they also come up with specific initiatives important for their district or the larger region. Naturally, these local initiatives fit into the general framework of party policies. For instance, a local branch of an opposition party may attack certain activities of the local branch of the national government.

District branches usually coordinate their local initiatives with the party's central offices and may ask for support in implementing their initiatives. There are cases when local branches do not require the centre's consent for raising certain issues of local significance (this is the case in the Conservative Party).

[119] In the early 1990s, many citizens lost their savings deposited in banks as a result of the hyperinflation of that period. Some political parties, including the Labour party, demanded that the State pay citizens compensation for their lost deposits.

While local branches of political parties are much more autonomous with regards to designing and implementing policies on local issues; most of them are much more directed towards implementing policies that are designed at the national level.

Another important sphere of interaction on policy issues between the national offices and local branches of political parties concerns relations with other parties and creating alliances or coalitions with them. The creation of blocs or mergers with other parties is usually decided on at the national level, and local branches have to follow these decisions. As a rule, such decisions are taken without there having been any prior discussions in the local branches. This may lead to disagreements at the local level. For example, when the United National Movement was being created, based on the merger between the National Movement and the United Democrats, quite a few members of both parties quit the *Mtskheta* District branch because they opposed the merger. Similar problems arised when a bloc between the New Conservatives and the Industrialists was created.

On the other hand, while general decisions about cooperation between individual parties are usually made in the centre, there are cases where the local branches of some parties cooperate independently of their respective national offices. This mainly concerns opposition parties.

Divergence of Opinions among Party members

How much divergence of opinion between members is tolerated or welcomed within a party? How far can discussions go within a party without threatening party unity? Both questions are relevant to assessing the level of internal democracy within a party. This also shows once more whether rank-and-file party members are perceived as creators of party policies or only a vehicle for promoting and implementing them. During the meetings, the majority of the parties emphasized that their party is first and foremost a party united around certain values and an ideology. Therefore, disagreements around current political issues cannot be a reason for leaving the party or being expelled from it. During a number of meetings, ordinary party members referred to specific cases in which the opinions of individual party members regarding certain issues did not coincide with the party line, and this divergence was fully accepted by party organizations.

Some members said that the main point of internal party discussions is to convince individual party members that the general position and assessments of the party are correct. This may imply that different sides in a given debate are not considered equal to begin with. However, some party members also said that internal discussions are not only means for ensuring ideological coherence within the party but tht they have an inherent value as an internal checking mechanism. “Someone on your side has to criticize you in

order for you to learn the truth; we cannot find out the truth through criticism from outside," said a member of the Labour party. Positive significance is also attributed to members' participation in the discussion of local issues, when local party leaders receive suggestions and criticism from party activists.

In sum, every party should seek a balance between a wide divergence of opinions on different issues and the party's internal coherence. However, it is generally desirable to maintain the highest possible level of pluralism. This helps to accommodate differences of opinion and to avoid large groups of party members leaving the party. At the same time, divergence of opinion within the party gives it greater flexibility in responding to the changing environment.

Main findings

- Political party members and activists in Georgia do not consider internal democracy to be among the most acute problems for their parties' development;
- Most Georgian political parties seek to maintain control over the process of admission of members in an effort to ensure their loyalty. They give priority to creating "cadre parties" that consist of dependable activists. The parties look for ways to draw a hard and fast line between these and more passive supporters or "associate members";
- Georgian political parties mainly have rather centralized structures. The higher the position in the party hierarchy, the greater the central leadership's control over the selection of candidates for it;
- Drawing up party lists for the national elections is mainly the prerogative of a party's central office. However, the leadership of the local party branches has a say in selecting candidates for majoritarian elections in the single-mandate districts and they have a fairly prominent or decisive role in selecting candidates for local elections;
- While party statutes define democratic mechanisms for electing the top leadership of political parties, usually the process is not competitive and rank-and-file members of political parties have little, or rather limited, influence on it. There are few precedents of change of political party leaders without party splits or a dramatic decline of the party's role and popularity;
- Rank-and-file members have little involvement in defining party policies at the national level. District branches sometimes put forward initiatives of local significance which may or may not be co-ordinated with the national offices;
- Policy discussions within the parties are accepted but weakly developed. Often their point is to convince rank-and-file members of the correctness of the pre-defined party line rather than to contribute to the formulation of party policies;
- There is a gap between the formal rules within the party, which are by and large democratic, and the actual practice of non-competitive, elite-controlled formation of cliques.

2.6 Women and Politics

What to do?

- Develop intra-party democracy by establishing clear and transparent mechanisms for the involvement of women members in the decision-making process;
- Support women's organizations in parties through educational and exchange programmes;
- Promote gender equality programmes within party organizations;
- Promote public debates on the participation of women in politics.

The November 2003 Rose Revolution changed attitudes to many issues, including those of gender. Before the revolution there was little public debate on the topic. Public officials showed no interest in gender equality, considering it to be a secondary issue that was scarcely topical. If there were any public statements on the subject, they were purely formal and did not lead to any change. Mikheil Saakashvili was the first Georgian president to highlight the issue and state publicly that the government was interested in increasing women's involvement. "We want to have and will have as many women as possible in the government and the political system," Saakashvili said. The President reiterated this statement on various occasions.

Experts who work on gender issues also admit that governmental dialogue with women's organizations on the subject of women's involvement in public life increased after the Rose Revolution. In August 2003, when the non-governmental organizations working on women's issues presented a legal initiative on introducing quotas for women within parties to Parliament, the majority of MPs ignored it. Only 67 MPs out of 235 took part in the voting procedure[120], and the rest were not even present. Today, almost all parties recognize the need to encourage women's involvement in political activities. Leaders of almost all political organizations have expressed a willingness to help to increase women's involvement in party activities. However, while recognizing the importance of this issue in general, none of them has set out a clear vision on the matter.

In reality, the role of female leaders in public and political life has modestly increased recently as the result of a strengthened position and public

[120] Elections/Gender and Media Component, UNDP 2004, p. 8

support for political leadership of the Speaker of Parliament, Ms. Nino Burjanadze, as well as other female politicians, albeit few in numbers.

Of the three main leaders of the Rose Revolution one was a woman. Enjoying a high degree of public approval, Nino Burjanadze managed to fill the niche of a balanced and calm politician who can be a unifying figure. This contrasted with the image of her male colleagues, who were seen as more confrontational figures. She noted that, during demonstrations, it was important "that there was a woman on their side. I was trying to mitigate the situation, I was cautious (...) I believe that the peaceful ending of the revolution was, to a certain extent, my accomplishment."[121]

Another sign of the increased role of women is that the last two years have seen a modest increase in the level of women's representation in the legislative, executive, and judiciary branches in the whole period of Georgia's independence. Before October 2005, women accounted for 17.6 per cent of Cabinet. In 2004, four out the seventeen ministries were headed by women.

The visibility of the issue of women's involvement in public life increased after the Rose Revolution

This ratio fell, however, as women ministers gradually lost their positions, and, at the time of writing this report, there was only one female minister remaining. In the 2004 convocation of Parliament, women's representation increased to 9.4 per cent (22 women MPs out of 235), in comparison to 6-7 per cent throughout the 1990s. The Speaker of Parliament as well as the leader of the parliamentary majority are women, two out of 13 parliamentary committees are chaired by women, and four committees have women deputy chairpersons. Women's representation in the judiciary branch has reached 40 per cent.[122]

Elections	Legislative body	Total number of deputies	Women deputies	Percentage of women
1919	Constituent Assembly	130	4	3
1990	Supreme Council	250	18	7.2
1992	Parliament	222	14	6.3
1995	Parliament	250	16	6.4
1999	Parliament	235	17	7.2
2004	Parliament	235	22	9.4

Table 11. Women's representation in Georgian legislative bodies

[121] Elections/Gender and Media Component, UNDP 2004, p. 20
[122] Elections/Gender and Media Component, UNDP 2004, p. 27

Even though women's representation is increasing, it still falls very far short of the requirements of a democratic state and does not correspond to the standards of a modern and fair society. Experts in gender issues believe that it is unacceptable for a social group which represents 59 per cent of all voters to have a 10 per cent representation in the legislative body. They believe that a society which lays claim to being just is obliged to make each one of its members feel that, by being represented in a decision-making body, their equality with other members of society is ensured and they are protected from any discrimination. Gender equality means "that a woman and a man are enjoying equal conditions and chances in their lives to realize their potential in full, are participating equally in the processes of political, economic, social, and cultural development and are enjoying equally all public benefits, opportunities, and resources."[123] It follows from this that the key to fulfilling all these aims lies in ensuring that women are adequately represented in a decision-making body so that they can protect the interests of the group.

Women's involvement in party activities

As in other areas of public life, women's participation has also shown a slight increase in party activities throughout the recent history of political party development. However, while they are reasonably active at the lower levels of organizational structures, their representation appears insufficient in the decision-making bodies. "Despite the fact that there are no artificial barriers to women's involvement, the lower the level of the party structure, the more harmonious is the gender balance. There are more women in district structures, that is to say, where decision-making is not as crucial for party life, than at the high levels of the hierarchy," according to a member of the Industrialists' Party.

Women's representation at the decision-making levels in political parties is on average 9 per cent. Female party members are rarely involved in the decision-making process and only a handful of them occupy high-ranking party positions. This indicator is quite low, given that the ratio of female to male members in political parties is more or less equal.

While women are quite active at lower levels of organizational structures, their representation appears insufficient in the decision-making bodies of political parties

Interestingly, the Labour Party of Georgia and the Republican Party have radically different indicators on this. In the former, the number of female

[123] Interview with Lela Khomeriki; Elections/Gender and Media Component, UNDP 2004, p. 26.

members exceeds the number of male members. In the latter, the number of female members constitutes only 30 per cent of the total. However, as the party is growing, this indicator is changing in favour of women; as a result, the Republican Party might soon be included in the list of "women-friendly parties."[124]

Just as in society as a whole, where stereotypical gender roles attribute leadership positions in public life to men while women are portrayed as 'caretakers', political parties broadly reflect the same bias. In most organizations, including political parties (save for rare exceptions), women serve in lower or mid-level positions rather then having senior and leadership roles. The majority of female party members are also brought together in women's organizations that exist along with the main party structure; they are often called women's 'clubs' or 'councils'. Women have major functions within the framework of these women's clubs/councils and primary organizations within parties.

Women's organizations exist within the New Conservative Party, Industry Will Save Georgia, and the Labour Party. Such organizations also have branches (local councils) at the regional and district levels. Chairpersons of these councils also take part in bureaus of regional- and district-level organizations and are active in other kinds of party work. Women's clubs/councils within the parties usually act as charitable organizations and mainly target socially vulnerable groups. The Conservative Party is planning to establish a functional organization of the same kind in the near future. Party members think that its possible functions could be developing special outreach measures to directly engage the female electorate and conduct humanitarian activities to benefit families with many children - "care and support to mothers who have many children, and organizing events interesting to these women."[125]

At the district and regional level, women's organizations register mothers with many children and families with disabled people; they study their problems and try to help them as much as party resources allow. For instance, coupons for free meals and medical assistance have often been distributed to the mothers with many children and elderly people over 100, this at the initiative of the New Conservative Party's women's organization. Thanks to their mediation, the party's central office has often provided disabled people's families with financial or in-kind assistance.

Monitoring state-run social security programmes is another responsibility of women's organizations within the party. For example, the women's organization of the Labour Party has started an evaluation programme aimed at finding out how appropriately the state spends moneys allocated for social security.

[124] Reet Laja, Estonian Women's Roundtable, Conference presentation, 31 May, 2005.
[125] Member of the Georgian Conservative Party

Industry Will Save Georgia Women's Club

The Industry Will Save Georgia Women's Club was established in 1999, the same year as the party was founded. The Club has its own structure and is represented at the central and district levels of party organization. The Club is mainly concerned with the problems of the socially vulnerable strata of society. Through district representations the party women study the needs of orphanages, families with many children and young artists, and tries to provide support. The Club considers the low level of women's involvement in the public and above all in the political life of the country a serious problem and tries to promote the active involvement of women in party life through different programmes (mainly supported by international organizations such as the International Republican Institute and UNIFEM). They initiated and conducted educational programmes for women as they believe that women are eager to get involved in public life but lack experience, knowledge and skills. The Club provided a special education and empowerment programme to women who stay home care for their children (the Housewives' Project), which was aimed at increasing the participation of women in public life through involving them in the organization of public cultural activities and educational programmes offered by international organizations.

Other important responsibilities of female party members, which are more directly related to their party organizations, include recruiting supporters for political parties, staffing the precinct electoral commissions[126] and carrying out administrative and office work in party organizations at different levels. In this, they become more active in the run-up to elections. Parties believe that women, like young people, are good campaigners and their work in terms of attracting new members and supporters is effective. At election time, women mostly carry out administrative duties within precinct organizations. As party representatives have argued, women members are particularly strict and tend to pay attention to even minor infringements of the electoral code which are often ignored or overlooked by male members. Correspondingly, their representation in the local election administration is quite high (for instance, women constituted 70 per cent of those involved in electoral administration for the New Conservative Party).

[126] According to changes to the Election Code of Georgia adopted in 2005, non-party citizens fill positions in election committees at central and district levels, while in the polling stations the top three parties which obtained the best results in the previous parliamentary elections are allowed two committee members (Article 36.3 of the Election Code of Georgia).

Only a small number of women's organizations within parties are involved in facilitating women's involvement in political activities

Another reason for parties to staff precinct administrations mainly with female members, as parties declare themselves, is their skills in resolving conflicts. They are excellent conciliators and cope more successfully with confrontations between parties or other conflicts that occur on Election Day. As a member of Parliament from the New Conservative Party said, women "stabilize tensions between the parties."

Only a small number of women's organizations in parties are involved in facilitating women's involvement in political activities. Important educational and leadership training projects targeted at women leaders and party activists are mainly organized by international organizations. According to a female member of the New Conservative Party, "We are actively involved in the Political Academy programme offered by the International Republican Institute, we participated in the trainings that were held by UNIFEM and which concerned women's role in conflict resolution, we took part in the National Democratic Institute's project called Leader Women, and so on." The only note of discontent that was sounded regarding the international organizations was the fact that the number of participants in these projects was restricted and only a few women had a chance of being involved in them. It was also often stated that only women are involved in these projects while men are also in need of gender education.

Different attitudes to women's' participation in politics

As has been mentioned, public interest in gender equality issues has increased to a certain extent since the Rose Revolution. Apart from the President's statements already quoted regarding the increase of women's involvement in government bodies, there has been an increase in the number of public discussions on gender issues on the most popular television programmes. Political parties have intensified their cooperation with Georgian as well as international non-governmental organizations on this topic. However, although these actions have brought about positive changes, statistical data show that active work in this direction is still insufficient.

Cultural and psychological stereotypes are the main factors determining the relatively low level of women's involvement in politics

Parties admit that the gender balance in the decision-making bodies is skewed. However, the lack of equal representation of male and female members is not currently understood as a significant problem by political parties

themselves. Parties believe that in Georgia, gender equality standards do not correspond to Western standards,[127] but they hope to improve the situation in the future. Parties explain the prevailing situation by alluding to broad societal factors that are beyond their control. In particular, they believe that there are simply not enough active women and that this is caused by social hardships and the pre-eminence of traditional values. Women turned out to be particularly vulnerable to the depressed economic conditions that followed the economic break-down of the early 1990s. As many men lost their jobs, a large number of women were forced to become the main bread-winners of their families mainly through self-employment in small business and entrepreneurial sector. This did not leave them enough time or energy to be involved in political activities.

The second key factor which, in the parties' opinion, hampers women's involvement in political activity is traditional attitudes towards gender roles in society: a woman is considered successful if she has a good family life and excels at domestic activities.

Many successful female politicians avoid talking about women's problems

Female party members themselves admit that cultural and psychological stereotypes are the major factors determining the relatively low level of women's involvement in politics. They believe that there are no formal or artificial barriers to the involvement of women in the decision-making bodies in any party. Apart from the perceived passivity of the female members of parties, they refer to a lack of interest in this issue in society in general. "We cannot see a clear public demand here. As long as the Georgian voters do not express a liking for the parties that are harmonious in terms of gender and do not say that they do not like parties resembling men-only clubs, it is hard to expect the parties to put this issue on the agenda on their own."[128]

Interestingly, the majority of successful female politicians avoid talking about women's problems, hinting that these either do not exist or are not very typical. "I think that women are already enjoying privileged treatment in Georgia and if a woman is a housewife, this does not at all mean that she is oppressed. I cannot say which is better, family or politics; there is no better or worse in this regard," Pikria Chikhradze[129] believes. Nino Burjanadze has remarked on gender equality, "I do not think that this issue is acute in Georgia, although it certainly does exist." Female leaders hardly talk about male politicians' conduct and do not consider this to be a possible barrier to the

[127] Member of the Labour Party of Georgia.
[128] Lela Khomeriki, Women's Coalition. Presentation at first multiparty conference, May 2005.
[129] Member of Parliament, New Conservative Party

increase of women's involvement. Male members of parties agree with them on this and believe that what matters is that a woman has the right and opportunity to make a choice: "Working in a mine is man's work but I am sure that women have the right and opportunity to work in a mine; the important thing is that this should be their choice."[130]

Ways to increase women's involvement in political life

The country's legislation provides for general principles of gender equality, but it does not introduce any special measures to facilitate it. The Georgian Constitution defines the principles on which the entire legislative system is based and it rules out discrimination of citizens on any grounds, including gender. Article 14 of the Constitution says that "everyone is free by birth and is equal before law regardless of race, colour, language, sex, religion, political and other opinions." Added to this is the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women signed in 1994. Experts in gender issues admit that the Georgian legislation is not discriminatory but note that there are no special laws that would facilitate the achievement of gender equality. In 1995, Georgia became one of the countries which undertook the obligation to elaborate a national action plan to improve women's conditions.

All parties agree that introducing quotas for increasing the role of women in politics is not the way to make progress

The political parties have not developed any specific ideas about how to increase the involvement of women either. All of them admit that the indicators of the increase of female leaders' representation in the political arena are lower than they would wish, but, so far, they cannot see any effective methods of effecting change in this regard. One issue on which they all agree is that introducing quotas is not the way to make progress. Parties believe that this is an artificial mechanism which will not have a positive effect: quotas might be equated with fairness in theory but this is not the way it happens in real life. Both female and male members of parties share this view. Parties, as well as society in general, believe that quotas for women's representation in internal party structures and state bodies constitute an imposition which violates the principle of equality between men and women. Moreover, quotas are believed to be insulting to women themselves. Career advancement in the political arena should be on the basis of merit, in other words, based on knowledge, experience, and professionalism. Interference in this process and the introduction of artificial mechanisms is seen as a possible cause for the emergence of cadres that lack professionalism.

[130] Member of the Republican Party.

There are a few divergent opinions, however. While the Industrialists do not support blind quotas either, the chairperson of its women's club believes that the share of educated, professional women who have leadership skills is quite large in society and finding them should not just be a matter of good will, but a direct obligation for parties.

Factors conducive to an increase in women's participation in politics:

- Increase of public interest in gender equality;
- Government leaders' support for the increase of women's participation in politics;
- Parties' admission of the lack of gender balance in decision-making bodies and their willingness to improve the situation;
- Intensification of public discussions on gender issues.

Factors hampering an increase in women's participation in politics:

- Persistence of traditional attitudes which oblige a woman to undertake all domestic work;
- Prevalence of a view that gender quotas violate gender equality;
- Lack of awareness in society of the importance of gender equality and ways to achieve it;
- Existing economic conditions that lead to many women being self-employed and working to provide for their families;
- The fact that successful women politicians do not emphasize gender issues.

Some experts on gender issues explain the negative attitude toward the quotas that prevails in society by citing the negative collective memory of the Soviet era. "Women's involvement in the political arena was determined in advance through election quotas; women's participation in political life was balanced through quantitative indicators although, in terms of quality, women's participation in the ruling structures was mostly fictitious."[131] Therefore, although some developed Western democracies practice quotas in order to increase women's participation in political and public life, this idea is quite unpopular in Georgia.

Gender experts also criticize the second argument named by the parties against quotas: the probability of diminished professionalism. "In the case of the introduction of quotas, parties will be compelled to find qualified professional women to fill their ranks. It is their main function as political organi-

[131] Elections/Gender and Media Component, UNDP 2004, p. 4.

zations as they have a direct obligation to recruit qualified cadres from society."[132]

Creating more sophisticated mechanisms for parties to attract new members, increasing the participation of ordinary party members and improving their political awareness may be considered instruments for facilitating women's participation in party activities, which will be perceived as neither artificial nor imposed. The Conservative Party has created a precedent for effectively introducing women into political life. It achieved better balance in terms of the proportion of men and women appointed to various positions within the party. There is one woman among the three elected members of the audit commission, and the party's legal service is headed by a woman. In addition, the heads of four of the seven Tbilisi district branches are women. Presumably, the Conservatives achieved this because their principles of internal organization are different from those of other parties. In particular, this may correlate with general higher levels of internal democracy.

Main findings

- Women's involvement in political life has been on the increase in recent years; their representation in the legislative and executive branch is growing;
- Georgian legislation guarantees gender equality in the country; no legal act restricts women's involvement in any sphere. However, there are no legislative acts that provide any measures specifically designed to increase women's public participation;
- The proportion of male and female members of political parties is almost equal. The same cannot be said about their roles, however. Female members are less well represented in party leaderships, but are usually active at the lower levels of the organizational structure. In particular, they are involved in campaigning, and they participate in elections as precinct election administration members;
- Women's clubs and organizations are functioning in some parties; they are occupied mainly with the problems of the socially vulnerable strata of society;
- There is a consensus among the parties that the involvement of women in decision-making bodies is quite low. However, there is agreement that no special measures, such as quotas, should be introduced in order to increase their representation in party leaderships.

[132] Lela Khomeriki, Women's Coalition: presentation at May 20054 Conference.

2.7 Parties, Elections and Campaigning

What to do?

- Develop comprehensive public relations strategies;
- Conduct election campaigns targeted more at specific groups;
- Improve the awareness of local party activists in the field of campaign management;
- Establish closer cooperation with non-governmental organizations and trade unions.

Changed electorate, new campaign strategies

Georgian political parties and the Georgian public are undergoing rapid and radical changes. The Georgian political party system is far from settled, and the same can be said of Georgian society. All six parties involved in this report recognize that society is in the middle of a process of transformation that is also changing and to a certain extent modernizing its political culture. The parties realize that a decade ago it was comparatively easy to win popular support by carrying out an intensive election campaign. Accordingly, they were active mainly in the immediate pre-election periods. Scarcity of resources also accounted for this: the political parties saved what they had to run short but intensive election campaigns.

Parties now believe that, in recent years, the situation has changed considerably. There is a distinct trend among voters towards making more rational electoral choices. They do not fall easily for simple and attractive pre-election promises. Dealing with such a public requires increasingly refined methods.

As one of the members of the Republican Party stresses, Georgian voters today are different from what they were 15 years ago, and in 15 years' time, they will be different from what they are today. A member of the United National Movement noted that, in contrast to the past, it is no longer possible today to deceive or bribe the electorate. This suggests that parties need to fine-tune their political technologies and make their electoral programmes more elaborate, realistic and pragmatic. Moreover, every political organization feels compelled to substantially improve forms and mechanisms of its relations with the public. Public relations campaigns should be long-term and cannot be restricted to the immediate pre-election period. For a United National Movement representative, "it is always a pre-election period."

Parties recognize the need to establish a strong rapport with the public well before election time. First of all, they have to set up regular channels of communications and information exchange. While the parties still complain of the lack of financial resources, they do their best to regularly remind the public of their existence by all the means at their disposal. As the new environment is more demanding on the parties' resources, this also makes them more vulnerable.

Although parties differ in their public relations strategies, in almost all cases, these strategies are defined in a centralized manner. The party's central governing bodies take the decisions as to how to maintain relations with potential voters, and these are among the most important decisions they make. On the other hand, local branches (see more on this in the chapter on *Human and Financial Resources* below) can amend or change the mechanisms of implementing policy in accordance with specific local conditions.

There is a distinct trend among voters towards making more rational electoral choices. Dealing with such public requires increasingly refined methods

The campaign formulated by the party leaders is implemented at two levels, the central and the local. The forms and mechanisms of public relations at these two levels are radically different. At the national level, the party leaders themselves are mainly involved in public relations, and they do this for the most part via the media. At the local level, members of party organizations establish direct personal contact with the voters. This does not mean that party leaders do not try to establish direct contacts with citizens as well by organizing public events, but even in a relatively small country like Georgia, they cannot afford to visit many places regularly. Therefore, such events usually happen in the immediate pre-election period.

The leading role of the media

All parties have professional PR groups, or press services, which are part of a central governing structure. They have two main responsibilities: on the one hand, they monitor electronic and print media and prepare daily analytical reports; on the other hand, they organize the party leaders' news conferences, draw up press releases and disseminate them via news agencies. Because the press service of the central office is the only professional body which maintains close regular relations with the media, they provide services to the territorial organizations as well, if the need arises. In almost all parties, staffers of the press service are also party activists. The Conservative

Party of Georgia is the exception, as it intends to create a professional non-partisan press service.[133]

From the OSCE/ODIHR report on partial repeat Parliamentary elections in Georgia (March 2004):

"Despite the general freedom enjoyed by the media, during the pre-election period media freedom became the object of public discussion and political confrontation, while serious restrictions of journalists' activities in Adjara raised concerns.

The simultaneous cancellations of talk shows on the most popular private TV stations in early February raised concern among opposition parties about undue government interference in the editorial policies of independent media. However, none of the media in question confirmed allegations about direct or indirect pressure, claiming instead that the programmes were being revised in view of the pre-election campaign."

Party leaders not only formulate public relations strategies, but they are also the main spokespersons through the media. The main means of reporting to the public and disseminating party statements is through national electronic media. All the parties attach great importance to the debates and discussions, which are organized by the central TV companies both during election campaigns and periods between elections. In Georgia, it is rare for debates to be held among independent experts; instead, high-ranking representatives of the government and the opposition are usually involved in direct and very heated disputes. This format is especially appreciated by the opposition parties as it allows them to confront the government on an equal footing.

Initiating or participating in events that receive coverage in the news programmes is another important resource for the public relations of political parties. In this, the incumbent party has a natural advantage as its efforts, which are also part of fulfilling the governmental functions, at the same time serve as a tool to attract voter support once they are covered by the media. The opposition often resents it as a form of "state and administrative resources" abuse by the government party. However, news programmes also invite party leaders to make brief comments on main political issues, and leading TV channels usually try to balance comments made by the government and opposition representatives.

[133] The Conservative Party of Georgia has recently extended substantially its professional staffing at the Public Relations office.

TV Channels	October 2003	February 2006
Rustavi 2	1 daily talk show	1 weekly talk show
Imedi	1 daily talk show 1 weekly talk show	2 weekly talk shows
Channel 1/ Public TV	1 daily talk show 1 weekly talk show	None
Mze	1 daily talk show	None
Channel 9	1 daily talk show	Channel closed
Iberia TV	1 daily talk show	Channel closed
Kavkasia	1 daily talk show	1 daily talk show
202	None	1 daily talk show 1 weekly talk show

Table 12. Reduced number of TV talk shows. "Daily talk show" applies to working days. Usually talk shows start late at night, at 10 or 11 p.m. Only *Rustavi 2*, *Imedi* and *Channel 1* cover most of the territory of the country; others broadcast mainly to Tbilisi. Non-political talk shows are not taken into account.

Opposition parties also have ample opportunities to appear on television as they organize news conferences to protest against specific government actions, initiate or take part in protest rallies, and so forth. For instance, it is widely believed that electoral support for the United National Movement in the run-up to the November 2003 elections was boosted by coverage of their trips to Bolnisi, Batumi and Zugdidi, where local authorities or groups of thugs, allegedly encouraged by the incumbent authorities, physically disrupted their rallies, which was widely covered by the national media.

All parties, whether in government or in opposition, are dissatisfied with the media coverage of political issues, party activities, and political life in Georgia. The opposition parties complain that, under alleged pressure from the government, the number of live debates on national TV channels has been reduced and that they therefore have fewer opportunities to present their views to the audience directly. The incumbent party claims that in none of the developed democracies do top party leaders engage in direct political debates with the opposition as often as in Georgia. In addition, there are two widespread allegations towards the media shared by various parties: that coverage and assessments of political events by the media are unbalanced and tendentious, that is, favourable to their opponents (the opposition alleges hidden pressure or censorship, while the government refers to journalists' natural anti-government bias), and that the media is oriented towards "scandals" rather than substance.

The internet does not play any significant role in party campaigning

At the same time, the national electronic media provides almost no coverage of the activities of local party organizations. Brief news reports on protest actions in one region or another constitute the only exceptions. Otherwise, the national media presents political parties through a handful of their leaders or, as the saying goes, "recognizable faces".

Only the regional media[134] takes an interest in the activities of the regional branches of the parties. However, if the local party branches take the initiative, the interest of the local media is all but guaranteed. Since the latter is chronically short of fresh information, it is ready to cover any events that take place in their regions.

Creative PR campaigns

It should be remembered that access to electricity is much lower in the regions than in the capital, and some villages can be without electricity for months if not years. Therefore, disseminating information via mass media is most effective in the capital and a few major administrative centres. Dissemination of printed media is hampered by the low income of the population; consequently, circulation of even the most popular newspapers is rather limited. This calls for the use of other methods. For instance, the **Labour Party** found an original method of familiarizing the population of the regions with the party activities and programme: the party leader recorded his speeches on an audio tape and disseminated copies in different villages.

The use of the internet is less developed, for the obvious reason that only a small part of the Georgian population has access to it. At present, only a few parties manage to regularly update information on their web pages[135]. However, the internet is still increasingly important inr influencing elite opinion, especially that of the young people. Some political leaders have joined popular chat-rooms with young and politically active Georgians and defended their positions there.

The parties manage to inform the public on their activities by using their publications. None of them has a newspaper, but during the campaign, every party prints and disseminates reports on work accomplished and future projects.

[134] There are is least one TV channel in every region of Georgia that is broadcast locally.
[135] The New Conservative Party: <http://www.ncp.ge> and Conservative Party of Georgia: <http://www.conservators.ge>.

Direct communication with voters

The most effective method of familiarizing people with party policies and activities, especially outside the capital, is by having direct contact with the people. Parties do their best – as much as their resources allow – to maintain permanent offices for their district and regional organizations and to have party activists present so they are always accessible to the people. The party charter, programme and other documents are kept at all offices, so that relevant information can be readily provided to anyone who shows interest. The distinguishing feature of relations between the parties' territorial branches and the public is that they are less formal. Members of primary organizations often meet people, learn about their problems and tell them what the party's positions on different issues are. These meetings are usually ad hoc, informal and often rather ingenious. "We discuss party decisions and positions among ourselves but do it aloud, for the bystanders to overhear, in the metro, bus, minivan, or other forms of public transport. Accordingly, by simply chatting to one another, we carry out a public relations campaign."[136]

The parties consider direct contact with voters to be the most effective means of familiarizing people with party policies and activities

On the other hand, the parties have not been successful so far in developing mechanisms through which the public can inform them about their problems and interests. From this point of view, they are mainly dependent on how much initiative members of the public take.

Visits by citizens themselves to the party offices are common. For the most part, they ask political organizations to resolve any legal problems they may have with government agencies or to help them receive adequate public benefits and services. Because opposition parties do not control the mechanisms for resolving such problems, local party offices often give informal advice as to how to approach the issue. If the suggestion does not work, more formal procedures are initiated. The citizen files a request with the party and asks the party to serve as a mediator in dealing with the authorities. The parties often file court suits based on citizens' requests.

Contacts with other organizations

The parties, mostly those in opposition, try to co-operate closely with non-governmental human rights organizations both in the centre and in the regions. These contacts take the form of regular exchanges of information and statements of common positions on different issues. Citizens often approach both for advice on issues related to dealing with the authorities. At times, the

[136] Member of the Labour Party of Georgia.

central offices of the parties also cooperate with analytical non-governmental organizations and utilize the expertise which is concentrated in these organizations. However, this co-operation is rather sporadic. Moreover, most leading NGOs usually avoid direct association with any particular political party and prefer to maintain a non-political stance. The number of NGOs that are ready to be seen as partners of specific political organizations is small.

The parties' relations with trade unions are even less regular and institutionalized. Many parties have experience of contacts with organizations that express the interests of a specific social group, such as the unions of seamen, farmers, schoolteachers or doctors, although this is less regular. Political parties take an interest in these types of organizations mainly when they raise a specific problem related to their professional activities and cause a major political stir. Relations end, however, as soon as the problem is resolved or is no longer pressing. The parties say that such organizations are still at an early stage of development in Georgia; as a result, they are not institutionalized enough, and it is impossible to cooperate with them as stable organizations.

Methods and resources of election campaigns

People with experience of participation in past election campaigns are a great asset for political parties, even though they have usually not been trained

There are some specific tools used by Georgian political parties during their election campaigns.

Managing electoral campaigns and developing strategies. Parties differ on how advanced they are in election campaign management. Most representatives of local party organizations mention that in the run-up to the elections, they draft a clearly formulated strategic plan. These plans differ considerably in the degree of elaboration and detail. The major parameters of the election campaign strategy, such as the content of the party message and the ways to deliver it to the voters, are designed by the national offices of the party. However, local organizations can modify both the content of the message and its presentation according to the character of their region.

In the run-up to elections, the network of party offices is usually greatly expanded. Parties try their best to open their offices in all electoral districts and precincts, though very few parties succeed in this. Apart from general strategies designed in the parties' main offices, what matters most is the presence of people with experience of participation in past election campaigns. Research shows that, in most parties, the planning and management

of election campaigns at the local level are conducted by groups of activists with some electoral experience. Some of them have taken part in more than one election and have learned a great deal from this experience. This knowledge, however, is usually purely empirical, since they have had barely any training in the technologies and procedures of electoral campaigns.

Over time, the management of election campaigns has become increasingly institutionalized. In parties that have greater resources, such as the New Conservative Party, electoral campaign management follows a more organized pattern. It is led by a party member who is appointed to a salaried position; in some cases, during the election campaigns parties also attract resources from the outside, such as consultants or research organizations.

Using research. Before defining the content of the campaign strategy, the parties study both the given electoral district and their rivals. Party organizations have experience in conducting public opinion polls locally and intend to use this method in future elections too. For example, before reaching the decision to nominate Giorgi Masalkin as their candidate in the parliamentary by-elections in Batumi in the autumn of 2005, the Republican Party conducted an opinion poll to determine his approval rating (subsequently the party decided for tactical reasons not to nominate any candidates in these by-elections). The Kutaisi organization of the New Conservative Party also conducts opinion polls periodically, especially before they launch an election campaign. For this, the party may hire personnel or use party activists. When conducting such research, the parties take an interest not only in specific candidates' approval ratings, but also in popular attitudes towards, and concerns about, the processes that are underway in the country. Since the local organizations of political parties may lack financial resources and expertise, the parties' central offices usually sponsor such research. On some occasions, international organizations, in particular the IRI, have conducted research specifically for the parties.

In recent years, several local and foreign consultancy firms have started to offer parties their services not only for conducting public opinion polls, but also for planning their election campaigns, studying their own and the rivals' strengths and weaknesses, and helping to fine-tune the content of their campaigns. However, parties are not always satisfied with the results of such co-operation.

One of the methods popular among Georgian political parties is conducting research in a given precinct in order to compile their own lists of eligible voters and establish the number and identity of party supporters within a given precinct. The parties say that one of the main reasons for doing this is to combat electoral fraud, as faulty voter registers have been an important instrument of fraud in past elections. It is also useful to know who the party supporters are.

Formulating campaign messages. Georgian political parties realize how important it is to clearly formulate the main message or slogan of the campaign. There have been numerous examples in recent election campaigns that were built around a specific general message, such as the National Movement's campaign, in which the idea of replacing President Shevardnadze's regime was central ("Georgia without Shevardnadze"), or the Industrialists' campaign in 1999, which centred on supporting local manufacturing (their slogan, "Industry Will Save Georgia" also became the name of the party).

Some political parties attach no less importance to determining more specific issues around which the election campaign should revolve. Examples of such issues are the National Movement's campaign for the repayment of pensions; the Labour Party's successful court campaign against the AES Telasi energy distribution company for a reduction in electricity tariffs; the Conservative Party of Georgia's campaign for unfreezing assets nationalized by the Soviets and exemption of small businesses from taxes for two years, etc. Representatives of the parties' local organizations often indicate that these ideas and issues are successful in attracting specific social groups (pensioners, the socially disadvantaged, small business owners, etc.). The parties often gain recognition and a significant number of supporters through these campaigns.

Not all parties, however, want their identity to be linked to such relatively narrow issues. For example, the Industrialists say that their party intentionally avoids making specific promises and keeps to the central message – promoting development of the country's manufacturing sector.

Target groups. Apart from using "general" campaigning methods, Georgian political parties increasingly address their campaigning efforts towards individual target groups. They think that this more nuanced approach may bring their parties significant successes. As already noted, slogans and the scope of issues are often devised with specific social groups in mind (such as pensioners, small shop owners, schoolteachers, etc).

Political parties increasingly address their campaigning efforts towards individual target groups

At the same time, in the opinion of the parties' representatives during the assessment, they also have their own core "natural" electorate. It is composed of voters who support the party because its programme coincides with their specific interests as a social group. For example, representatives of the Labour Party deem the socially disadvantaged strata to be their supporters, whereas the Industrialists rely on the support of economically independent individuals with entrepreneurial skills.

Appeal to the majority mindset. While focusing on specific social groups, parties are also eager to demonstrate that they are part of the mainstream, that is that their values and principles are close to those of the majority of Georgia's population. However, they have different views as to what constitutes that mainstream. As one of the representatives of the Labour Party remarked, Georgians are leftists due to their economic situation and because of their mindset. By contrast, in the opinion of representatives of the New Conservative Party and Industry Will Save Georgia, Georgians' cultural values make them rather inclined to right-wing ideas and that is why all attempts to promote leftist ideologies in Georgia have been unsuccessful. Members of the Conservative Party of Georgia rely on the Georgians' concern about the negative effects of globalization on traditional culture, which they think is characteristic of most Georgians.

Looking for key supporters: informal leaders and *'recognizable faces'*. One of the chief methods of attracting voters used by the Georgian parties, especially outside urban centres, is to focus on informal leaders, or people respected in a given village, district or neighbourhood. Support from these individuals might secure the support of the majority of local voters.

In small localities, parties seek the support of informal leaders

However, there are different types of informal leaders, and party activists say they are not indifferent to the kind of respected individuals they deal with. What they have in mind is a trade-off between those who command respect and individuals who have greater influence. The parties say it is preferable for them to attract individuals who have earned their good reputations on account of their education and knowledge and what they have done for the good of the community. However, it is not always these kinds of individuals who wield the greatest social control; in some cases, these are powerful individuals on whom a significant number of people depend financially. For example, seamen in Batumi are such persons; each of them often supports two or three families and may decisively influence the choices people make on Election Day.

One the most controversial issues is related to the relations between the political parties and criminal networks. In some communities, criminal bosses exert a considerable level of social control; however, relying on their influence might ultimately prove damaging to a party's credibility. Still, party members did not deny that their parties do on occasion use the influence of this kind of individual in trying to attract votes.

Representatives of some opposition parties were sceptical about relying on the support of informal community leaders. As they say, some people who enjoy a high standing in the local community are, at the same time, civil

servants or are otherwise already linked to the powers that be. Therefore, even if opposition parties are successful in working with the informal community leaders, these leaders eventually switch their allegiances owing to pressure from the local authorities.

Another way to capitalize on the informal authority of certain individuals for electoral purposes is to include a celebrity or "recognizable face" in the party list. The parties often persuade popular performers or sportsmen to run for elections in their party lists or in single-mandate districts. They are often included in the top ten of the party lists. Parties hope that the name recognition and popularity of these well-known figures will extend to their parties. But some parties who have used this method in the past have been disappointed with the results.

Popular performers and sportsmen may bring votes but are unreliable afterwards

"We were oriented towards attracting recognizable faces to the party, who were not necessarily politicians; we simply needed their name recognition. It turned out that the method did not work. It might yield some results during the elections, but it hinders our work within the elected body itself."[137] The implication is that, once popular figures belong to an elected body, they are found to be both unqualified and unreliable. Moreover, such a practice is considered unfair and lowers motivation among the real activists in the party: the latter may think that the party does not properly appreciate their work, as popular personalities who have done nothing for the party are included in party lists instead of them.

Using the personal contacts of party members. One of the most effective methods of election campaigning used by Georgian political parties is working with networks of personal trust. A member of the Conservative Party said that "in the elections, he who has most friends and relatives always wins." The United National Movement representatives also said that, in their work, they relied heavily on using personal contacts. One of its local officials said that party activists try to attract individuals among their circle of friends and relatives who had hitherto been completely indifferent to politics and that this strategy has proved particularly effective. The parties also said that their efforts to attract support among politically indifferent voters through personal networks of trust tend to strengthen over time.

Meetings with voters. Organizing public meetings in a given locality is one of the most popular methods of election campaigning used by the Georgian political parties. These meetings usually take place when the party leader or

[137] A member of the New Conservative Party.

one of the top party activists visits the precinct or village. Information about the upcoming meeting is spread by party members within the community.

One of the most effective methods of election campaigning in Georgia is using networks of personal trust

Parties believe that meeting in person is much more effective for boosting party support in a given community than using more anonymous methods such as distributing party posters or leaflets. However, the parties' abilities to use such methods are restricted for understandable reasons: most popular leaders cannot visit all the communities during the period of election campaigns.

TV campaigns. The central importance of the media has been discussed above. In the run-up to elections, TV commercials are added to the parties' usual methods of using the media. It is the business of the parties' central offices to produce such commercials and put them on the national TV channels. This, however, is a rather expensive undertaking and only the most affluent parties can afford to run long TV ad campaigns. Though in the run-up to elections political parties receive some free TV time that they can use for TV ads or otherwise, this is not considered sufficient. Running TV ads therefore takes up a considerable part of the party election budget.

Canvassing. The parties employ canvassing as a vehicle for influencing the voters. As party representatives said, the IRI has played an important role in helping political parties to develop campaign methods. During canvassing (as well as at meetings with voters), the party activists distribute pamphlets and newspapers which are especially published for campaigning purposes.

In preparation for elections political parties think not only about how to attract voter support but also about how to fight unfair electoral practices

Street advertising. As happens in elections in every country, in the run-up to each election Georgia is full of campaign posters and billboards. They usually display the party name, the picture of its leader (rarely – several leaders), the main slogan and the number of the party in election bulletins. In this way main items that define the party identity get imprinted in voters' minds.

Most parties start such campaigns a few weeks before the elections, as they believe doing this earlier would be less effective, and only very affluent parties can run such lengthy campaigns. Parties usually have groups of young people designated for this purpose, who in some cases receive a small remuneration for their work. In these very intense few weeks of election

campaigning, campaign posters become important tugs-of-war between political parties. Posters are often torn off by representatives of rival parties or covered by the opponent's election propaganda. Sometimes such rivalry leads to brawls between party activists, usually at night when they do their work.

Some party activists expressed scepticism about the effectiveness of electoral posters precisely because they are often destroyed by rivals. However, the party leaders presumably do not share their opinion as political organizations devote considerable efforts and resources to street advertising.

Allegations of unfair electoral practices. One of the main problems related to electoral politics in Georgia is the participants' lack of trust in the fairness of the electoral process. In a number of Georgian elections before the Rose Revolution, independent observers, whether international or Georgian, noted many substantial irregularities in the electoral competition, which may include direct fraud on Election Day or in the process of tabulating the results, flawed voter registers, inappropriate pressure on the voters (by intimidation or bribery), etc. This tendency peaked in the November 2003 parliamentary elections, and was the immediate reason for the mass protests that led to a change of government. Elections held during 2004 and 2005 were greatly improved in comparison, but there are still significant shortcomings. Most importantly, election participants do not express confidence that the next elections will be fair. The opposition parties believe that the government will use dishonest means in order to rig the results in favour of the incumbent party, but the latter also thinks the opposition will resort to fraud if it gets a free hand (see on this also *The Political Party System* chapter above).

Therefore, in preparation for elections, political parties think not only about how to attract voter support but also about how to combat the unfair electoral practices that they expect to be used by their opponents or, presumably, how to use such methods to their own party's advantage (naturally, no party would speak about this openly). In fact, accusing rivals of violations and unfair practices may be part of campaigning in its own right. Public statements, usually issued by leaders of political parties, in which they charge political rivals with specific violations or deny such accusations made by their opponents have become part and parcel of election campaigning in Georgia.

Campaign resources. What kinds of resources are available to the parties when they carry out election campaigns? Notably, parties consider human resources to be the most important. Many party activists agree that the most important resource for the party is the personality of the leader, in some cases a group of leaders. This means leaders at both the national and the local level. There are several specific qualities that leaders should have: name

recognition, financial resources that they either possess or can attract, links with influential groups and organizations, etc.

Parties consider human resources to be extremely important. This means first of all the personality of the leader, the leaders of local organizations and the networks of dedicated local activists

However, different parties may have different views on which qualities in a leader are most important. For instance, the New Conservatives said that name recognition was not as important as they initially had thought and the candidates who were less well-known before the elections also achieved success.

When it comes to local leaders that run in single-mandate districts, it is crucial to be a native of that district. A local candidate always commands more trust than an "outsider" because voters tend to think that he or she knows the district's problems better and will accordingly be more sympathetic towards local interests. Therefore, displaying an emotional attachment to a given district is crucial for the candidate's success. It is important to be a "real native of Kutaisi" or a "true citizen of Telavi".

A team of committed and able individuals who will dedicate their time and energy is also crucial in the pre-election period. These are the individuals who organize campaign meetings and take part in them, get involved in canvassing, putting up posters, and so on. These teams are created and managed by local organizations. Relying on local party organizations when carrying out election campaigns makes it possible to accumulate and maintain activist networks, experience and expertise in those organizations.

Naturally, finances constitute a no less important resource. In this, local party organizations fully depend on their central offices. This issue is discussed at greater length in the chapter on human and financial resources.

Opposition parties routinely accuse the government party of using the so-called "administrative resources" for carrying out their election campaigns. These accusations were made as regularly under the previous government as they are made today. What is meant here is that staff, premises, finances and influence of government institutions are used to benefit the pro-government candidate.

Main findings

- The parties recognize that during the last fifteen years, the Georgian public has also become more sophisticated and demands more from political parties. Therefore, they need more substantive messages and more advanced methods to achieve success;
- Parties think that they need to make their public relations campaign work continuously rather than having it focused on the few pre-election weeks; base it on an overall strategy and on more careful research of societal needs; establish closer contacts with professional research and consultancy organizations, NGOs and trade unions. Such changes, however, put a strain on the limited resources of political parties;
- In general, Georgian political parties conduct rather blanket-type campaigns appealing to the general public rather than to specific interest groups. Of late, however, parties are increasingly trying to combine this approach with focusing on particular constituencies through highlighting specific issues relevant to the latter;
- All parties doubt the fairness of the electoral process. Efforts to prevent fraud and accusations of unfair practices by their opponents have become part and parcel of the parties' election campaign strategies and rhetoric;
- The personalities of party leaders rather than brand names are decisive for the image and electoral chances of political parties. Therefore, the personal participation of party leaders is especially important for the public relations work;
- Having a well-organized and committed network of campaign organizers and activists, preferably with an experience of past elections, is considered the key to the success of grass-roots campaigning work throughout the country;
- At the local level, the most important methods are working through the party activists' personal networks of trust (friends, relatives, etc), as well as securing the support of informal community leaders who are in a position to "deliver" the votes of their communities.

2.8 International Support for Political Parties

What to do?

- Enter a long-term commitment and help to create the stable environment necessary for the institutional development of political parties;
- Connect the consensus among political parties on foreign policy issues and the wide-spread European orientation to working practically on these issues;
- Facilitate inter-party cooperation and support multiparty dialogue;
- Support strategic capacity-building activities;
- Provide parties with the tools and knowledge to carry out regular public opinion surveys and internal party research;
- Increase parties' capacity for international networking;
- Create a common database of different projects aimed at developing the political party system.

General picture

The collapse of Communist rule in the early 1990's created a demand for democratic institutions and, in particular, political parties, as democracy was associated in the public mind with the multiparty system as contrasted with the single-party Soviet state. However, there was no experience with democratic institutions and little adequate knowledge about them. This created a gap between the relatively high social expectations of a democratic system and the available human capital necessary to build and sustain democratic institutions. International support and expertise appeared to be one of the principal ways to fill this gap and help Georgia develop democratic institutions, including political parties.

International democracy-assistance programmes became active in Georgia from 1992 on, and such assistance has steadily increased since then. In the period from 1994 to 1996, a number of international donor organizations (such as USAID, the Eurasia Foundation, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, the Open Society - Georgia Foundation, which is part of a network funded by an American philanthropist George Soros)opened their offices in Georgia, thus making support for democratic institution-building more systematic and structured. Even though the priorities of assistance coming from the

Western countries have shifted in accordance with the events unfolding in the country and other political factors, it is clear that the international community has been committed to providing large-scale assistance to Georgia. The United States is the main donor country. Its government has allocated more than $1 billion from its budget for different humanitarian, development and democracy-assistance programmes in Georgia since 1992[138]. In recent years, annual assistance has exceeded $100 million, of which about $20 million are spent on the implementation of democracy-related programmes.[139]

The EU is another major donor. From 1992 to 2003, it supported Georgia through a range of programmes. The main activities have involved more traditional development assistance: ECHO humanitarian assistance (€92 million 1992-2002); the Food Security Programme (€59 million 1992-2002) and the Tacis National Programme (€84 million 1992-2002). Total EU assistance has amounted to €370m (not including assistance from the Tacis Regional Programme or from member states). From 2000 to 2003, the budget of the Tacis Programme reached €29 million, focusing on support for institutional, legal and administrative reform, as well as on support in addressing the social consequences of transition[140]. In September 2003, the EU adopted a new Country Strategy Paper (CSP) for Georgia and defined thematic priorities for assistance in 2004-2006, which includes the rule of law, good governance, human rights and democratic institutions. It is also important to note that in the summer of 2004, the European Commission decided to make available some funds under its Rapid Reaction Mechanism (RRM) for measures to reinforce the rule of law and democratic processes in Georgia.[141] After Georgia was included in the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2004, there was increased cooperation between the EU and Georgia.

Only a small fraction of international democracy-assistance programmes have targeted political parties so far

Notably, however, only a small fraction of democracy-assistance programmes have targeted political parties. Most programmes envisaged reforming vari-

[138] US Assistance to Georgia – Fiscal Year 2002, Fact Sheets, US Department of State // <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/rls/fs/11029.htm> accessed on 15 November 2005

[139] US Assistance to Georgia – Fiscal Year 2002, 2003, 2004, and 2005, Fact Sheets, US Department of State // <http://www.state.gov/p/eur/ci/gg/c7008.htm> accessed on 15 November 2005

[140] EU Past Assistance to Georgia // <http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/georgia/intro/index.htm> accessed on 16 November 2005

[141] EU relations with Georgia // <http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/georgia/intro/ip04_846.htm> accessed on 16 November 2005

ous government agencies and supporting civil society and the media. Strengthening election administration was also one of priorities, but this concerned parties only indirectly. Very few donors have been interested in working directly with political parties.

One reason for this might have been that international donors did not want to be accused of getting involved in Georgia's internal political struggles. But the instability of the political party system itself was also an important reason. There are no political parties that have steadily played a key role in the Georgian political scene during the last 10 to 15 years; in fact, the party scene is radically different before each election. Western political parties seeking like-minded strategic partners in Georgia were baffled by the fact that political values or ideologies did not appear to be central to how Georgian political parties were created. The absence of stable partners naturally hampers the implementation of long-term projects.

Georgian political parties, on the other hand, are quite open and motivated to establish close international ties. They express willingness to cooperate with both the international organizations and like-minded parties in other countries. Since all parties admit that they need to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their party work, they believe that learning from successful international experience is crucial. Parties believe that, while the Georgian political system has its unique features and Western experience cannot be directly transferred to the Georgian scene, international cooperation can have an important positive effect.

Georgian political parties hope that their international connections will increase the parties' capacity and recognition and secure greater guarantees for the development of a multiparty system in Georgia

Apart from increasing their capacity through learning best practices from more experienced political parties, international connections have an important additional dimension for Georgian political parties. They imply *recognition*. Especially for the opposition parties, such recognition is, to a certain extent, a guarantee of their security. They believe that international projects targeting political parties, as well as partnerships with like-minded parties among leading political parties in the developed countries, constitute some additional guarantee for maintaining a multiparty system in Georgia.

In order to develop stable international connections, almost all the political parties surveyed have established international relations services in their central offices. But these offices are for the most part recent creations, and their capacity and experience are not up to the task. The result is that there is a gap between expectation and reality: Georgian political parties want to have a strong network of international connections, but such contacts and partnerships are relatively weak and unstable.

Party representatives recognize that they are not sufficiently active in this regard. In most cases of international contacts, the parties emerge as passive consumers of these relations and rarely take the initiative themselves. "The relations that we have established so far were offered to us by the international organizations. They offer us the assistance and we accept it."[142]

In most cases of international contacts, parties emerge as passive consumers of these relations and rarely take initiative themselves

Those international contacts and partnerships that have already been established may be divided in two main categories: 1) parties' relations with international organizations and international NGOs, and 2) parties' relations with like-minded parties abroad. The former is usually initiated by the international organizations (international NGOs) and their aim is to implement specific programmes and projects aimed at strengthening party organizations in Georgia. Some parties have relatively stable relations of this sort. The second kind of relations are often (but not always) initiated by the Georgian parties themselves. Here, the main aim is some kind of international recognition.

Relations with international organizations and international NGOs

The only international donor which has carried out relatively continuous and stable programmes aimed at strengthening political parties in Georgia is USAID. This area of work has been one of the priorities in the programmes USAID has been implementing since 1992. It has carried out its programmes of assistance to parties and parliamentary factions through the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI). NDI was the most active organization in this field in the 1990s, but in the last several years the Georgian office of the IRI has been considered by the Georgian parties to be the key international organization working with them. Since 1998, it has been actively cooperating with all the main parties, helping them to increase their competitiveness by means of various educational programmes.

The IRI has two main directions in its activities in Georgia. It works to promote the parties' institutional development as well as to improve their electoral capabilities. In order to increase the quality of party work and strengthen their organizational structure, the IRI is implementing a consulting programme which is carried out individually with all parties. Within the framework of this programme, by means of developing recommendations to

[142] Member of Industry Will Save Georgia

parties and training their activists and staff, it is trying to help the parties improve their structure, develop primary and functional organizations and streamline party work during the election period.

The second direction of the IRI's activities encompasses its work with the parties as well as the voters. In order to develop the parties' capabilities, it has carried out campaign academy programmes which aim to teach party members the techniques that are required for carrying out a fully-fledged election campaign: for instance, how to define an election strategy, how to compose public appeals and how to work with the voters and the media. The programme entitled Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV), which is carried out by the institute and whose aim is to increase the participation of society and especially of its young people in elections, also constitutes one of the priorities of the IRI's work.

Parties value the IRI's work and believe that more international assistance is necessary to achieve the parties' effective development. The number of participants in the educational programmes organized by IRI is restricted. It is mostly leaders of various structural units of the parties that are involved in them. These programmes cannot include all party members wishing to participate. However, it is noted that, after having participated in such educational programmes, party members have better chances of securing promotion in internal party positions as compared to other members. The New Conservative Party has gone as far as creating a paid position of election consultant, and today, members who have been trained in the IRI's campaign academy are employed in the majority of the party's regional branches.

Political parties think that the current work of the international non-governmental organizations aimed at assistance to parties is useful but insufficient

Another organization which has been actively working with the Georgian political parties is the National Democratic Institute (NDI). Unlike the IRI, it cooperates with parliamentary factions. Therefore, parties that do not have a faction in Parliament are beyond its scope. Programmes implemented by the NDI are aimed at increasing the efficiency of the parliamentary factions' work. By organizing working meetings and conferences, it helps to step up the work of Parliament: "Before Parliament adopted the new Tax Code, the NDI helped us twice in setting up meetings related to this issue. It also frequently organizes trainings for Parliament members."[143] Since opening a field office in Georgia in 1994, NDI has assisted political party leaders and activists representing pro-reform parties to develop policy programmes and messages, to create party- building strategies, to reach out to supporters and voters, as well as to strengthen national and local party organizations. In

[143] Member of Industry Will Save Georgia

1995, NDI helped to create the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED), a non-partisan, non-governmental Georgian civil society organization. Since that time, it has provided financial and technical assistance to ISFED to assist in its organizational development and build skills to monitor elections, conduct civic and voter education programmes, publish newsletters to increase citizens' awareness of their constitutional rights, organize local and national advocacy campaigns, and assist and advise elected officials at the local and national level in reaching out to citizens to address their needs. ISFED has monitored numerous elections throughout Georgia and drafted reports on the conduct of elections with recommendations for improvements. Alongside ISFED, NDI has helped local officials to convene town hall meetings designed to increase outreach to citizens and solicit their input. NDI and ISFED have further promoted the development of citizen advisory committees, volunteer bodies of citizens to assist elected officials in addressing the needs of local communities.

NDI has assisted numerous political parties in local party-building and skills-building of national and local activists in such areas as campaign organizing, canvassing, membership recruitment, voter targeting and voter contact (media, message development and delivery) for the 2001 local elections and 2003 parliamentary elections. In addition, NDI has worked to build consensus and cooperation among opposition parties on issues such as electoral reform. In the aftermath of democratic change in Georgia in 2004, NDI advised party members on the changing role of parties in Georgia's new political environment, the challenges inherent to democratization, and the need for opposition parties to cooperate, given the popularity and strength of the governing National Movement Party. After the March 2004 parliamentary elections, NDI has continued working with the governing National Movement and other parties in the opposition. But its work is now completely concentrated in Parliament[144].

Other donor organizations cooperate with political parties as well but their work is limited to the issues of their specific interests (election systems, women's involvement, etc.). The German Friedrich Evert Stiftung (FES) operates according to the principle of "topic-related" instead of "actor-related" work and therefore does not focus on one particular social-democratic party in the country – which, according to the FES, is simply not available in Georgia. The projects that the FES and other organizations like the German Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) and Friedrich Naumann Stiftung implement are usually carried out in the form of conferences, seminars, round tables and discussions. These and other programmes of other organizations are often implemented by Georgian non-governmental

[144] The information about NDI comes from its Political Party Department in Washington and was provided by its Director, Ivan Doherty.

organizations in partnership with donors, who in most cases identify the topics and agendas.

Unfortunately, the majority of programmes are often one-offs and do not form part of long-term systemic efforts. They are more concerned with developing the working skills of individual parties, while inter-party relations are not really considered. However, the need for international support for establishing a stable political environment based on consensus among major parties is emphasized by all political actors. A better coordination of activities and the exchange of information between international actors are generally perceived as issues that should get more attention. The creation of a stable environment is considered necessary to develop a multiparty dialogue and a culture of inter-party cooperation, including opposition parties outside Parliament.

Relations with like-minded parties in other countries

Establishing relations with like-minded parties in developed countries and joining international associations of parties with similar ideological principles are important priorities for Georgian political parties. Apart from gaining international recognition and status, these links provide an additional way for the parties to more clearly define their identities at home. Joining ideologically-based party associations may also be a matter of competition between Georgian political parties of similar ideological orientation: this may be used as an indicator that a given party is the pre-eminent representative of certain (centre-right, centre-left, liberal) political directions within Georgia. Therefore, if they establish any kind of contacts with major foreign political parties or party associations, Georgian political parties are usually eager to publicize this within Georgia.

As a rule, it is on the initiative of the Georgian parties that contacts with like-minded parties abroad are sought.[145] In that sense, Georgian parties follow the same pattern as other parties in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union since the beginning of the 90's. However, these contacts rarely lead to the establishment of the strong partnerships to which the parties aspire. The main reason for this is that Georgian political parties have often been unable to satisfy the main requirements of their prospective foreign and international partners. In particular, the majority of them do not have a long-term record of party work and independent participation in parliamentary elections. On the other hand, the main political political families in

[145] Precedents to the contrary exist as well: "The Chinese Communist Party expressed willingness to cooperate with us on its own initiative. Even though we do not have much in common in terms of ideology, we will try to find common ground on economic issues." – Interview with the member of the United National Movement.

Europe now seem to have a more cautious attitude towards new parties than they did in the last decade of the 20th century.

International fraternity

While establishing close relations with foreign political parties is considered desirable by all Georgian parties, only a few of them have succeeded in obtaining international recognition:

The New Conservative Party is an associated member of the International Democratic Union (IDU); the Youth Organization of the New Conservative Party is affiliated with the Youth Organization of the European People's Party (EPP) and IPU. In 2007 the New Conservatives are planning to join the EPP.

The United National Movement started conversations with the EPP in 2005 after having decided to identify itself more with Christian-Democrats and the European conservative family than with the liberals. In 2006, it attended an EPP summit (in Rome) for the first time and has officially applied for admission.

The Labour Party of Georgia is mainly cooperating with the Socialist International and the Party of European Socialists. It has succeeded in establishing close contacts with the European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity.

The Republican Party is a strategic partner of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation (linked to the liberal German Free Democratic Party) in Georgia.

Only a very small number of parties have more or less settled relations with political party associations in the US, Europe, and the former Soviet Republics. These relations are expressed mainly in formal expressions of support, participation in congresses, exchange of information and the organization of joint working meetings. Several parties have declared their wish to cooperate with the International Democrat Union (IDU), an international association of centre-right parties, but only the New Conservative Party has become its associated member so far. The New Conservative Party also claims to have relatively advanced relationships with the European People's Party (EPP), a European-level centre-right party of the European Union. It hopes to acquire an observer's status in this organization in 2006 or 2007.

Only one of the parties surveyed in Georgia, the Labour Party of Georgia, defines itself as a centre-left party and is looking for steady contacts among parties and international party associations, principally with the Socialist International (SI) and the Party of European Socialists (PES). Its most active

contacts are with the European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity (EFDS), an organization established by the social-democratic parties and political foundations from EU countries in order to support transformation and democratization processes in Central and Eastern Europe. The Labour party participates in the conferences and meetings organized by this institution.[146] The EFDS has also paid incidental visits to Georgia to asses the situation. The same holds for the EPP and related parties from Europe.

In the autumn of 2005, the Republican Party of Georgia became a strategic partner in Georgia of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation linked to the German Free Democratic Party. This may be a first step for this party to establish closer contacts with the international family of liberal parties.

Georgian political parties desire but have rarely enjoyed stable partnerships with like-minded parties abroad

Some parties give priority to establishing close relations based not on common ideology but on specific issues. These are more pragmatic contacts that enable parties to share problem-solving mechanisms with foreign political actors facing similar challenges and obstacles during different stages of their development. Thus some parties are seeking "to contact the parties of truly liberal-democratic ideology in the post-Soviet and former socialist bloc countries and establish close relations with them."[147] Since parties in these countries are developing along more or less similar lines and have emerged from a historical background similar to that of Georgian political parties, their experience may be more appropriate, comprehensible and acceptable in the Georgian political space. However, so far Georgian political parties have not succeeded in establishing stable partnerships in this area.

Most parties are not satisfied with the state of their relationships with like-minded political parties and party associations so far and they hope to achieve much more. Usually they have no well-designed plans or strategies with regard to developing their international networks, but they do have more or less specific ideas concerning the direction in which they would like to move. For instance, they believe that the establishment of international contacts by their functional organizations (this implies mainly women's and youth organizations) and the organization of training programmes and working meetings are vitally important for their party work. This might constitute the initial stage of what could become fully-fledged partnerships in the future.

The high death rate of political parties in Georgia during the last 15 years is certainly linked with the high political instability in the country and vice-versa. For international actors, consolidation and stabilization of an institu-

[146] Member of the Labour Party of Georgia
[147] Member of the Republican Party

tionalized political party system should be a high priority in the democratization agenda. This is crucial and demands a strategic approach from the international community.

Main findings

- A large number of democracy-assistance projects have been implemented in Georgia since 1992 with support from international organizations, foundations, and Western governments. Only a small fraction of them targeted political parties;
- In the last ten years, there have been only two organizations that have had long-term systematic programmes aimed at strengthening the party system in Georgia: the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the International Republican Institute (IRI);
- Georgian political parties consider international party-assistance programmes useful and want more of them. They believe that such programmes give them an important opportunity to learn from best international practices and increase their capacity. Moreover, they consider international links to be an important sign of recognition and an additional guarantee for maintaining a multiparty system in Georgia;
- Political parties think that the scope of existing international party-assistance programmes is insufficient for their needs. Only a limited number of party activists can participate in them;
- Because most international party-assistance programmes were targeted at individual actors, attention to interparty relations and development of the culture of co-operation and dialogue between parties has been insufficient;
- Parties seek contacts with like-minded parties abroad but only a few of them have been able to establish more or less stable contacts;
- All the parties surveyed have international relations services in their central offices but they usually have insufficient capacity and experience. Despite their strong interest in international contacts, parties are rarely proactive in this regard.

3. A Framework for Democratic Party Building

What to do?

- Georgia can only stabilize as a state if it develops effective and sustainable democratic institutions. The strong support for democracy among the Georgian public is the main asset for that development;
- Cooperation with European and Euro-Atlantic partners and institutions is a key for Georgia's democratic development. It provides a strong motivation for Georgian democratic reforms;
- Political parties in Georgia are generally free to express their views and they serve as a foundation for political pluralism. But the political party system is weakly institutionalized, and Georgian political parties need to successfully pass their initial stage of institutional development;
- While there is a fairly high level of consensus among Georgian political parties on the most important policy issues, there is a need to increase the level of trust in the political process and the cooperation between parties across the political spectrum;
- Parties require cooperation with peers to implement structural and organizational reforms;
- Political parties are open to international co-operation. They see the important benefits from political party-assistance programs and demand a long-term commitment from partners.

The above two sections have presented a general picture of the Georgian political situation and the state of the development of political parties currently active in this context. This is a picture of a dynamic country that has had a troubled recent past but also a very strong determination to achieve its national goals. These goals are fairly distinct and there is considerable public consensus about them; but Georgia has yet a lot to do in order to consolidate its political institutions.

For years, Georgia was seen by most analysts as a remote and unstable country whose fate largely depended on the outcome of geopolitical competition between Russia and the United States. Transportation of oil and gas from the Caspian region to the consumers in the West was seen as the most important stake in this real or perceived "Great Game". On the other hand, Georgia – and the South Caucasus region in general – was seen as a region of conflict. About fifteen percent of Georgia's territory and a comparable

share of its people live in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, self-proclaimed states that are often referred to as zones of 'frozen conflict'. Effective jurisdiction of Georgia was also problematic in some other parts of the country. Due to its inabilities to extend control over a large part of its territory and perform many other functions, Georgia was often described as a "failing state". The context of the international fight against terrorism gave a new dimension to the international attention on Georgia: states that cannot enforce minimal order on their own territories easily become home to terrorist and criminal networks or plunge into internal conflicts. This creates threats not only to their citizens, but to the international community as well.

Today Georgia wants transcend its position as a hostage in geopolitical games or a passive object of international assistance. This can be achieved through the development of effective democratic institutions that are capable of providing public goods and are accountable to its citizens.

The project of consolidating effective democratic institutions defines both Georgia's internal and international agenda. Georgia's long-term project has been to join the European and Euro-Atlantic space. Georgians consider accession to the Council of Europe in 1999 as the first step on that road, to be eventually followed by joining NATO and the European Union. Achieving these goals, however, is inseparable from successful democratic reforms.

The Rose Revolution of November 2003 gave a new impetus to Georgia's efforts to establish a democracy and its movement towards Europe. It put Georgia in the vanguard of the new wave of democratic transitions in the post-Soviet region, thus offering a real chance to consolidate democracy. Georgia increasingly defines itself as being part of the family of countries that were late in their transitions to democracy and could not make the first train to Europe but are determined to go the whole way nonetheless. Georgia is an active member of the Community of Democratic Choice, the new grouping of Eastern European countries that was established in 2005 upon the initiative of the presidents of Georgia and Ukraine.

Georgia also strives to show solidarity with the democratic world and contribute to international peace through participation in the military operation in Iraq and the peacekeeping operation in Kosovo.

While accession to the European Union looks like a distant and uncertain prospect at the moment, Georgians believe that the Rose Revolution and its aftermath have already brought Georgia closer to Europe. Inclusion of the South Caucasus into the European Neighbourhood policy (ENP) in 2004 and the forthcoming agreement between the EU and Georgia on the Action Plan within the framework of ENP will move Georgian-EU cooperation to a qualitatively new level. On the other hand, after the International Partnership Action Plan (IPAP) with Georgia was approved by NATO in the fall of 2004, Georgia sees joining NATO as a prospect that could become reality in the

current decade. Cooperation with these organizations serves as a catalyst for democratic reforms.

Political parties are the most important institutions that underpin a stable democracy. So far, the Georgian political parties have ensured a considerable level of pluralism in Georgian political life and have allowed different groups of citizens to express the variety of their positions. However, the Georgian political parties, as well as the political party system as a whole, are unstable and underdeveloped. Political parties are excessively dependent on the personalities of their leaders and easily go out of business as soon as the leader exits the political scene. The political party landscape is radically different before each election. None of the parties that defined Georgia's political life in the mid-1990s have any influence today. At the same time, however, after each change of government, the same structure of political parties is reproduced: there is a single dominant party that is effectively merged with the state institutions, and of the large number of opposition parties, none of them is automatically considered a viable contender for power.

Apart from being weakly institutionalised, the Georgian political party system is characterised by a low level of ideological polarisation indeed, there is no strong difference between the policy agendas of the different parties. However, the level of confrontation is high, although political debates, while frequent, are oriented towards personalities rather than policy issues. Political parties do not trust the integrity of either their political opponents or the electoral process. While there are many instances of cooperation between political parties, such cooperation very rarely includes both the government and the opposition.

The research shows that Georgian political parties have a realistic view of their weaknesses and understand the necessity of structural change. Parties recognize that having accumulated political experience in the past decade and a half, the Georgian public has become much more informed and selective in its choices. Therefore, parties also need to reach a qualitatively high level of development in order to convince citizens that they are viable political organizations that can effectively serve their society. Political parties understand that they should develop not only as strong electoral institutions but also as alternative policy options for Georgian society. Based on that understanding, the majority of the currently functioning political parties are in the process of formation or reorganization, which is manifested in a reviewing and overhauling of their functions, roles, policies and organizational structure.

While the parties are competitors in the political space, it is extremely important for them to cooperate constructively with other parties, state agencies and civil organizations. Although the government has the primary responsibility for the administration and policies of the country, all major political actors have a shared responsibility for the general functioning of the

democratic system. During this research project, the parties themselves not only highlighted some of the significant obstacles which they come across in the process of development, but they also demonstrated a high degree of openness and expressed their desire to cooperate with non-governmental and donor organizations. So far, the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute have been the only international NGOs that have run comprehensive party-assistance programmes in Georgia. Georgian political parties recognize they have benefited from cooperation with these and other international organizations, but also emphasize that more assistance to political parties is welcome. The development of the Georgian political parties is first and foremost their own business – and that of the Georgian society. But they can also learn a great deal from international experience and contacts, something they are eager to do.

This chapter summarizes the difficulties in the process of party development which were identified during the study and outlines recommendations for addressing them effectively. The recommendations are categorized into groups according to the three principal actors concerned: the state, political parties, and non-governmental/donor organizations involved in political party-assistance programmes. An Action Plan for the medium term can be found at the end of the chapter.

3.1 General Conclusions, Recommendations and Plan of Action

Recommendations to state institutions

Relations between the state bodies and political parties drew especially great attention from the party representatives in the course of this research. All parties agreed that, in the past, the legislation and, especially, actual behaviour of state agencies were unfair and limited the development of political pluralism in Georgia. However, when it comes to assessing the current situation and defining desirable models of relations between the state and political parties, the opinions of the party in power and those in opposition tend to differ dramatically. These differences are at the root of much political controversy, as is true in other countries.

This report does not intend to take sides in tense political discussions on the details of election legislation, which is currently taking place in Georgia. Moreover, some of the issues related to state regulations relevant tor political parties will be revised in the section of inter-party dialogue, as strong inter-party cooperation is a prerequisite for a greater legitimacy of the rules regulating political competition. Recommendations in this area will be limited to two general points.

1. Monitor the effects of new legislation on state funding for political arties. The recently enacted changes in the law on political parties were given a positive assessment by both representatives of the parties and international experts. These changes may constitute the most important positive step in the development party-related legislation in the last few years. The legislation recognizes the public value of political parties and provides important (though not sufficient) resources for the parties' institutional development. At the same time, no final solution to the problem of the public financing of political parties exist. Actual effects of the new legislation on the development of individual parties and the party system in general should be carefully studied. Moreover, discussion will continue on the possible adoption of alternative mechanisms of public funding for political parties, such as matching grants, spending limits, tax exemptions, etc.

2. Consider implementation of the OSCE/ODIHR and Council of Europe recommendations on lowering the electoral threshold. In the last two years, the issue of a high threshold for political party lists has developed into one of the most controversial issues of Georgian party politics. This threshold is among the highest for the OSCE region. The Council of Europe recom-

mended that Georgia lower the threshhold by at least two percent, and opposition parties also consider it unfairly high. Many political observers believe the threshold hinders political pluralism and fair representation of different social groups in the governing bodies of different levels.

This issue became especially dramatic in the context of repeat parliamentary elections in March 2004, when there was a high probability of not a single opposition party being able to overcome it. In the end only one opposition bloc barely made it to Parliament.

At the same time, parties in power and in opposition share the concern of high fragmentation of Georgian political party system and proliferation of weak parties that do not really represent serious social interests. Therefore, even parties in opposition support relatively a high threshold of about 4-5 percent.

The ruling party should give greater consideration to the concerns of both the international community and Georgian political players and reconsider the issue of the electoral threshold.

Recommendations to political parties

The study exposes a number of problems that exist within the Georgian political parties and in the relations between them. Respectively, recommendations formulated in this part of the chapter focus on these two broad sets of issues: those related to inter-party relations and the institutional development of the parties.

Parties acknowledge that one of the most important problems in developing a multiparty system is the lack of dialogue between political organizations. The level of cooperation between the parties is very low and the spirit of confrontation by far exceeds that of cooperation.

The difficulties within the parties for the large part stem from their low level of institutional development. Accordingly, some of the recommendations deal with the issue of laying down clear internal rules and strengthening the formal mechanisms of decision-making as compared to the informal ones. Another important direction of changes that will lead to strengthening political parties will be assigning a more important role to the members, which implies involving them more in the decision-making processes and improving mechanisms of supplying information to the party leaders from the party's grass-roots level.

Most parties also recognize that their systems for distributingtasks between different levels of the party organizations and their officers is inadequate and that this limits their flexibility and effectiveness in responding to emerging challenges; some of them suggest specific solutions to this problem, but these ideas have yet to be finally shaped.

1. Inter-party dialogue

Maintaining continuous inter-party dialogue on rules of political competition. The direct and indirect effects of legislation regulating electoral processes and other aspects of political party activities are never fully neutral politically-speaking. Every change in legislation, though formally not discriminating against anybody, can have beneficial effects for some parties more than for others. On the other hand, overall legitimacy of the political process requires that all major political players consider the existing rules of political competition to be generally fair. This is not the case in Georgia, however, where the level of legitimacy of the system of political competition is rather low. Therefore, despite obvious political difficulties, seeking consensus with regards to state legislation concerning political parties remains necessary. The party in power should not take advantage of its dominating position in the legislative and impose rules that do not take into account the interests of other political players. The opposition parties, on the other hand, should realistically assess their chances of influencing the outcome of the political dialogue and avoid excessive politicizing of relevant issues. Of course, the role of the opposition is to check and critize the government, but always with the general interest in mind. The same holds for the government.

Such an inter-party dialogue may take many different forms. It is possible to create a permanent or ad-hoc forum of the party leaders, which would give them the opportunity to discuss the issues related to party activities and important political topics in relatively equal conditions. To make the dialogue more informed and open, local and foreign organizations and experts should be involved. Overall, broad participation of the political and social groups in the dialogue might be critical to its success.

One could also consider creating an inter-party body that would monitor compliance with the agreements reached in the course of inter-party dialogue.

Developing a code to regulate relations between parties. Mutual distrust is a significant factor that hinders cooperation between the parties. Regular use of physical force as a method of settling the scores between political players is an especially disturbing feature of the political life. It would be highly desirable for the parties to prepare a common document that would set forth the fundamental issues of regulating relations between the parties. There have been some attempts at adopting such documents in the past, but they were relatively narrow in scope. This applies to the codes of conduct adopted by the opposition parties in 2003 and by politicians in the Georgian Parliament in 2004. The latter document described acceptable forms of debates and dialogue within Parliament, although there were numerous violations

of its provisions later. Therefore, apart from adopting rules, there is a need for an effective mechanism of monitoring their observance.

Renewing inter-party dialogue on procedures for forming the electoral administration. The composition of the electoral administration remains a controversial political issue and one that has caused distrust about the impartiality of the election administration. While the current party in power insists that the new rules of staffing the electoral administration is on the principle of impartial civil service and constitutes an important step forward, the opposition dismisses these rules as a single- party domination of the election commissions. There is a pressing need to achieve a higher level of inter-party consensus on these issues.

Coordinated efforts by the parties to avert the use of administrative resources and election violations. The use of administrative resources and election violations is the cause of an intense confrontation between the opposition and the ruling party. The opposition's belief that it cannot have realistic possibilities of competing for power using conventional methods of party politics pushes it to take radical positions and exercise populist rhetoric. Setting up an inter-party body to monitor and examine specific instances of misuse of administrative resources and/or election violations could be one way to set clearer standards in these areas and develop greater trust between competing political parties. Such bodies could be created at the national,regional or local level.

Developing other forms of inter-party dialogue and communication. Developing inter-party dialogue with the specific purpose of resolving controversial issues related to political competition is an important though difficult task. However, parties should also develop different forms of communication and dialogue that do not necessarily aim at resolving specific political issues, such as discussing mutually interesting issues of politics and party life, educational activities, etc.. This will develop the culture of cooperation and trust between competing political actors.

2. Constructive opposition

Opposition parties should identify themselves more with suggesting alternative policies. A substantial part of society as well as many experts believe an important problem to be that opposition parties focus on criticizing the government without matching this criticism with specific alternative policy proposals. This, together with the extremely confrontational style of relations between the party in power and its opponents, creates an image of "uncon-

structive opposition", which is first of all damaging to the opposition itself. Therefore, putting more emphasis on alternative policy proposals will make the opposition's criticism of the government more productive while enhancing a positive image of the opposition and increasing public trust towards it. At the same time, this will contribute to the quality of policy debates in the country and increase the opposition's chances of influencing political decisions.

3. Cooperative ruling party

The party in power should be more open to cooperation with the opposition. As has become a general pattern of Georgian politics, the party in power tends to be politically so strong that it can take crucial decisions without consulting and eventually cooperating with the opposition. The current majority in Parliament is even stronger than before: it is in a position to change the Constitution without engaging the opposition. However, such domination has its hazards as well, since no ruling political group in Georgia has been able to preserve its power against internal splits or to maintain its own identity. Moreover, excluding the opposition from the decision-making process tends to lead towards a more radical agenda and methods, which even worsens the chances for a constructive policy dialogue. Therefore, the dialogue between the party in power and different groups of society and opposition parties is a pre-condition for maintaining the stability of the political system. Such dialogue will also improve the quality of political decisions and the sustainability of policy implementations.

Therefore, even though there is no imminent necessity for involving the opposition in the decision-making process, the party in power should be as open as possible to cooperating with the opposition and considering its views and concerns. This is needed not only for the stability of the party system in Georgia but also for the long-term viability of the party in power. The continuity of good governance will also increase.

Maintaining separation between party and state institutions. There is a perceived lack of separation between the ruling party and state institutions, creating the possibility of misusing state resources for political purposes. That has, in reality, also been the fact for the last 15 years. Such a trend undermines the legitimacy of the political process and it has negative repercussions for the performance of the government and for the the long-term viability of the party in power. It is always a big challenge for the party in power to maintain its image not only as a governing group but also as part of society. This problem can be solved only by clearly formulating, publicizing and consistently following specific standards and rules that guarantee a distance between party organisations and state agencies. This includes strict

adherence to legislation that distinguishes between non-partisan civil servants and political appointees.

4. More institutionalized parties

A clearer division of rights and responsibilities between internal party positions and structural units. One of the main organisational problems in the parties' activities is excessive concentration of power and, accordingly, responsibilities, in the hands of individual party officials who are mainly active in the parties' national offices. Responsibilities of party leaders often include defining party policies, representing the party in relations with third parties and the public, general management, fundraising, etc. At the local party branches, on the other hand, it is the overlap in functions of different party officers that create problems. Chairpersons of local branches often simultaneously head the bureau and thematic groups. An uneven distribution of responsibilities among the leaders of local party organizations causes inefficient management of the human and other resources available to the organization.

Developing more efficient schemes of distributing rights and responsibilities between party officers of different levels is an important task for the institutional development of Georgian political parties. This will increase party efficiency and help overcome excessive dependence on party leaders.

A clearer formulation of party strategies. Georgian political parties rarely draft comprehensive strategy documents that guide their activities in different areas of party work. Instead, their activities are directed by small leading groups that tend to make ad hoc decisions in the changing political environment. The lack of a formulated and clear-cut party strategy makes a party's activities less understandable and transparent to both its own members and the wide public, jeopardizes the process of institutional development and hampers the influx of new members on the basis of support for the party platform.

It is important for the parties to formulate their strategies following a realistic assessment of the social and political environment, existing needs and concerns of the public and their own resources. These strategic documents should cover such issues as the party's values and policy outlooks, strategies of institutional development and public relations work, cooperation with other political or non-political players, general and specific policy-objectives and methods to reach them.

Creating effective mechanisms of information exchange within the party. There are no developed and institutionalized mechanisms of information exchange between different units within most Georgian parties. In fact,

communication flows are one-sided, with the parties' central offices usually taking the lead in contacting their local branches. The latter, however, have much greater difficulty in gaining access to party headquarters. Horizontal contacts between sub-national units are weakly developed in general. The lack of efficient and institutionalized channels of bilateral and multilateral communication and information exchange reduces the efficiency of the party as a single organization and reduces the extent to which its structural units are involved in the party activities and decision-making.

Parties could strengthen themselves considerably by instituting a set of measures to facilitate and streamline communication and information exchange within a party.

Enhancing expertise of middle-level party officers. Georgian parties have many dedicated party activists and local leaders who have accumulated considerable experience of participating in election campaigns and other party activities. However, these people, who are the backbone of the party organizations, do not have sufficient up-to-date expertise. Focusing on enhancing the capacity of such people may be extremely beneficial to the institutional development of political parties.

Establishing formal mechanisms of resolving internal conflicts and disagreements within parties. The parties have not developed any formal regulations for resolving disagreements and conflicts as they inevitably arise in party organizations. The only regulatory document which in some way deals with conflict situations is the party charter. However, it defines only those violations that constitute the grounds for expelling a member.

Once disagreements and conflicts do arise, members usually try to resolve them through informal discussions between the individuals in the presence of respected party members. In many cases, this approach works. However, the lack of clear and transparent rules of conflict resolution outlining rights and expected behaviour of members makes the process too dependent on personal relationships and trust. This in turn makes the structure of the party too closed and limits the potential broadening of party structures beyond the personal networks of trust. As a result, party members tend to identify more with such personal networks rather than with issues of policy, values or social interests. Moreover, as all disagreements easily turn into personal confrontations, interventions of informal leaders often prove insufficient and frequent splits ensue.

Adopting formal documents like codes of conduct and establising effective mechanisms to monitor them would help avert or regulate conflicts and stabilize the parties' internal organizational structure.

Sharing international experience. Parties often recognize a need for strengthening ties with like-minded foreign parties and international party networks. One of the benefits that the parties can draw from such contacts consists in learning from the experience of advanced and consolidated party organizations. This concerns general experience with respect to their institutional development and solving specific problems that these parties have confronted in the past. In this, Georgian parties can learn not only from ideologically like-minded parties, but the experience of political parties in Eastern Europe and NIS countries could also be particularly helpful.

The international contacts of Georgian political parties are rather sporadic. Such contacts would be much more advantageous for the parties if they develop strategies of international cooperation based on an assessment of their needs and the specific benefits they expect to get from such cooperation. Such strategies would also help better identify prospective partners they seek contacts with.

5. More Democracy within the Parties

Increasing the role of members in party activities. Most Georgian political parties are in the process of redefining the institution of party membership. Most parties move in the direction of creating a core of actively involved and dedicated members, and clearly delimiting them from a more passive supporters or associated members. However, the stress in this process is made on defining member's responsibilities. While this may be legitimate and useful for creating more effective party organizations, an equally clear definition and expansion of members' rights would make their role more effective, and membership in political parties more attractive to the politically motivated part of the public.

Currently, rank-and-file members tend to be weakly involved in party activities in the period between the elections and play little role in the decision-making process. This does not contribute to their strong self-identification with the party. Greater opportunities for taking initiatives, debating and influencing party policies, electing to or being elected to internal party positions become a significant motive for involvement in the party activities and broaden the pool of prospective members.

Increasing the role of members would also allow parties to highlight the diversity of issues of local importance and include them in party agendas. This is linked to the next recommendation regarding development of internal democracy.

Increasing the capacity of party members in policy analysis. While the lack of tradition of a broad discussion of party policies may be one reason for insufficient participation of party members in internal decision-making processes,

the lack of capacity may be an important objective factor that hinders such participation. Parties can enhance their strength if they find ways to train their activists from different levels in policy analysis and policy development skills. That will empower political party members to assume a more active role in internal party processes and participate in defining party policies and strategies.

Decentralizing organizational structures of the parties. The study results show that the majority of the parties have a rather centralized structure. Most of the party's financial, intellectual and human resources are concentrated in the centre, whereas the role of the local organizations is limited mainly to carrying out campaigns initiated by the central office. Apart from making parties less internally democratic, this makes party management less efficient and flexible. But there are objective reasons for this situation. The centralization of the national administrative system does not leave room for strong local governments and logically does not motivate political parties to decentralize. An administrative decentralization would certainly contribute to a more locally organized political life.

However, even under the current circumstances, parties can consider delegating greater functions and competences to their regional and local organizations. In this process, the local organizations could gain broader rights with regards to fund-raising and financial management, get more involved in the formulation of party policy and achieve greater freedom in electing party officers at the local level.

Benefits of the decentralized party organizations include chances of better synergy between a diversity of local interests, greater motivation for party members, the creation of a broader pool of able leaders and a positive effect on the party's popularity.

Decentralizing party funds. While almost all parties suffer from a shortage of financial and material resources, this problem is particularly acute for the local organizations. This is in part caused by fewer opportunities to raise funds outside the capital, but the over-centralized internal structure is an even greater obstacle. If the parties allow their local organizations greater rights to raise and manage funds, this will also give them greater chances of becoming strong and autonomous players at the local level, of taking specific initiatives and carrying out election campaigns and other activities more effectively.

Supporting women's involvement in decision-making processes and promoting women candidates in elections at different levels. In almost all major Georgian political parties there is a balance between men and women members, and women play an important role in party work at the grass-roots

level. There are individual women leaders who are prominent in some parties. However, the overall level of women participation and influence at high levels of party leadership tends to be quite low. This harms the representative character of political parties and the effectiveness of their work.

Notably, there are a greater number of successful female political leaders in the regions than in the centre. There are also many able female functionaries at different levels of party organisations whose work is crucial to the parties' success. One could expect that establishing more open and transparent procedures for regulating internal party work would positively affect women's representation in general.

A greater degree of internal party democracy should also result in promoting female candidates in elections at different levels. This would bring about a more balanced and effective representation of men and women in the decision-making bodies. However, as there are currently more strong women leaders in local party organizations, it appears more realistic to have more women candidates in local government elections.

Capacity-building efforts and training of cadres and members should explicitly be focused on an equal participation of men and women.

6. Developing party identities and policies

A clearer definition and presentation of parties' identities and principles. Many ordinary people assume that the activities of Georgian political parties are not guided by a (more or less) coherent system of ideological principles and that their identities are in fact defined by the personalities of their leaders. Rank-and-file party members often have a slight or incorrect knowledge of their own party's stated political values and goals. Actual steps and initiatives of political parties are repeatedly criticized for not being in accordance with their proclaimed general principles. Sometimes, the leaders of political parties underscore the need for highlighting a party's ideological identity so that it is more distinct and better known both to its members as well as to the broad public.

The current situation hinders creating a stable party system, harms the long-term viability of political parties and undermines their accountability to the voters. Without being identified with their principles and clear political record, it is very difficult for political parties to build stable support constituencies.

The best way to craft clearer identities for political parties linked to political principles and policies is to encourage wide and inclusive policy dialogue within the party and with different social groups. General political principles cannot simply be borrowed from international experience or textbooks on political theory. They should grow out of analysis of local problems and concerns and be based on specific policy platforms addressing those problems

and concerns. The above-made suggestions to increase the capacity of party activists in matters of policy analysis and policy development and to involve them more in formulating party policies are also relevant in this context.

Georgian political parties often see contacts with like-minded foreign parties as one way to highlight their ideological identities. Studying international experience may be highly useful for increasing the capacity of party leaders and activists in the field of political analysis. However, it can only be a supplementary tool for defining what a given party stands for in the Georgian political context.

7. Reducing the gap in relations with society

Improving ways of connecting to and aggregating public interests. The Georgian political parties are often seen as detached from the public. The latter is fairly well informed about the relations between individual politicians, but it is less familiar with the activities of the parties as political organizations.

There may be several different ways for more successfully embedding political parties in Georgian society. One is through careful study of societal needs, which can be achieved both through more frequent direct contacts with different groups and cooperation with Georgian research organisations. On the other hand, parties could benefit from establishing a system of dialogue and debates with representatives of social groups. Parties are stronger if they are proactive in seeking feedback for their specific political decisions and initiatives.

The above-formulated suggestions for developing mechanisms of internal party democracy that would involve both active members and actual or potential supporters in the process of formulating party policies can also play an important role in overcoming the image of the parties as relatively closed elite groups. Parties can be assisted in developing tools to measure the different societal preoccupations and the agendas of ordinary people.

Broadening the party recruitment policy through targeting individual social and interest groups. The parties' policy of attracting new members is oriented mainly towards the existing members' immediate networks of personal trust, such as neighbours, relatives and friends. While close personal contacts may be effective for the party's work in the short run, this also contributes to the image of parties as closed networks and limits the parties' ability to attract members on the basis of social interests and policies.

This could be greatly helped by defining the social groups which parties consider to be their natural constituencies and running carefully designed campaigns for the latter. This will help to better explain the party policies to the public, create a stable support base and recruit motivated new members.

Establishing closer contacts with professional associations, interest groups and other civil society organizations. The network of civil society organizations is not strongly developed and it does not involve a large part of Georgian society. This may be the reason why the political parties do not consider them as socially representative and do not strive to establish stable contacts with them. When contacts occur, they tend to be motivated by short-term considerations of gaining political support. However, this is rarely successful as civil society organizations usually prefer to maintain the image of political neutrality. Some parties tend to run their own network of civil society organizations rather than build bridges to the existing ones.

However, while the network of organizations that do exist may not have a broad social base, they constitute the most active part of Georgian society and articulate important professional or civic interests. Motivation to cooperate with such organizations should not be limited to considerations of short-term political expediency. For the parties, this cooperation can be the source of important information on social interests and needs and can provide feedback in developing party strategies. At least in some cases, such contacts can serve as an interface for getting involved with broader social groups.

Recommendations to donors and non-governmental organizations

International actors have been involved in political party-assistance programmes in Georgia since the mid-1990s. However, such activities have been much more limited than programs concerning institutional reforms and the development of civil society organizations. Foreign donors have considered Georgian political parties too unstable and have avoided possible accusations of getting involved in local politics.

After the 2003 Rose Revolution, political organizations faced new challenges. An increased role for the parties may be a possible and positive outcome of the new political environment. The migration of a number of prominent civil society leaders to political parties, both in power and in opposition, is one of the indicators of this. Political parties themselves recognize the need for their greater institutionalization and are motivated to use external assistance to this end. In the course of this research, the party representatives repeatedly underscored their readiness to cooperate with international organizations and NGOs and to take an active part in the educational and research activities organized by them. They give priority to activities involving training party activists, formulating party strategy and discussing models of organisational development for their parties.

All this shows that party-assistance programmes are greatly needed and that the Georgian political parties are open to such cooperation and hope to benefit from it. In the following pages we will discuss several ways in which

external assistance may be productive for the development of both individual parties and the Georgian party system in general.

Supporting inter-party dialogue. One of the main impediments preventing the further development of a multiparty system in Georgia is the lack of co-operation, dialogue and constructive policy debate between different political actors. Excessively confrontational relations between the political parties are also one of the important concerns of the Georgian public in general.

So far the focus of most political party assistance programmes has been on enhancing the capacities of individual parties. Naturally, improving the atmosphere of inter-party relations depends primarily on the will of political players themselves. However, external organizations, whether Georgian or international, can also contribute to this goal.

In particular, external players can provide neutral spaces for interparty dialogue and cooperation. Meetings of leaders and activists of political parties may focus on acute policy issues but also on more politically neutral subjects, such as mutually interesting issues of party development, educational and cultural activities, or the like. Through being involved in such activities, the parties may see that developing a spirit of multiparty cooperation and dialogue creates a friendlier environment for developing individual parties as well.

Supporting educational projects on party-building and structural development. Until now, most party-assistance programmes implemented by international organizations have been oriented mainly towards the elections. In particular, they have aimed at improving election legislation and the technology involved in the elections themselves. There is also a great need to focus work on the long-term institutional development of political parties.

Such programmes may combine activities aimed at increasing the organizational strength of political parties and their internal democracy. As this interactive assessment has shown, the parties are keen to focus on the former issue but are less inclined to see the lack of internal democracy as a problem. However, assistance activites may demonstrate that, in fact, these two issues are interrelated. More flexible and inclusive party structures may broaden the parties' support base and motivate their members.

To realize these aims, training and educational programs may be designed that should avoid presenting any single universal model to the parties so that each party can develop according to its own views and goals. Information may be supplied to party leaders and activists on various models of party structures and the strengths and weakness of each of these models may be discussed interactively. This approach to the issue will enable the parties to make their own choices. The advantages of developing and following formal internal procedures regulating relations within the party, and from broader

internal party democracy in general, can be more effectively demonstrated based on the experience of different parties.

It is important that not only party leaders but also party activists from different levels take part in such work. Such activities should be designed as systematic programmes rather than one-off events.

Supporting the parties in developing their platforms and formulating policies. Training and educational programs should focus on increasing the capacity of party members to analyze and formulate public policies and design party platforms. Party representatives can also be trained in skills needed to adequately interpret the data of public opinion research in the process of formulating public policies. Such work will help parties to better define their identities and will also increase the participation of party activists at different levels in the process of designing party platforms and formulating policies. The members thus trained will also gain a better understanding of the goals and activities of their own parties. This will increase the effectiveness of the party's work, increase the long-term viability of political parties, contribute to the development of the parties' internal democracy and help define more distinct public profiles for the parties.

Training and educational programmes aimed at achieving these goals may focus on the general enhancement of skills for public policy analysis and formulation, but, under some circumstance, they may be even more effective if they focus on helping parties develop specific policy proposals.

Conducting regular research on public opinion, the effectiveness of the parties' work, and the parties' policy behaviour. One of the factors that weakens the ties between the political elites and the public is the mutual lack of information. The parties do not have a clear and comprehensive understanding of public concerns, while the public does not have a broad and full picture of how the parties actually behave with regard to specific policy issues.

External players can help both the parties and the public through supporting methods to measure public opinion, such as polls and focus groups. Political players and the public need more qualitative and quantitative public opinion research on both public attitudes to individual political parties and the party system in general as well as on the attitudes of different social groups to specific problems facing the country. In the last two years, the research by the International Republican Institute has in part filled this void, but there is a need for more nuanced and in-depth research that would be available to the public and the research community.

The internal party activities and processes of party institutional development are also rarely studied. Here again, the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute are the main organizations that

cooperate with the parties on this. More efforts and available information about the outcomes are needed.

Georgian political parties are often blamed for a lack of consistency between declared goals/ideologies and the actual practice of parties. However, there are no tools to measure this. The electorate is not adequately informed about the actual political record of the players it has to choose from. To overcome this deficiency, there is a need to study party behaviour in electoral bodies and monitor the stands that the parties or individual politicians take on important issues of public policy. The results should be analyzed and made available to the public.

Broad availability of these kinds of research topics would help members of the party as well as the public in general by providing them with more adequate information about the policy implementation and the political behaviour of their representatives. Such data would also help the leadership of the parties to develop more targeted and relevant policies. But also to inform the public about what the party is actually doing.

Supporting development of professional public relations groups within the parties. The majority of parties have created professional public relations groups in their central governing offices. Their main responsibility is organizing the leaders' press conferences, preparing and disseminating press releases and monitoring the media. However, the parties usually do not have comprehensive and clearly formulated public relations strategies and are often unfamiliar with up-to-date mechanisms of public relations work. These groups also tend to be insufficiently informed about current public opinions.

External players can assist political parties through increasing the capacity of their public relations groups. In particular, this could include training them in analyzing public attitudes and concerns, formulating public relations strategy, studying technologies and improving the skills needed for public relations work.

Carrying out programmes for a broader involvement of women in decision-making procedures within political parties. Female members are quite actively involved in political party activities, especially at the local level. However, their involvement in decision-making, while far from non-existent, is utterly insufficient. Almost all parties recognize the existing lack of balance as a problem, although none of them has formulated any plan for resolving it.

External players could help by conducting educational programmes on the mechanisms that facilitate women's involvement in the decision-making processes of political parties in different countries. Also important is that these types of educational programmes envisage both women's and men's

involvement and include a broad range of party activists at different levels of party hierarchies.

Initiating public discussions on gender equality and encouraging successful female politicians to get involved. There is insufficient awareness among the Georgian public of the need for the representation of women in the decision-making bodies. The media also pays little attention to this issue.

Therefore, there is a need to generate a greater public interest in the issue of women's participation in decision-making processes. International and local civil society organizations can take a lead enlarging public-awareness. This may involve focusing on identifying the factors that hinder women's involvement, developing recommendations on how to overcome them and increasing women's interest towards political activities.

Helping parties in establishing and strengthening international partnerships. All the parties stress the need for and the positive effects of international cooperation and partnership. However, with very few exceptions, the parties do not have comprehensive strategies in this area. They willingly take advantage of chances for international contacts but are not sufficiently proactive in seeking them.

All the parties have international relations services, but they suffer from lack of experience and resources. External players could assist parties in developing more professional international relations services and increasing the capacity of their staff.

Helping functional organizations of the parties to develop international contacts. Almost all parties have created their own women's and youth organizations whose representatives usually take some part in the decision-making bodies of political parties. These organizations play an important role in strengthening the ties of the parties with different social groups and improving the public image of the party.

Such organizations rarely maintain international contacts and often do not have information on the activities of similar specialized organizations in foreign parties. Helping them establish such contacts would help them review their functions and improve their work. Sharing international experience may also help them gain access to resources that would enable them to make their activities more varied and inclusive. Moreover, in some cases strengthening the international cooperation of the youth and women's organizations with their counterparts abroad might pave the way for successful international partnerships at the party-party level.

Ensuring better coordination between different projects aiming at political party assistance. While there are not too many activities and strategic programmes implemented by international organizations or international and Georgian NGOs whose purpose is to assist political parties, it is still rather difficult to find out which of them have been or are being implemented by the different players. There is almost no exchange of information between the programmes. Even when it is known that certain projects have been implemented, the information about their outcomes, lessons learned, etc. is not available. All this makes each new project or programme aiming at assisting political parties less effective than it could otherwise have been.

Creating a unified database and ensuring an exchange of information between the party-assistance projects would help both Georgian and international organizations carry out more effective and targeted work. At the same time, it would be desirable to systematically monitor the implemented projects in order to assess their results and summarize the lessons learned from them.

Action Plan

The framework for the institutional development of democratic and programmatic parties in Georgia presented in this book is very extensive in its recommendations. Nevertheless, the agenda for improvement based on issues interactively assessed and iedentified by the Georgian political parties contains five main lines along which the medium and long-term programmes to support the development of political parties in Georgia should be structured:

1. The first line is **party-organization** building: the main aspects of this is the development of elite and activist recruitment criteria in order to increase the coherence and focus of the parties. The parties themselves emphasize the need to (re)define the role, purpose and position of party members, activists and supporters. Concurrently, parties want to work on the reformulation and adaptation of the internal party regulations. This first cluster of activities can depart from a multiparty approach, while parties also conclude that more concrete activities concerning the inner rules and workings of parties might also require single-party activities (made available to all political parties).

2. As a second cluster of activities, parties stress the need for developing **more international contacts**, mainly establishing links with international organizations and international party unions, in order to develop ideas on organization, ideology, policies, electoral strategies and internal procedures. All parties express an eagerness to exchange experiences with European party leaders, activists and members. Particularly trainings pro-

grammes in policy formation and implementation, oppositional parliamentary activity and internal policy discussions need to be included in this cluster of activities. In this cluster, programmes can be both of a multiparty character and individually oriented, again under the condition that all parties receive equal access to these activities.

3. Thirdly, parties stress the need for **local capacity-building**. Parties in various parts of the country are less developed or face structural weaknesses. Activities in this cluster will probably be on a single-party basis as the differences among parties are substantial. In addition, parties want more training of active members in youth and women's organizations of the parties. Also activities for increasing member participation should be included in this cluster. Most of the latter activities will include multiparty settings as all parties want to improve on these points.

4. As a fourth line of activities, parties in Georgia want to work on **improving inter-party relations**. As sketched above, the relations between parties need to be improved and intensified in a multiparty setting.

5. Finally, a cluster of activities needs to **focus on the lack of resources** for most of the political parties, particularly those in opposition. That involves improving their capabilities to do the political work, both in financial and human terms. It also involves enlarging the access of Georgian society in general to the knowledge of political institutions and politics in democracies.

ANNEX: Political Party Files

Conservative Party of Georgia

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Brief history

The Conservative Party of Georgia is the youngest among the centre-right parties inthe country. It was created in May 2005 through the merger of two parties, the Union of Georgia's National Forces and the Conservative Party. Its current leaders and some of the members, many of whom were supporters of Georgia's first president, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, created the Union of National Forces-the Party of the Conservatives in 2000. In November 2003, they were among the leaders of the Rose Revolution and were elected to Parliament through the United National Movement's electoral list in repeat parliamentary elections in March 2004. However, they soon afterwards split from the party, disagreeing on a number of issues including constitutional amendments that changed the design of the Georgian political system. In their opinion, these amendments violated the principles of checks and balances between the different branches of government. Besides, they argued that that the United National Movement failed to keep a number of promises to the voters, mainly relating to protecting the interests of the poor.

The main issues on which the party currently focuses include support for the socially deprived strata of society, such as pensioners and the unemployed. The party thinks that increasing the budget of social programmes on the one hand and liberalizing the economy and fostering the development of small and medium-sized businesses on the other hand are the best ways to resolve the problems of the poor in Georgia. The party also actively promotes decentralizing political power and other aspects of democratizing the political system. One more important issue of the party's programme is to protect the cultural heritage and increase the role of traditional religious institutions such as the Georgian Orthodox Church in public life.

Despite its short history, the Conservative Party of Georgia has introduced a number of innovative ideas to the Georgian political party scene, such as holding primary elections among the opposition parties, staging fund-raising events, and establishing the principle of the electivity of party officials at all levels of party hierarchy.

Structure

The document that regulates the party's activities is its statute, which was adopted at the party's Constituent Assembly in May 2005. The principle of the territorial division of the party structure follows the pattern of the country's territorial and electoral divisions. Creating structural units and defining their rights and responsibilities are also regulated by the statute, which quite clearly specifies all the procedures and issues of internal relations.

The supreme governing body of the party is the party Congress, which is convened at least three months before the parliamentary elections. The participants to the Congress are members of the National Committee, members of Parliament representing the party, chairpersons of the primary, district, regional/city and youth organizations, and members of the regional organizations' councils. The Congress is duly authorized if more than half of its members attend, and the decisions are reached by a simple majority. The Congress elects the party chairperson for a four-year term. The consent of two thirds of the participants is required to take decisions only on the issues of managing party property, amending or appending the statute and reorganizing the party, as well as dissolving it. Both in the Congress and in any governing body of the party, decisions are reached by secret vote.

The executive body of the party is the General Assembly. Its delegates are members of the National Committee, members of Parliament representing the party and chairpersons of the precinct, district, regional and youth organizations. It is convened at least biannually and is entitled to take any decision on party activities which are not a special prerogative of the Congress.

In the periods between the Congresses and Assemblies, the party is governed by the National Committee, which is composed of the party chairperson, the co-chair and five members. The members are elected for a 2-year term by the Congress, and, in the period between the Congresses, by the General Assembly. The National Committee:

- represents the party in political and legal relations;
- carries out decision made by the Congress and General Assembly;
- manages the party's material resources;
- reports to the Congress and General Assembly on the accomplished work;
- sets the cost of the membership fee and rules of its payment;
- expels party members for violations of statute;
- discusses the issue of terminating the chairperson's powers upon the Audit Commission's proposal.

The Audit Commission has three members who are approved by the Congress. It monitors all the internal party elections as well as activities of the governing bodies of the party and its local branches. It is also entitled to raise the issue of early termination of the chairperson's powers before the National Committee. The Audit Commission is accountable to the Congress and the General Assembly.

At the local level the party is represented by the primary organization, whose area of activities is limited to the boundaries of the electoral district. Its governing body is a general meeting of its members; in day-to-day activities, however, it is headed by the chairperson elected by the members. The duties of the organization include meeting regularly with the population, attracting and admitting new members and supporters, collecting signatures and organizing different party events at the local level.

The primary organizations create district organizations, whichare headed by chairpersons. The chairpersons are elected to state government bodies six months before every election by members of the district organization. Chairpersons of primary organizations can nominate their candidates for the position of chairperson. The elected chairperson of the district organization retains his or her position until the next elections. He or she may resign after having explained the reasons in a resignation letter or if the council members dismisses the chairperson, which is possible only if the chairperson violates the statute.

The district organization also has the position of the co-chair, which is taken by the person who came second in the district elections. The co-chair has similar responsibilities to those of the chairperson and carries out the chairperson's duties in the latter's absence.

The district organization has a third elected body, the council. It has five members, two of whom are the chairperson and the co-chair. The council is independent in its decisions at the district level, , including financial decisions . The decisions are reached by a simple majority. The assemblies of district organizations can nominate candidates for president, MPs in single-mandate districts, the mayor, regional governors and members of the local self-government bodies.

The district organization manages its budget independently. It has full freedom to raise and spend funds, although there is a limitation with regard to attracting funds of questionable origin. At the same time, the district organization is obliged to transfer 20% of the revenues to the central office.

The party structure also includes regional/city organizations, which consist of at least two district organizations. Like in all other structural units, its leadership is elected. It is governed by the general assembly, which is made up of the members of the district organization councils. The regional/city council, which directly manages the regional-level activities, includes chairs of district organizations.

The party has a youth organization as well, which unites party members under the age of 35. Its structure, set out in the statute, is similar to the primary organization's structure at the district level and to the district organization at the regional level. The party does not have a separate structural unit for women nor has it formulated any special gender policy yet. However, the party plans to create a women's club, whose main function will involve caring and providing support for mothers of large families and organizing events that will be of interest for the women.

Despite the fact that the party's structure is very similar to the other parties', the principle of filling party positions is radically different as all of them are elective. The party believes that decentralization of governance and encouragement of internal competition is important to consolidate and develop the party's structure. The CPG is certain that in a competitive environment, the strong win. Accordingly, encouraging internal competition will help create a strong organization. The main principle of the party's strategic development is forming a party of three thousand leaders (there are about this number of electoral precincts in Georgia). Respectively, the goal is to create primary organizations in every electoral precinct.

Yet another novelty which the Conservative Party of Georgia has introduced to Georgian politics is the strict rule of compiling electoral lists. The party statute allots the first 35 positions on the parliamentary electoral lists to holders of specific party positions, whereas the identities of the rest of the candidates are determined by the National Committee on the basis of strictly defined selection criteria.

Membership

Becoming a party member is quite simple. According to the statute, any Georgian citizen who recognizes the party statute can become a member. For this, the candidate fills out a form and provides personal data, information on his/her occupation and interests. There are no limitations to becoming a member;however, owing to the current economic situation in the country, it is mainly the unemployed and the poor who are joining the party.

The primary and district organizations have great freedom in implementing the admission policy in practice. The party's opinion is that leaders of the primary and district organizations are better equipped to assess the local situation and plan specific steps aimed at attracting new members.

The party is confident about its ability to expand the membership base. Its ultimate target is getting the support of every Georgian citizenwho is eligible to vote. In line with this priority, each district organization has come up with specific quantitative criteria for assessing the work of its activists. As is expressed by the formula n+1each member must bring to the party at least one more member each month.

The party statute distinguishes between full and associated members. Full members pay monthly membership fees and have active and passive voting rights in party elections. Associated members do not pay monthly fees and have only passive voting rights. All party members have the right to propose an initiative on any issue. They can write to the party chairperson, the National Committee or the Audit Commission to familiarize these with his or her proposal. The party members are entitled to receive exhaustive information on the party's activities. Only the National Committee has the right to expel a member if latter's action contravenes the party statute.

The Conservative Party of Georgia has no special ethical code or provisions that would be applicable when resolving internal party conflicts. They deem the absence of such a mechanism a problem and see the need for making amendments to the statute or passing an additional regulatory document. The party elections can be viewed as the main potential source for emergence of a conflict. To avoidsuch a conflict, every member should be ready for defeat and realize that other candidates are rivals, not adversaries.

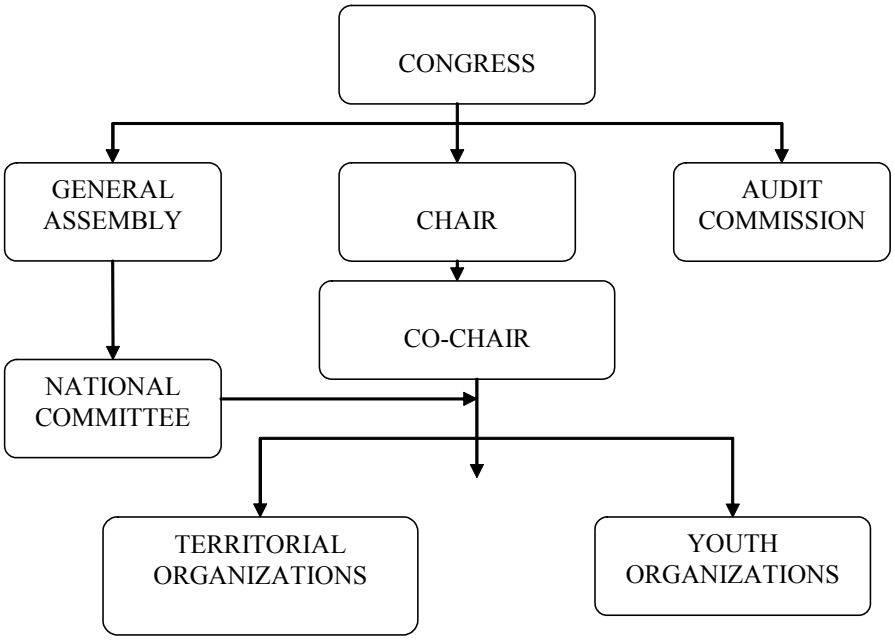
Public relations and international contacts

The Conservative Party of Georgia establishes direct contacts with the public through its primary organizations. In these relations, information flows in two directions: The party provides a detailed description of its activities, plans and programme, and, in turn, it learns about the people's problems and interests.

As for the media, it is usually the party's central governing body that cooperates with it. The Conservative Party of Georgia maintains the regularly updated web page (http://www.conservators.ge/) as another tool of supplying information to the public.

The party relies mainly on its own human and professional resources, although it expresses its desire to work with different professional groups and experts if it has such an opportunity. The party is ready to cooperate with international organizations and accept any type of assistance that they propose, be it technical equipment, educational programmes or recommendations on improving the efficiency of the party organization. At present, the party is involved in programmes carried out by the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute. The party plans to establish close relations with foreign parties of similar ideology because it believes that these links will help it in the processes of self-identification and the building of party structure.

The CONSERVATIVE PARTY of GEORGIA



The Political Movement Industry Will Save Georgia

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Brief history

Industry Will Save Georgia is one of those successful parties in Georgia, which has not been formed from a faction that was created in the legislative body. It takes its origin in the Industrialists' Union, a civic organization created to protect the interests of the Georgian business community, especially its manufacturing sector. The party was founded in April 1999 upon the initiative of its future leaders, the people who worked in the business sector, disagreed with the economic policy of the government and wanted to influence it. Its list (in a bloc with the political association of Georgia's Sportsmen) came third and exceeded the threshold for party lists in the 1999 parliamentary elections, and in the repeat 2004 parliamentary elections, its joint list with the New Conservative Party came the second with 7.6 percent of the vote, also exceeding the threshold. Until February 2006, its MPs were in the same faction with the New Conservative Party, and since February, the party has had a separate faction in the Georgian Parliament.

From the day of its creation, the party's priority has been to foster local business development. In the party's view, this can be best achieved by liberalizing the tax laws. The party often criticizes the International Monetary Fund's recommendations to the country, which they believe render the locally manufactured goods uncompetitive compared to foreign imports. The party views economic development as a solution to the most important problems that the country is faced with, in particular, social problems and the problem of restoring territorial integrity. The party's slogan is: "Let us save industry, and industry will save Georgia."

Structure

The internal relations, goals, and ways of achieving them are regulated by the statute, which was adopted at the Constituent Congress in 1999andamended in 2005, although the main principles of the organization's work remain the same.

The supreme body of the movement is the Congress, which convenes at least once in four years. No fewer than 200 delegates attend. The main functions of the Congress include adopting, amending or appending the statute,

assessing the party's work, and electing the chair, deputy chair, secretaries, the Council, the Main Committee and members of the Audit Commission.
During the period between the congresses, the party is governed by the Council. It is elected for a four-year term, and the number of members is set by the Congress. The Council is convened at least once in three months and maps out the party's strategy and tactics.

The party's executive body is the Main Committee, whose members are nominated by the Council and approved by the Congress. It is in charge of ensuring the implementation of decisions taken by the Congress and the Council. The Main Committee's meetings are held at least once a month. The committee takes all the decisions which are not special prerogatives of the Council and the Congress.

The party's activities and central apparatus are governed by the chair, deputy chair and secretaries. They are elected by the Congress for a four-year term and are at the same time members of the Main Committee. The chair or, in his or her absence, deputy chair represents the party in relations with other entities.

The party's financial activities are managed by the Audit Commission. It has five members, who are nominated by the Council and approved by the Congress for a four-year term. The Commission sets the rules of its work independently. Its exclusive function is to audit financial documents of the party. The Commission reports to the Council annually and to the Congress once in four years.

The party's principle of the territorial division of its branches follows the pattern of the country's administrative division. The basic unit is the primary organization, whose scope coincides with the boundaries of the electoral precincts. The primary organizations form zone, district and regional organizations. The primary organizations are responsible for directly working with voters. Their activities are intense during the campaign period, whereas during the periods between the elections they are mainly busy conducting the population census. The members of the primary organizations are continuously involved in canvassing, recording the residents' passport data, counting how many residents are eligible to vote and how many of them are party supporters. The primary organizations are also responsible for attracting new members and supporters.

The primary organizations' activities are coordinated by the district branches. The relation between these two levels of party hierarchy is often mediated by an intermediary structural unit, the zone organization. The latter are set up in the districts that are quite large in terms of area and population. Zone organizations coordinate the relations and efficient exchange of information between the district and primary organizations.

Apart from coordinating the efforts of the primary and zone levels, the district organizations are responsible for compiling the lists of party mem-

bers and voters and staging cultural and sports events. At the same time, they collect information on local problems and try to respond to these whenever possible. In particular, when there is a need for legal advice or a social or community problem arises, residents file an application with the party organization and ask for help. The latter contacts appropriate state government departments and tries to help resolve the issue.

According to character of the district, councils working with specific social groups are created within the district organizations. This may include councils which focus on problems of ethnic minorities or internally displaced persons. The party organizations try to involve representatives of these target groups as heads of the councils in order to make their work more relevant and efficient. Local branches of the youth and women organizations also function at the district level. They are involved in organizing public relations and cultural and sports events at the local level.

In their own turn, the district organizations create regional branches. Their activities are lead by the chair, who is elected by the local members and approved by the superior body. The regional and district organizations are obliged under the statute to report quarterly to the Main Committee on their activities.

In parallel with the party's main structure, there exist the youth and women's organizations. The majority of the members of the youth organization are sportsmen, who take active part in sports events organized by the party. Young people are also often used to disseminate various sorts of information, such as brochures on the party programme, among the voters.

The party's women's organization is involved in studying the problems of and assisting the poor, including homeless children, mothers of large families and young artists. It has also carried out the project of greater involvement of housewives in public life. This envisaged involving housewives in organizing different political, cultural and educational events.

Membership

The rules of admitting and expelling members are laid out in the statute. The candidate for membership must apply in writing to the party's territorial organization. Usually the decision is taken by the regional office.

The party pays great attention to the new members' political past, reputation and motives for joining the party. This information is collected during the interview with the candidate, an interview that is decisive for taking the decision on admission. The party does not have a target plan for admission of new members because it believes that pursuing numbers might detract from the quality of human resources.

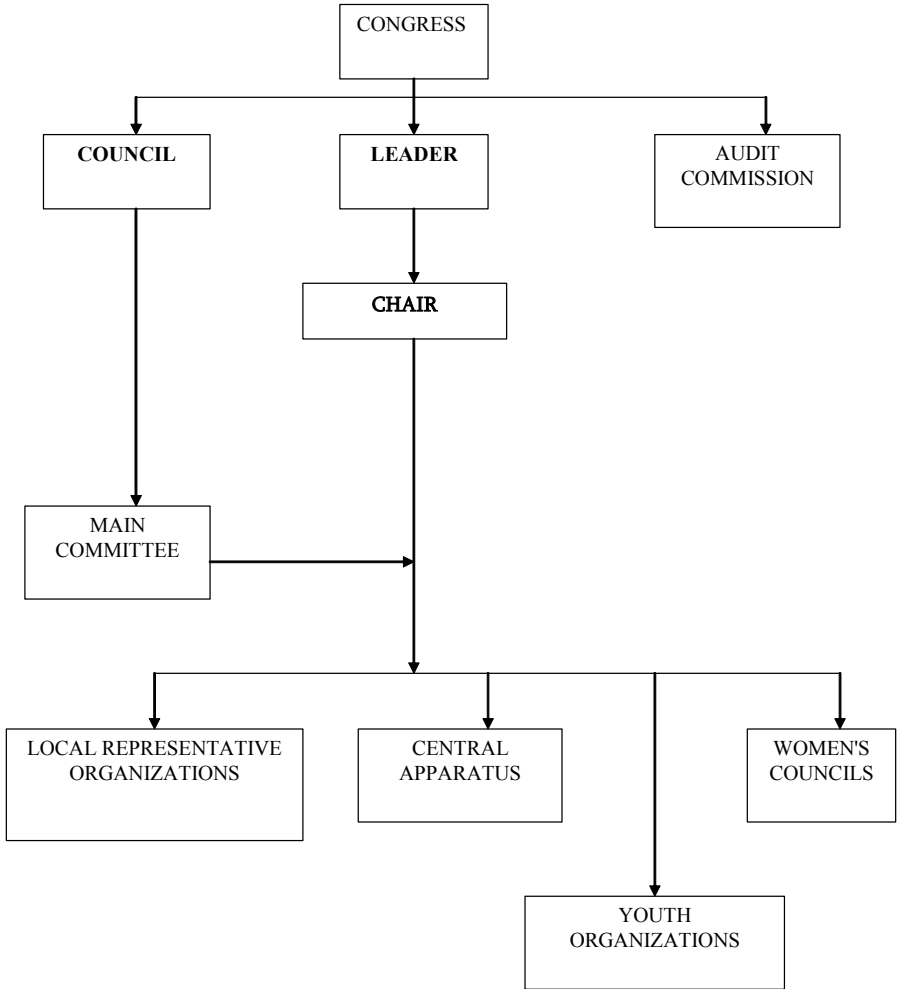
The grounds for expulsion from the party are set out in the statute. Violation of the statute and/or Georgian law as well as any action that causes

moral or material damage to the organization might constitute the grounds for expulsion. The decision on expulsion is taken by the regional organization. Expulsion from the ranks of the party is the only sanction which the statute envisages for mala fide members. There are no other formal mechanisms provided for resolving conflicts within the party. Frequently used informal methods of resolving conflicts include discussions in primary units that involve the parties to the conflict and other members.

Public relations and international contacts

The party maintains both formal and informal relations with the public . Informal relations are usually maintained by local organizations. They meet personally with acquaintances and neighbours and familiarize them with the party's activities and goals. Contacts with the media comprise the formal component of the public relations work, and this is taken care of by the central governing body. Only the head organization has the professional press service, which, if needed, provides services to regional and district offices as well. In the party's opinion, the media currently show little interest in covering the party's activities. With rare exceptions, the electronic media do not cover local-level party events and take interest only if party leaders take part in them. Therefore, the party does not see a need to keep public relations services at the local level.

The party relies mainly on its own resources in formulating and implementing its policy. However, it does admit that it needs expert assistance in terms of streamlining structure and improving work efficiency. The party is actively involved in educational projects funded by international NGOs, in particular, the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute. The party's women's organization also cooperates with international organizations and takes part in different educational programmes on gender issues. The party has almost no experience of relations with foreign parties, citing lack of experience and resources as the reasons for this. It admits that the party has so far not taken an initiative in seeking international connections and has only responded to emerging opportunities.


CONGRESS
COUNCIL
LEADER
AUDIT COMMISSION
CHAIR
MAIN COMMITTEE
LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE ORGANIZATIONS
CENTRAL APPARATUS
WOMEN'S COUNCILS
YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

Georgian Labour Party

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Brief history

Founded in 1995, the Labour Party of Georgia is the most successful left-wing political organization in the country. In the 1999 and 2004 repeat parliamentary elections the party was close to exceeding the election barrier. Its greatest electoral successes so far came in the 1998 and 2002 local elections, particularly in the 2002 elections to Tbilisi City Council where it won a plurality of votes.

The party was formed in order to protect rights of social groups who suffered from the failure of social safety networks in the period of transition from the centrally-planned economy to the market economy. The party aspires to develop into a Western-style (European) social-democratic party.

The main issues that the party is vigorously raising are those of adding free education and healthcare systems to the existing paid systems, but this does not exclude privately paid education and healthcare, reducing utility prices and setting up social security networks for former civil servants who have been dismissed. It supports the idea of preserving (partial) state ownership of land and opposes the privatization of the electrical power plants until the country achieves self-sufficiency and security in the energy sector. The party prioritizes support for local manufacturing, especially small and medium-size enterprises, and believes that the liberalization of the tax code is the best way to achieve this goal. It advocates the idea of assigning to the Georgian Orthodox Church a greater role in public life and calls for protecting and preserving cultural values and the traditional lifestyle. At the same time, it affirms that the rights of all other religious denominations alongside the Orthodox Church should be protected as well.

Structure

The party's structure and internal relations are regulated by its Statute. It was adopted in 1995 and underwent minor changes in 1998 and 2002, while the basic principles have remained almost intact. The Labour Party is known for its relatively simple structure compared to other parties.

The main decision-making body in the party is its Central Office although, important decisions are taken at party conferences and the political committee. However, when important decisions are to be reached, the issue is forwarded to regional branches for consideration. These offices are obliged

to prepare their own remarks and suggestions and must inform the Central Office in writing of their decisions. If there is a disagreement, the decision is reached by the majority, and if votes are split in half, the chairperson has the deciding vote. The decision that was taken by the political committee becomes mandatory and all structural units of the party are obliged to carry it out.

The supreme governing body of the party is the Congress, which is held once in four years. It is duly authorized if at least two thirds of the delegates are present, and decisions are made by the simple majority of those present.

Special powers of the Congress include:

- Adopting, amending, and appending the Statute;
- Electing the chair of the party and hearing his/her report on party activities;
- Electing the Political Committee nominated by the party chairperson;
- Electing the Audit Commission and hearing its report.
- The party's executive body is the Political Committee, which has 25 members (including the party chairperson). It is elected to a four-year term by the Congress and has to assemble at least once in three months. The everyday activities of the committee are carried out by the Bureau and secretaries. The Bureau usually has 10 members who are nominated by the chairperson and approved by the committee. The committee's rights and responsibilities include:
- Admitting or expelling party members with two thirds of the vote, appointing heads of the local structural units;
- Ensuring the holding of the Congress;
- Managing party property in the period between the Congresses.

The party chair is the highest position in the party. He or she represents the party in domestic and foreign relations and signs the official party documents. The chair is also authorized to manage the party finances and material property.

The basic local branches of the party are the primary organizations or clubs, which are established in the electoral precincts where the party has at least three activists. They are headed by chairs, whose main functions are attracting new members, organizing public relations events, and informing members about party decisions. At the same time, chairpersons collect information on the problems existing in their communities, especially in the social sphere. They are also obliged to ensure that supporters are active on election day and go to the ballot boxes.

Some 8-12 primary organizations form a Zone Organization. It is headed by the supervisor, who is responsible for successful party activities in

the area. The supervisor of the area is at the same time a deputy head of the District Organization in charge of some fields of activity. The supervisor has a deputy, or vice-supervisor, who assists with his or her work.

The key tier of the local structural units is the District Organization. It leads the party activities within the given electoral district. The voters' lists and files of supporters and members, compiled by the lower-level units of the party, are kept in the District Organizations. The District Organization is headed by the chairperson, who is nominated by the party chair and approved by the Political Committee with two thirds of the vote.

The main sources of income for the District Organization are membership fees or small donations by members. At present, funds that the party raises are only sufficient for renting the offices (which the party usually gets at a discount from its friends) and furnishing them . The membership fee is 30 tetri (0.3 lari) per month. Half of these funds remain in the district, and the rest is sent to the centre. Often, if this amount is not sufficient to cover the local office expenses, 100 percent of collected revenues remain in the district and are spent for maintaining the office. However, in this case, the leadership of the District Organization must provide explanations to the central office.

Apart from the main party organization, there also exist the Youth Organization and the Women's Council, which are represented in both central and local representative bodies. Their structural units are headed by chairpersons.

The Women's Council, which is also called the Pedagogues' Council, is made up mainly of school teachers and nursery school teachers. Their main duties are registering mothers of large families and socially deprived families and studying their problems. They also monitor whether funds in the social security programmes are expended appropriately.

Membership

The issue of granting party membership is decided by the Political Committee. The candidate must write an application and file it with the appropriate local organization depending on his or her place of residence. Ultimately, the decision is made by the Party Committee. At present, the party plans to tighten the admission procedures, this as a result of the general change of the principles of structural development. While in the first 2-3 years of after its creation the party was oriented towards expanding its membership base, it currently places emphasis on the quality of its members. By introducing stricter admission requirements, the party seeks to attract only worthy and active individuals. It avoids having members who will be listed only on paper but who will not fulfil any responsibilities.

Apart from the application, the candidate for membership has to attach a letter of recommendation from a party member. If the candidate does not have a reference person, local party activists will gather information about him or her. In particular, it is important to know whether the candidate has been a member of another party, what his or her true motives might be, etc. Although raising the number of members is not the party's priority, attracting at least one member per month is viewed as a minimum target for each primary organization.

When granting membership to candidates, the party takes an interest in the applicants' occupation and interests. This information goes down in the members' log books, which are kept at the offices of all the local branches. The log book also lists the members' birthdays. The party uses this information, along with the national holidays, for the purpose of reminding its members of the party. The activists of the primary and district organizations regularly phone all the members on holidays and birthdays. They consider this as a simple sign of attention which pleases everyone.

The party members are obliged to take part in party events, carry out the instructions and tasks assigned by the superiors and regularly pay membership fees, or otherwise they will be expelled from the party. Dire financial circumstances often do not allow members to pay membership fees or take part in party activities. In such cases, the member does not leave the party but is given a special allowance and/or other members try to compensate the debt.

The Labour Party encountered the problem of the outflow of its members during and after the Rose Revolution. Roughly 15-17 percent of members left the party, mainly because of the position which the party took towards the revolution. Some of the members, mainly less active ones, could not accept the fact that the party did not join protest rallies against Shevardnadze's government. The party was against Shevardnadze but did not cooperate with Saakashvili. However, the number of the party members has recently increased again.

The power to expel a member from the party is vested in the Political Committee. Actions that contravene the party Statute, programme or goals, refusal to participate in party events or failure to pay membership fees for four months (bar the exceptions) might constitute grounds for expulsion.

Apart from membership, the party also has the system of supporters. The people who intend to vote for the Labour Party in the next elections as well as those who have forfeited their membership status due to their passivity but still side with the party can join the lists of supporters. These lists are drawn up by the clubs in their localities and kept at the District Offices. As results, the party knows almost exactly the share of votes (minimum amount) that it might receive in the next elections if they are held in a fair

way. The party also spares no time or efforts to monitor the voters' lists and correct mistakes in them.

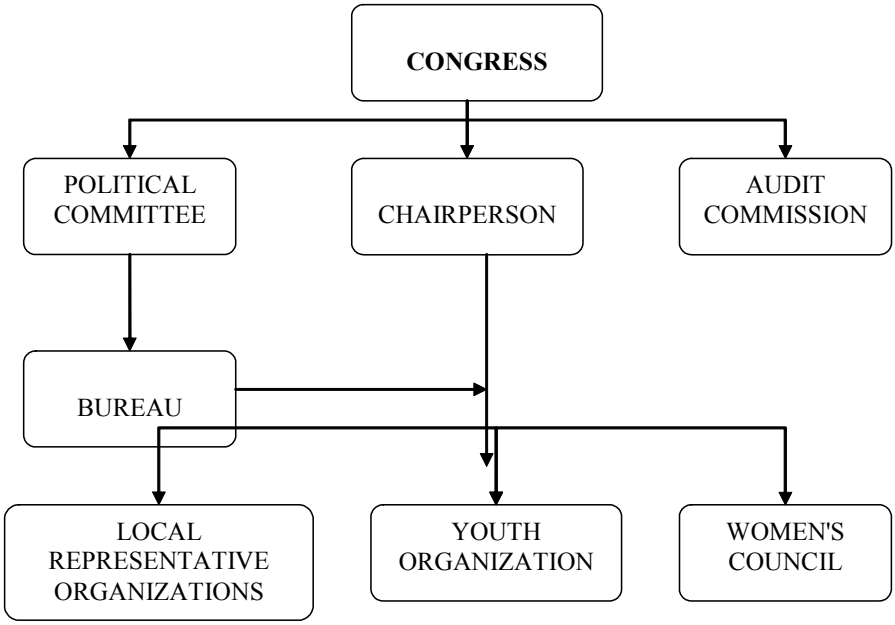
Public relations and international contacts

Propaganda is the main and most effective public relations tool of the party. The Labour Party has developed an unusual method of propaganda: representatives of local organizations loudly discuss the party's activities and programme in public transport and so arouse the bystanders' interest. When engaging in propaganda, members not only spread the party information among the public, but also listen to people's problems and try to serve the collective interest. The professional Public Relations Service exists only in the Central Office, although local representative bodies ask for its help when needed. The party itself has no media outlet of its own and is entirely dependent on the mass media. However, drawing the attention of the latter is quite difficult, and besides, the party complains that the media reports are biased and unbalanced.

Yet another unusual public relations method which the Labour Party employed was the dissemination of audio tapes. The party recorded the chairperson's addresses to the public, made multiple copies and disseminated the tapes in the regions where information from the centre is rarely available. Despite this, however, the party feels the need to improve the technology of maintaining relations with supporters and the public. They also deem excessive the duties that are officially assigned to individual positions within the party, which makes the party activities less efficient. In particular, the chairman of a primary organization has to be present at the electoral precinct during the elections, but he or she would be able to mobilize supporters if someone else performed this duty. Accordingly, the party believes that revising and redistributing rights and responsibilities would improve the effectiveness of party activities.

The party closely cooperates with the International Republican Institute. It is involved in the IRI-organized projects, and its members undergo retraining at the Campaign Academy, a programme that was founded by this organization. The party maintains links with foreign parties of similar ideologies by cooperating with the funds and organizations that are founded by those parties. It is trying to get actively involved in the conferences and working meetings that are organized by the Westminster and Alfred Mozer foundations as well as by the European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity. The party is striving to join the Socialist International and the Party of European Socialists.

Georgian Labour Party



New Conservative Party

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Brief History

The New Conservative Party was established on the basis of a faction in the Parliament of the third convocation (1999-2003). The young businessmen who had entered Parliament through the list of the Citizens' Union of Georgia separated from the majority and united in a faction called "The New Faction". Based on this faction, they founded the New Conservative Party in 2001. The main reason for leaving the ruling party – the Citizens' Union of Georgia – was a rejection of the government's economic policy. The main reason for young successful businessmen having decided to start a political career was to represent and defend the rights of businessmen in the legislative branch of the government. As a gap widened between their approaches and the economic policy implemented by the government, they decided to design and promote their own policies. In the 2004 parliamentary elections, the party created a joint list with Industry Will Save Georgia, and it came second with 7.6 percent of the vote. In Parliament, the two parties had a joint faction

The main aim of the party is to support the liberalization of the economy and create an environment open to entrepreneurial initiatives. The major characteristics of the party's ideological identity include recognizing the crucial importance of guaranteeing the security of private property, promoting the principles of the market economy, furthering the democratization of government institutions and preserving the traditional cultural values, norms and way of life.

Organizational Structure

The Statute of the party is the main document regulating the party's structure and forms of its activities. Adopted at the founding conference in 2001, it gives a detailed description of the scope of each structural unit, describes the procedures of the structures' interrelations and outlines the rights and responsibilities for different positions inside the party. The Statute also defines governing, executive and auditing bodies within the head office of the party. The territorial representation of the organization is based on the principal of the country's territorial division. Heads of territorial organizations

are locally elected positions but later need to be approved by the superior body.

The supreme administrative body of the party is the Congress that is held once in four years. Generally one delegate to the Congress represents four hundred members of the party. The Congress is authorized if it is attended by more than half of the delegates. Most decisions are taken by the simple majority of those present. The exceptions are introducing amendments to the Statute, reorganizing or liquidating the party, adopting the programme and electing the chair, two deputy chairs, the general secretary and the main committee for four years. Such decisions can be adopted only by the two thirds of the Congress participants.

The Congress also nominates a candidate for president, and it hears and approves the reports of the chairperson and the Inspection Committee.

During the period between the Congresses the party is managed by the Political Committee., which unites the heads of all the structural units and the party members represented in the government. It is called once in six months and confirms the budget, determines the size of the membership fee, hears reports, confirms the party electoral lists and the candidates to be elected by the majority system and takes decisions on uniting into electoral blocs, boycotting elections or going over to the opposition.

The executive body of the party is a main committee consisting of 17 members including the chairperson, deputy chairs and general secretary. The committee is authorized to:

- make statements on behalf of the party;
- confirm the chairs of regional and district organizations and members of the bureau;
- draw up the party electoral lists;
- confirm rhe annual budgets of district and regional organizations.

The highest position within the party is the chair, who is also the chair of the Political Committee and the Main Committee. He/she represents the party and is authorized to speak on behalf of the organization. During elections, he/she is responsible for establishing an elections office, defining its regulations and structure and submitting them to the main committee.

The organizational activities of the party are directed by the general secretary, who coordinates the work of the party staff. He/she is authorized to appoint/dismiss staff members. The general secretary disposes of the funds in accordance with the budget approved by the political committee.

The Inspection Committee is the auditing unit of the party and is comprised of given members elected by the congress for four years. The Committee is responsible for carrying out an annual “audit of finances and books

as well as economic and legal inspection". Sessions of the Committee are held at least once in six months. The Inspection Committee is accountable to the Congress.

The main territorial representative organizations are regional, district and primary organizations. The supreme governing body of each of these units is a members' assembly. It is usually called up once per year and is authorized to elect the chairperson of the local organization that later has to be approved by a supreme body. In addition to the chairs, local organizations are managed by bureaus. Usually there are five members in the bureau, but heads of local functional organizations (youth and women organizations) also take part in the bureau sessions. The bureau is a decision-making body at the local level that plans and carries out local activities and answers to the head office of the party.

A primary organization is the basis of the party structure. It is established upon the decision of a district organization. The work of primary organizations becomes more active during the elections, although within the period between elections, members are busy spreading the party information and conducting surveys to register the voters, supporters, and members.

Primary organizations unite into district organizations, although, if needed, an intermediary unit – zone organization – is established between these two levels. Zone organizations function as intermediaries between the primary and district organizations and contribute to a rapid exchange of information and coordination of their activities.

District organizations coincide with the areas of election districts. The main responsibilities of this unit is to supervise party work at the local level, gather information about the problems that local residents are facing, annually update the members' database and collect membership fees. It can also approve and dismiss members and submit a candidacy for a majoritarian MP to the Main Committee.

The district organization is free to raise finances on its own for implementing party activities at the local level. Usually these are sports or cultural events where the costs of prizes and excursions are covered by the local businessmen. At present, the head office of the party remains the main source of funding for district organizations. The moneys received from the centre are spent mostly on office expenses. The positions that are remunerated in the district-level organization are those of the chair and the technical staff, particularly the assistant/secretary and the election expert.

District organizations have members who work on specific issues such as legal, social, and other problems. Their help is needed when citizens apply to the organization and ask for consultations. The members of a district organization try to provide at least small financial support to the poor. In particular, they solicit the head office for funds and, with this money, they implement such projects as supporting mothers of large families, supporting

the elderly over 100, distributing free lunches and medical aid vouchers, etc. Such initiatives are usually taken by the district representation of the women's club and its head office.

The district organization participates in taking significant decisions when the head office sends it a proposal for consideration. Such issues are considered by a bureau that summarises the opinions of its members and sends the comments to the party leadership. Generally, district organizations are executive bodies within the party structure. They receive instructions from the central office, but choose the ways of implementing them in accordance with the local characteristics.

The regional organization, an intermediate unit between the district organization and the head office, coordinates the party's work and carries out activities at the regional level. It reports to the Main Committee, Political Council and Inspection Commission.

The party has a women's club and a youth organization. The resources of the latter are often used for carrying out canvassing activities. To attract youth the party organizes many cultural and sports events with their participation. For example, in 2002 and 2003 they carried out the project Dzegli (Monument), sending thousands of young people to different part of Georgia to restore medieval Georgian temples. For most active young people, the party has begun courses in computer sciences, foreign languages and accounting.

The women's club has its representatives both in the head office and in local administrative bodies. Its main function is to study the problems of mothers of large families and the disabled and to support these groups. The women's club was the initiator and organizer of the occasional financial assistance programme and the programme for providing free meals and medical aid.

Membership

The rules and procedures of admission of new members are set out in the Statute. Any person wishing to join the party should fill in the required form, giving personal details, particularly contact information, educational background, working experience and spheres of interest. After that, the party coordinator will collect information about the person's political background and possible reasons of his/her willingness to join the party. In order to be admitted to the party, an applicant should satisfy three main requirements: being a citizen with full rights, sharing a conservative ideology and being a reliable person. The party leaders admit that it is very difficult to assess the reliability of a person, but they think that, after obtaining information about the applicant and conducting an interview with him/her, it becomes possible to make a right decision.

While trying to attract new members, the party is facing the challenge of maintaining the loyalty of those who have already joined. During the Rose Revolution, the New Conservative Party lost about 15 percent of its members. Although most of them were passive members, such experience was a good lesson for the party. The party believes that in order to keep the loyalty of its members, the party has to recognize that the latter should need the party just as the party needs them. Respectively, it tries to give its members the chance of self-realization and satisfy their healthy ambitions.

A member can leave the party on his or her free will, and the resignation is effective from the date of handing in the request. The right of expelling a member is vested in the bureaus of district organizations. Such sanction can be taken when a member commits an action that harms the party's image, infringes upon its interests or prevents the implementation of the party's decisions.

The party has no other formal mechanism for settling the conflicts than its Statute. Expelling is the only sanction for serious violations. Hence, the only way of regulating conflicts is through informal discussions.

Public relations and international contacts

The public relations of the party are run by its two different structural units employing different means. District organizations that do not have professional public relations services work through personal meetings with the public. Nearly all the members of primary organizations contact people on a daily basis, study their problems and explain to them details of the party's activity.

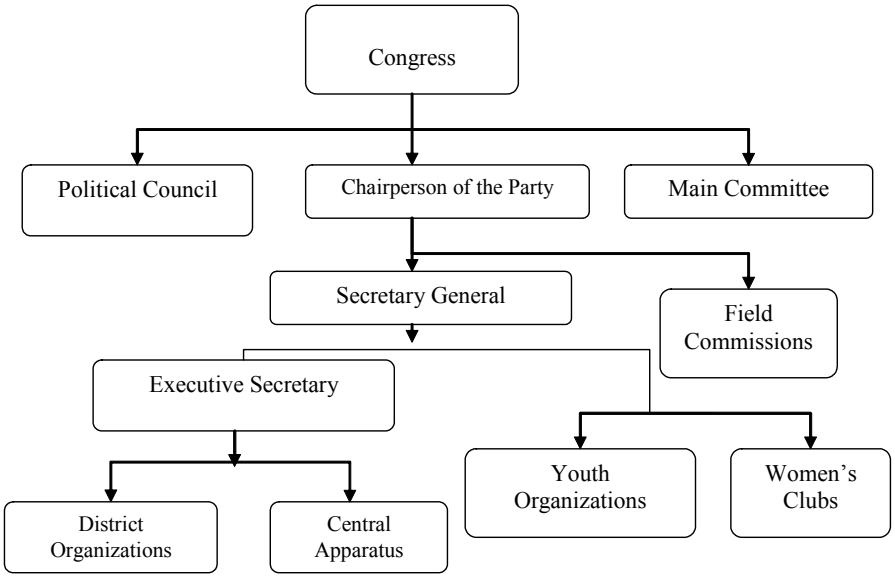
The central governing body of the party usually contacts the public through mass media. The party often complains about the passive and biased attitude of mass media but, since it does not have its own electronic media (except for the web page www.ncp.ge), it is always ready to cooperate with them. The party does not have a regular publishing house either, although during the election campaigns its programmes are usually printed and widely spread.

The party is actively cooperating with international organizations. It was deeply involved in the projects implemented by the National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute. The election consultants trained by these organizations are represented in all structural units and are paid for their work.

The party has also established close relations with like-minded foreign political parties and party networks. In 2005, the New Conservative Party obtained the status of associated member in the International Democrats Union (IDU). The youth organization of the party is a member of youth organization of the European Peoples' Party (EPP), and the party itself claims it

will obtain the status of observer within the EPP next year . The party is also cooperating with the parties of Western and Eastern European countries: Norway, Germany (Christian Democrats), Greece (Nea Democratia), Poland (Civil Platform), and the Ukraine (Our Ukraine).

The NEW CONSERVATIVE PARTY



The Republican Party

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Brief history

The Republican Party is the oldest among the currently active Georgian political parties. Founded in 1978 as an underground organization of dissidents who opposed the Soviet rule, the party has since then relied more on informal relations between its members rather than organized structures.

With Georgia's independence, a new period started in the evolution of the Republican Party. The party participated in all parliamentary elections held in independent Georgia, although it did so in blocs with other parties. Its influence peaked in the 1992-95 Parliament, where it formed a major opposition group and played an important role in drafting the 1995 Georgian Constitution. Coalitions in which the Republicans participated in 1995 and 1999 elections, could not overcome the threshold necessary to enter Parliament.

The Republican Party leaders played an important role in the Rose Revolution. They were among the founders of the United National Movement, and ran in the 2004 repeat parliamentary elections on that party's candidates' list. Later on, they left the parliamentary majority amid the controversy over the February 2004 constitutional amendments and the status of the Autonomous Republic of Achara. In the fall of 2005, together with the Conservative Party of Georgia, they created a new faction of the Democratic Front.

The inertia of a dissident group continued in the party for a couple of decades. Party members took an active part in discussions and public debates on key problems of development in the country. Several party leaders were involved in the activities of non-governmental organizations, which brought them public attention. But the party was not as successful in attracting large number of members. In fact, the party has acquired the nature and image of a political club of intellectuals.

A major reorganization that is currently underway in the party aims to transform the party from a club-type entity into a well-organized political organisation.

The supreme political value of the party is the freedom of the individual. It is a proponent of developing democratic political institutions, strictly adhering to the principle of the rule of law, developing the free market economy and protecting private property and of the minorities' rights. The party

has drawn up a draft of an alternative Constitution, which envisages the parliamentary model of the state government system, decentralization of governance and the development of local self-government institutions. It has also framed a draft alternative status of the Autonomous Republic of Achara.

Structure

The party's internal relations are regulated by the Statute, which was adopted immediately after the creation of the party and amended in 2005. The structural divisions follow the pattern of the country's administrative-territorial system, with local branches being set up at the regional, city and district levels. The right to establish these local branches has been given to the National Committee. To make the work of the city and regional organizations effective, a managerial apparatus will be created that will be staffed by salaried officials. This is a matter of principle for the party because members believe that, in order to do the quality work, a person should be a paid professional and engaged full-time. . However, the party does not yet have salaried positions.

The supreme body of the party, whose decisions are mandatory for all the members and structural units, is the Congress. It is convened once in four years and is entitled to:

- Demand reports from the heads of the party's structural units and party members who were elected or appointed to official positions and assess them;
- Elect the National Committee;
- Elect the Audit Commission.

In the period between the congresses, the party is run by the Political Council. It consists of members of the National Committee, party members who were elected to state government bodies of any level, chairs of the regional and youth organizations and other members whose number does not exceed one fifth of the number of the above-mentioned members. The meetings of the Political Council are held once in three months to hear the reports of all structural units on ongoing activities. The meeting is authorized to define the political course of the party, establish the cost of membership fees and revoke the decisions by the National Committee and party chairperson with support of more than half of all the members.

The main body that governs the party activities on a day-to-day basis is the National Committee. It has 13 members who are elected to a four-year term by the Congress. The National Committee is eligible to:

- Make statements on the party's behalf;
- Elect the chairperson;
- Create and close down the structural units;
- Appoint and dismiss the heads of organizations;
- Approve the lists of candidates running in the elections.

In accordance with the Statute, each member of the National Committee is assigned specific functions in different aspects of the party's activities and is personally accountable to the National Committee.

The top official in the party is the chair, who represents the party in relations with third parties, makes political statements and issues executive orders and manages the party's funds in compliance with the National Committee's decisions.

The Audit Commission, which is authorized to monitor party activities,t has five members who are elected by the Congress. Apart from making financial audits, it is in charge of putting forward proposals regarding improvements in the party's organizational activities and personnel changes.

In addition to the party's structural units, the party members can also join different groups within the party based on their professional or other interests. Entities alternative to state government bodies are also formed within the party. They define party policy and alternative ways of solving problems in different fields of government work.

In 2005, a youth organization was established within the party. It has its own structure, but its members can also join the main party units. The organization has different thematic groups: legal, economic, foreign relations and administrative-territorial, and an alternative cabinet to governmental bodies.

Membership

The rules of admission and expulsion of members are regulated by the party Statute, which prescribes that any legally competent Georgian citizen who will submit his CV and recommendations together with his application may join. A member who has already proven himself may be the reference person who will be responsible for the new member. Besides the National Committee, the district organizations have the right to grant membership as well, but the candidate should be later approved by the National Committee.

The party has no experience in regulating internal conflict situations. Even those people who left the party reached their decision without conflicts

and withdrew from the party of their own will. Neither is there a precedent of expulsion. Hot debates are very frequent in the party, but they have never escalated into conflicts. Accordingly, the party has no special mechanism of regulating conflicts except for the Statute. It is interesting that, in contrast to other parties, the Statute envisages different types of punishment should a member violate the Statute or hinder the party's activities. Besides expulsion, the Statute also envisages softer sanctions, such as a warning and temporary suspension of membership.

Along with membership, the institution of supporters is also being created in the party. It will include people who have not decided to join but who intend to closely cooperate with the party. Accordingly, they will have complete freedom of getting involved in the work of professional and interest groups that have been created within the party.

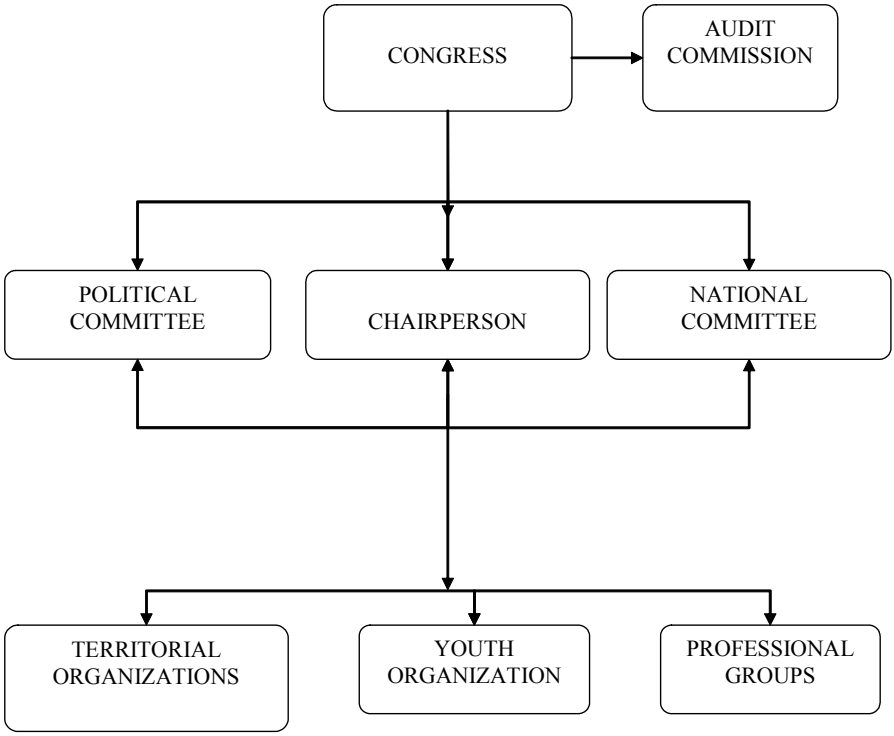
Public relations and international contacts

The main vehicle of the party's relations with the public is the mass media. The party had its own newspaper but now it is no longer in print, which makes the party entirely dependent on the mass media for publicizing its activities. The party is displeased with its relations with the media. Its activities and news conferences are often ignored, and when they are covered, the media often presents them in a biased and unbalanced way.

Since its creation, the party has mainly relied on its own intellectual resources. While still adhering to this tradition, it does not rule out the possibility of inviting and/or hiring local and foreign specialists if needed. In this respect, cooperation with non-governmental organizations is especially interesting for the party. Compared with other parties, the Republicans have the longest and most successful record of close cooperation with the Georgian NGOs. The party leaders themselves were founders or staff members of the leading NGOs. Currently, the party is using the expertise of the non-government sector and deems cooperation between the parties and NGOs to be necessary to develop the Georgian state.

Together with other parties, the Republicans closely cooperate with those international organizations which work on socio-political projects. Until now, cooperation with international organizations and foreign parties has been limited to participation in international forums and exchange of information, although in the future the party intends to step up political cooperation at the international level. In particular, it plans to establish closer relations with the US and Western European parties. At the same time, it intends to contact the political organizations of liberal democratic ideology in the post-Soviet and former socialist countries and establish close ties with them. The party cooperates strategicly with Friedrich Naumann Foundation of the German Free Democrats' Party.

REPUBLICAN PARTY



United National Movement

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Brief history

The United National Movement was created as a result of the merger of two parties, the National Movement and the United Democrats in November 2004. These two constituent organizations, in their turn, were created in the early 2000s, and the leaders of both of them came from the reformist wing of the Citizens Union of Georgia, who quit that party being dissatisfied with its activities.

The National Movement was founded in December 2001. In 2002, it took part in the local self-government elections and achieved an important success in the Tbilisi Council Elections. After these elections, its leader, Mikheil Saakashvili, became the Chairman of the Tbilisi City Council. The United Democrats' Party,created in 2003, was led by Zurab Zhvania and a group of other reformist leaders who broke away from Eduard Shevardnadze's government in 2002.

In the 2003 parliamentary elections, both parties participated as, respectively, the Saakashvili-National Movement bloc and the Burjanadze-United Democrats bloc. After it became obvious that the elections were rigged, these parties played a key role in organizing the protest events that became known as Rose Revolution and led to the resignation of President Shevardnadze. In the March 2004 repeat parliamentary elections these two parties took part in a joint list. This list also included representatives of the Republican Party and the Union of National Forces, who were in a bloc with the National Movement in the 2003 elections and in the days of the revolution. The joint list was victorious, with 66.2 percent of the vote. Later, representatives of the latter two groups went over to the opposition.

At the current stage, the party has two clear-cut priorities in its activities. These are the restoration of the country's territorial integrity and the improvement of social conditions for the people. Regarding the former issue, the party is working on intensifying political negotiations, elaborating projects for peacefully settling conflicts and enlisting international support. With regard to the latter issue, the party promotes such measures as making more funds available to the social programmes, creating favourable conditions for business, especially the medium-size and small businesses (through tax liberalization, the simplification of licensing) and other initiatives.

Structure

The basic principles and structural divisions of the United National Movement are defined by the Statute adopted in 2004. In addition, each structural unit has the right to adopt additional regulations or internal rules. In 2005, the party endorsed the five fundamental principles that were compulsory for members and laid out a 10-year development plan.

The supreme governing body of the party is the Congress, which is convened at least twice a year. A minimum of 200 delegates should participate. The Congress is duly authorized if it is attended by more than half of the delegates, and the decisions are passed by the majority of those present. Its special prerogatives are the following:

- adopting, amending and appending the Statute;
- electing the chairperson, secretary general, Political Council and Audit Commission of the union;
- discussing and taking decisions on the issues of reorganization and dissolution of the union.

In the period between the congresses, the most important decisions are made by the Political Council, whichconsists of the chairperson, secretary general, chairperson of the Tbilisi City Council and 23 members who are elected by the Congress. The council meetings are held at least once a month. The Political Council is accountable to the Congress and the chairperson of the Union. It has the right to:

- found/dissolve local branches of the union;
- approve the regulations adopted by the local branches;
- approve the union's budget;
- lay down the rule of admission for members, activists and supporters;
- expel members should they systematically violate the Statute, fail to carry out the superior body's instructions or exhibit unbecoming behaviour;
- discuss the issue of revoking the status of activist;
- formulate the rule of selecting Congress delegates.

The auditing body of the union is the Audit Commission. It has seven members who are elected by the Congress to a two-year term. The commission is in charge of monitoring the financial activities of the union and auditing the financial and bookkeeping documents of the union. It is accountable to the Congress and, once a year, to the Political Council.

The top official of the party is the chairperson of the union, who governs the party directly and represents the organization both inside and outside the

country. The chairperson can take political statements and deliver addresses on behalf of the union. He or she also signs Congress's decisions.

The organizational work of the union is managed by the secretary general, who organizes the Congress and the sessions of the Political Council. The secretary general also proposes the budget to the Political Council with the chairperson's assent. He or she can appoint and dismiss the heads and staffof structural units.

There are two main decision-making tiers within the party, central and local (including regional and district organizations). The most important decisions are made by the central office; in particular, the central officer formulates the party's philosophy, policy and ideology. It also manages the process of raising and spending funds. Accordingly, all other activities, including those at the district level, have to be coordinated with the central office. As for the second decision-making tier, the district offices, they take decisions on local problems and coordinate this with the superior bodies. Usually, party policy is formulated by its leaders, while other units carry out the decisions.

The grass-root level of the party structure is the primary organization. It operates within the boundaries of the electoral precinct. To coordinate the district- and primary-level activities and ensure rapid reaction, zone organizations have also been created.

The zone and primary organizations are headed by coordinators, who are considered mediators between the party and the public and are responsible for conducting party activities at the local level. In particular, it is incumbent on them to familiarize themselves with the precinct, its residents and local problems. They organize the meetings between the party representatives and local residents and register supporters and voters. The prime responsibility of the coordinators is generating propaganda and enroling new members and supporters. On election day, they are expected to mobilize supporters.

The activities of the primary and zone organizations are coordinated by the district organization. It has the administrative apparatus needed to efficiently manage the activities, namely, the administrator, organizing secretary and chief clerk. The district branches organize the implementation of the party activities, in particular, staging cultural and recreational events, collecting aid, discussing the problems of the impoverished strata and raising them with the executive branch.

The nine-member councils exist within the district organizations and are made up of local party members. The council is a body that makes decisions which are then carried out by the apparatus. District organizations try to make councils widely representative so that they include people from different precincts, ages and professional groups. In ethnic minority-populated districts, the organizations try to involve the minority leaders too. The council's functions include admitting new members, approving candidates to

become heads of precinct organizations and dealing with the district organization's financial issues. The council usually convenes weekly or once in two weeks.

The party's strategic development plan envisages creating boards in addition to councils at the district levels. The boards will be open structural units without limitations for the number of members. Along with party members, non-members will have the right to take part in the board's activities. The board will act as a consultative body, which will give recommendations to the district organization on local issues. It will also pursue the goal of attracting specialists in different fields and interesting them in the party's work.

Parallel to the main organization is the party's youth organization with its same structure and governing council. Usually it stages sports and cultural events and promotes a healthy lifestyle. In the summer of 2005, the youth organization made a major contribution to organizing the Patriot summer camps sponsored by the Ministry of Culture.

Membership

The rules of admission of new members are set out in the Statute. The applicant must submit an application and a minimum of three references to the council. At the initial stage of the party's history, it was quite easy to join, and almost all applicants were granted membership. At present, however, selecting, formulating, and tightening the new criteria is part of the party's strategic development plan. During the period of research, enrolment was suspended because the party was working on a new admission policy. In the future, potential members will need to submit references from people who are respected and trusted by the party. The reference persons will be held responsible for the activities and reputations of their nominees.

Apart from membership, the party has the system of supporters and activists. The central secretariat, city and district organizations register and keep records of supporters. As for the activities, they can either be affiliated with the party or not. The activist must get actively involved in all the party events and carry out his superiors' decisions.

Leaving the party is voluntary. Expulsion of members falls under the Political Council's jurisdiction. The "Five Fundamental Principles for Party Members," which were laid down by the party in 2005, further defines the limits and principles of the member's activities. In the party's opinion, those members who excel in their adherence to these principles will be encouraged as best as possible, whereas those who grossly violate any of them will immediately leave the party's ranks.

Internal conflict situations are quite rare in the party. They are usually resolved in an informal atmosphere through dialogue. Should an irreconcilable confrontation arise, the member who has the fewest supporters leaves

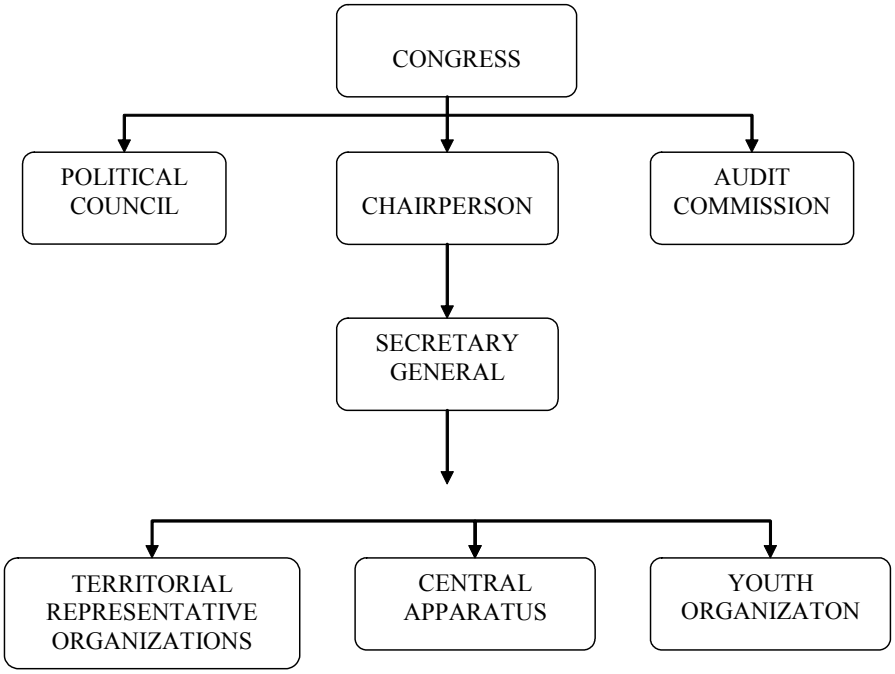
the party. The party maintains that the best way to avoid conflicts between members is making a clear division between rights and responsibilities and ensuring a strict hierarchy in the party's structures.

Public relations and international contacts

Public relations are the responsibility of the party's central government bodies and local branches, although the forms of maintaining relations differ. The central office's prerogative is relations with the mass media. The service for relations with professional communities is also part of the central office but, if necessary, serves the needs of local branches as well. The primary organizations' relations with the public are of a less formal nature. The organizations' members try to regularly familiarize themselves with the local residents' problems, hear their complaints and make them aware of the party's activities.

The party takes pride in its ties with the leading political parties in Europe, including the European People's Party (Christian Democrats), the Dutch Liberal Party and others. It closely cooperates with the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute offices in Georgia. It has plans to make the foreign relations service more active in the future and, accordingly, establish close international contacts, which in the party's opinion are necessary to form a strong party organization.

UNITED NATIONAL MOVEMENT



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