

## NEWSLETTER V

### HOW GEORGIANS VIEW DEMOCRACY?

#### SELECTED RESULTS AND COUNTRY SPECIFIC COMMENTS

##### GORBI Georgia

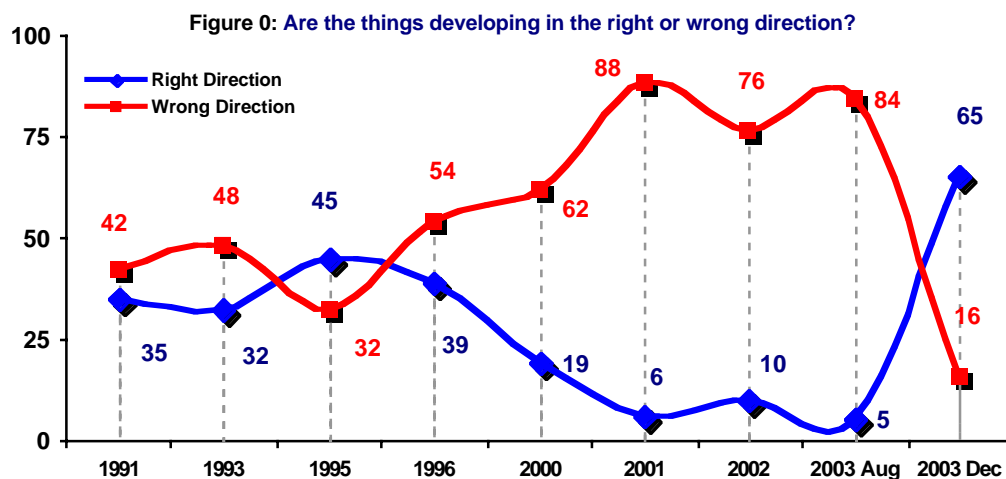
Project supported by SCOPES, Swiss National Foundation for the Promotion of Research and by the INTAS network “The Role of Regions in Transforming Post-communist Societies: The Cases of Belarus, Georgia, Russia and the Ukraine Compared”

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#### From the post-soviet to a post-revolutionary Georgia?

The peaceful revolution of November 2003 headed the international media. A small country became a player in the world arena. This study analyses what could have been foreseen besides the surprising events. Seldom a social change can be measured “life” as an ongoing process. Immediately after the revolution the December surveys show that the revolution is also one of rising expectations; two thirds hope for an improvement of the living standard for the next future.

The optimistic outlook that Georgia will develop in the right direction has increased more than eight times from 5% to 65% after the revolution of Roses (Figure 0).



From now on Georgians need to change the real situation. The insights of the study show that this changes cannot occur under a revolutionary pathetic. Now the name of “post-soviet” and “transition” will change on “post-revolutionary”. A woman participating in the focus group sessions found a statement excellently summarising the basic challenge:

*“In an economically impoverished country like Georgia the establishment of truly democratic institutions is impossible, on the contrary, the strengthening of democratic institutions should help for economic improvements” (Woman of a focus group).*

Impressum

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## Editorial

Immediately before the peaceful revolution in Tbilisi the GORBI team carried out the survey “How Georgians view Democracy?”



Smiling but also challenged. The new president of Georgia Mr. Saakashvili after his victory in the elections, 4<sup>th</sup> of January 2004.

A few days after the dramatic events the GORBI team finalized the in-depth interviews with a selected group of persons. The results let expect a very interesting period after the political change. It will be fascinating for scientists as well as for interested people to observe the further developments looking at our questions, concepts and hypotheses:

- How are the new political agents able to overcome the gaps and deficits between society and state?
- Is it possible to create trust and a public awareness enabling that democracy accepted as a norm will become a real expectation?
- Which agents and actors are the most important for the developments in the next years?
- What are the geopolitical factors, the opposition and sharing of interests between the East and the West?
- How can the civil processes in Georgia be supported by help projects and science?

Our network project (INTAS) is happy and confident to realize our further plans and steps for projects in the

countries included, especially the project summarized in Newsletter 4 (after the Minsk workshop, Nov. 2002). We can profit from the results and work of our Georgian partners and of the project supported by SCOPES of the Swiss National Foundation for the Promotion of Research. We thank all persons, especially Mrs Evelyne Glättli of SCOPES, for their engagement and commitment to our study.

The GORBI Institute is an organization with a communicative power. This is very important since the results confirm that the information sector, the press and media, have played an important role in mobilizing people. The GORBI Institute published the results as a PPT Presentation on its homepage. Simultaneously the Institute produced the following report.

One of our focuses is a scientific reflection and discussion of the findings in order to compare the different situations and preconditions of the societies involved into our network. In this sense Newsletter V is a baseline work for our joint work. So a call for comments according to the selected questions summarised at the end of the paper was addressed to all members of our network. We received very interesting comments, which are included into this second draft.

This paper will serve as an input to our joint project “Regional Responses to Global Change in Eastern Europe” which will be submitted this year. Actually we plan a conference in the next time<sup>1</sup>.

Zurich, April 2004

Coordinators:  
René Schaffhauser,  
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[www.culturprospectiv.ch/php/index.php?Transnational%20Civil%20Society](http://www.culturprospectiv.ch/php/index.php?Transnational%20Civil%20Society)

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## **How Georgians View Democracy – outline of empirical findings**

### **1. Abstract**

The project aimed (on the background of a comparative study in 1998) to analyse of how Georgian population perceive and judge democracy today. The empirical work done by the project team including a survey of 1000 individuals was carried out in summer before the peaceful revolution in Georgia in December 03. The focus group interviews have been realised immediately after the events of December enabling to observe the immediate impacts of the events on the forming of attitudes in a qualitative way. In Georgia people is especially concerned by bad conditions of income as well as of political participation. The results of the survey confirmed the contradictions between a positive attitude to democracy as a value, on the one hand but a strong distrust to the official public, political and governmental elites on the other hand. By this reason the bridges and channels between society and state are blocked; the private sphere, especially the family networks, works as the basic source for confidence and help while the state structures are seen as external sphere characterized by corruption. In this situation the positive attitude to democracy is hindered to become a realistic expectation. The results confirm that the media sector worked as the most important and legitimated agent for trust and changes. In fact, the media fulfilled this function before and during the revolution. The research project delivers an empirical basis for a continuous observation of the dynamics of how democracy will develop in Georgia after the revolution and in face of the new geopolitical role of Georgia as a small state between the big powers.

### **2. Georgian Democracy**

Social processes in Georgia are comparable to those, which we can observe in other East European countries during the post-soviet period. But evidently for each of the countries different preconditions are essential in order to foresee the scenarios of social and political developments. These preconditions are different between Georgia, Belarus, Russia and the Ukraine and have been discussed and outlined in Newsletter IV (INTAS network 97 – 2025). The differences stem from distinctive developments in the older or recent history of these countries. In Georgia mainly the various historical cataclysms, the religious and ethnic wars, the internal separatism of Georgian nobles, the role of hegemonial geopolitical influences, especially the long experience as a part of Russian empire and finally the decades of soviet governance have brought in multiple negative preconditions for a modern Georgia developing as a society with a democratic and independent small state. The collapse of the soviet system resulted with a break down of the economic connections and increased the impoverishment of the majority of Georgian population.

On the background of this situation we can hardly imagine today that in the thirteenth century, in the period of the Queen Tamar, there was a serious attempt for establishing

a parliament with liberal principles. Maybe some of the positive characteristics of Georgian mental dispositions (for instance tolerance and openness) could be related to the history of *longue durée*. But today it is evident that democratic development seems to be rather a luxury for the Georgian state because it can emerge only within economically and politically strong societies<sup>2</sup>. There is no doubt that also Western democracy is determined by the improvement of economy, welfare and the establishment of non-violent traditions, laws and regulations. All this enabled a growth of stability where every citizen got equal rights and duties.

The recent Georgian history did not support the optimistic predictions in regard to a successful democratic development. The hindering factors are: hardships of transition economy, several ethnic conflicts inside the country, high immigration rates and a decrease of innate population, regulatory crisis, the high rate of corruption among state officials and the institutions for law and order, the strong shadow economy, a widespread social apathy, a nihilism and absence of a national vision mobilising for progression. Although the background for democratic development in Georgia is not strong, our results confirm that positive attitudes towards democracy were also autonomously awakened and not only induced from the West as an unavoidable enforcement for becoming a “civilised” actor within the international society. The historical inner nature of Georgians has taken a significant role during the revolution of December 03. After all, (as noted by experts many times), Georgian character is tolerant and liberal itself; the ethnic and religious coexistence in the history of Georgia can be an example for a wide tolerance even unique in the world. The main square in Tbilisi gives the evidence for religious tolerance including a Jewish Synagogue, Muslim, Orthodox and Gregorian religious places. This hereditary of the past is actually working and can ensure us that entering into a new democratic period will not be an artificial step superimposed from outside but a conscientious choice supporting the best intentions and advancements inherent to the civil and economic dispositions available in Georgia. While the Georgians have experienced the live in non-demo-

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<sup>2</sup> The examples of many modern as well as ancient countries reveal that the paths and steps towards liberal and democratic state need a confidence in its economic, political and military strength. Roman democracy was achieved after the empire has reached the limits of its political power and economic development. Although we do not argue that Roman democracy was conceptually similar to modern Western democracy, it seems clear that liberal and democratic values rise with the increasing potential of those who have enough spare time from production, and are freed from the struggle for surviving and from submission under collectivistic rules.

cratic situations they learned to distinguish between democracy and what they lived – as we see from the results of the survey. This observed contradiction between the lived reality and the democracy as a value and an ideal instigated the November “Revolution of Roses”.

There are many arguments explaining that the November events were the consequences of the contradictory conditions emerging during the last decade. The quantitative part of the present survey delivers the exact figures; the tension between the attitudes and experiences explains the outbreak of the events, i.e. on the one side the majority of population was quite well oriented towards a democratic development, and on the other side the same majority evaluated the existing “democracy” as not working properly. On the one hand the broad majority of people did not recognize any violent methods for socio-political change and on the other hand the majority did not believe into the possibility of changes by participating in elections. The majority of respondents did not trust to any one of the state or law enforcement institutions and declared that governments did never take their opinion into consideration and political parties would treat the voters as marionettes, that is as a mean for achieving and protecting particular personal interests of their leaders. The qualitative survey with experts showed that the existing situation in Georgia could not be identified as really democratic because of the various economic, social and political factors and tensions (named above).

The survey aimed to measure all three dimensions of democratic progress in Georgia, the individual, economic and political aspects. The main results are generated from the analysis of personal attitudes and evaluations, but we use some official statistical data in order to support our conclusions by additional information. There is one advantage; using the same questionnaire of the former study conducted five years ago (1998) we are enabled to compare the results. This will make the present assessment more contentious. The present survey will be a part of a broader international study and finally the data will be compared to the results obtained by the same instruments in the Ukraine, Belarus, and Russia. So, at the completion of the general assessment plan, we will be able to show the place of “Georgian Democracy” on the “democratic map” between the other post soviet countries. As a first step, we propose the

discussion of the Georgian results according to a common framework and to joint questions (see the new comments).

As noted above the present assessment includes results from two conceptually similar separate steps of the surveys – qualitative and quantitative. Overall 1000 respondents were questioned during the quantitative survey and a group of eight reference persons participated in focus group discussions of experts – politicians, journalists and businessmen. The time gap between these two steps of the survey will enable us to analyze not only the results from the quantitative survey but also to make general conclusions in regard to the ongoing events in Georgia. It is no doubt that the social attitudes illuminated by the present survey, delivered significant results and played the major role in formation of the events in front of Georgian Government building during the November 2003 events in Tbilisi.

The comparison of the actual survey with a survey conducted in 1998<sup>3</sup> demonstrates that for the most questions significant changes due to the time difference are not observed. The most important fact is that positive changes are completely inexistent, that is the bad situation of the year 1998 is reproduced through the time period. The questions of the quantitative questionnaire were addressed to all dimensions of democracy. The guide for the focus group referred partly to the interpretations and analyses of the results received from the quantitative study and was concentrated on questions looking in-depth at the present, past and future outlooks.

The actual survey emphasised on the degree of “support for democracy” among the population including other variables possibly determining attitudes. These indicators serve as descriptions of the general situation in the country, i.e. of the socio-economic baseline, of general attitudes, of social intentions and of actions and events that we will try to prove furtherly. The questionnaire consists of nine<sup>4</sup> different sets of issues covering this baseline.

1. Baseline socio-economic and demographic data – gender, age, marital status, education, occupation, etc.
2. Evaluation of transition processes
3. Alienation and readiness to participate in political processes

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<sup>2</sup> Using the same formulation for the crucial questions allowed the comparison of the changes happened since 1998.

<sup>3</sup> The survey of 1998 did not include the questions about the attitudes towards the international organizations and unions and the two countries – USA and Russia.

4. Support of democratic and non-democratic regimes
5. Orientation to democracy and to communism
6. Trust into institutions and political actors
7. Acceptable social behaviour and acceptance of political violence
8. Scope with government
9. Attitude towards international organizations (NATO) and unions (UE) and to main countries shaping the international political environment for Georgia – USA and Russia

The focus group guide was oriented to find the in-depth explanations and those ideas and interpretations triggered by the quantitative results. The discussion issues were moderated within a wide range of topics related to democratic performance in the individual, political and economic spheres.

## 2. 1. Baseline socio-economic and demographic data

**Gender:** A representative sample of 1000 persons was interviewed during the survey. 43.7% of the interviewed respondents were male and 56.3% female.

Figure 1a: Baseline data: Age distribution

18 – 29 years old	22.3 %
30 - 39	18.9 %
40 - 49	22.8 %
50 - 59	13.9 %
60 years old and more	22.1 %

**Nationality:** The majority of interviewed respondents (89.1%) were Georgians and for 89.5% the native language was Georgian.

Figure 1b: Baseline data: Nationality

Georgian	89.1 %
Azeri	5.7 %
Armenian	3 %
Russian	1 %
Other	1.2 %

**Education:** The majority of respondents (39.6%) had a higher education and a slightly lower number (36.5%) a complete secondary education. 17.2% noted their education as specialized technical and 6.6% had less than full secondary.

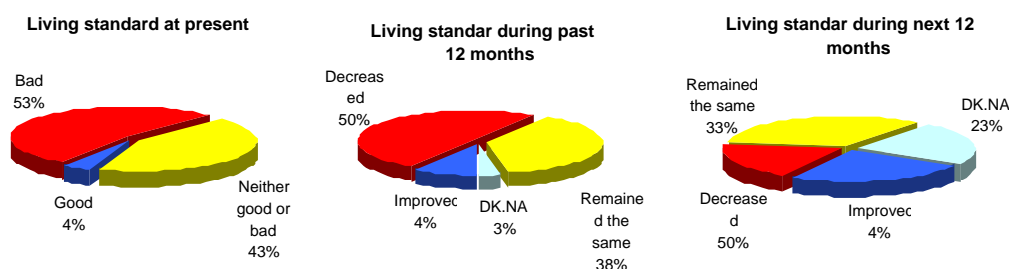
**Residence:** More than one fourth (25.4%) of the interviewed respondents stem from Tbilisi. In general 56% of the respondents were interviewed in urban settlements and 44% in rural areas. 3.6% of the respondents were refugees or internally displaced persons.

**Income:** The official data about the average income of the common citizens are not very valid indicators of the general economic situation of Georgian population. The monthly pension of a Georgian citizen is 14 GEL (less than 7 \$); according to our survey the average salary is 150 GEL (~ 70 \$). Nevertheless 72% of the respondents did not report to have an income while another group of 23% reported that they did not have a job. Only 5.6% of the respondents declared that they have a job or an economic activity that provides an income.

**Standard of living:** When asked to evaluate their economic condition a majority of respondents (41%) noted that they “have enough money for food but have difficulties buying clothes”. One third (33%) of the respondents replied that they “don't have enough money even for food”. Almost every fifth respondent (19%) replied that they “had enough money to buy food and clothes but not enough to buy other goods”. Only 2% of the interviewed respondents replied that they had enough money to buy expensive goods.

**Level of expectation:** According to our present survey only 4% of the respondents evaluated their level of life as “good” and more than the half (53%) considers it “bad”. The half of all respondents (50%) responded that their level of life had decreased during the last 12 months and only one person of ten (9%) notes that the level of life has improved. One fourth of the respondents are optimistic toward the future and thought that their level of life would improve during the next 12 months, while one-fifth (19%) expects a decrease, one third (33%) estimated it as the same and a significant group (23%) hesitated to make a clear forecast.

Figure 1c: Baseline data: level of expectation



**Assessment:** All focus group participants strongly associated the democratic development to the economic outlooks and progression of the country. They all agreed that “real democracy” is equivalent to the civil responsibilities and laws; but this is impossible without an economically formed majority, or a strong and a significant middle class in the state. Of course this does not mean that everybody could and should be rich, but everybody should have access to the minimal state of welfare and of social services. It is this minimum which is a necessary precondition for democratic development but surely not a sufficient one. According to the focus group participants we will be able to talk about a developed democracy in Georgia only if this minimal requirements will be satisfied. It is notable as well that respondents in the quantitative survey had often associated the economic indicators to democracy, i.e. 45% associated it with “improvements in the economy” and 41% with “a better standard of living”.

Many arguments from the focus group participants noted that a strong will or motivation from the side of government will be essential for the economic advancements and that the lack of this will have caused the significant drawbacks of Georgian democracy. Nevertheless the focus group participants tend to agree that the road to democracy will not be easy in any country and they hope that the time would be on the side of democratization processes supported by the special effort of both, the Georgian government and the people.

*“In an economically impoverished country like Georgia the establishment of truly democratic institutions is impossible, on the contrary, the strengthening of democratic institutions should help for economic improvements” (Woman, Cuga).*

## **2. 2. Support to democracy and democratic and non-democratic regimes**

The most important finding was that for three fourth of Georgians democracy is considered better than any other form of government. It is also notable that the number of those who shares this opinion has not changed during the last five years (2003 - 73% and 2001 - 71% and only 15% opposed to this statement in 1998 as well as in 2003; compare Figure 2). This high evaluation of democracy as a norm was supported by the focus group participants; there was a consent that democracy is the best type of government which ever existed in history.

*“Democracy is not an absolutely developed system by the form of its existence in the world’s even most democratic countries, but still it is the best political system which the world has ever experienced” (Man, Journalist).*

*“Democracy is both a social reality as well as a political phenomenon. The social request for democracy should awake the political democracy. Nowadays, the political democracy is rather behind from social request (Man, Journalist).*

The political request is rather of a secondary priority in regard to the urgency of the social request for democracy. Other participants tried to explain the nature of democracy with statements like: “power of majority”, “liberation”, “freedom of speech”, “transparency”. One participant associated democracy to the real practice and explicitly not to abstract notion: *“Democracy is not an abstract goal, it is rather a method of life and we have to study to live using this method” (Man, Journalist).*

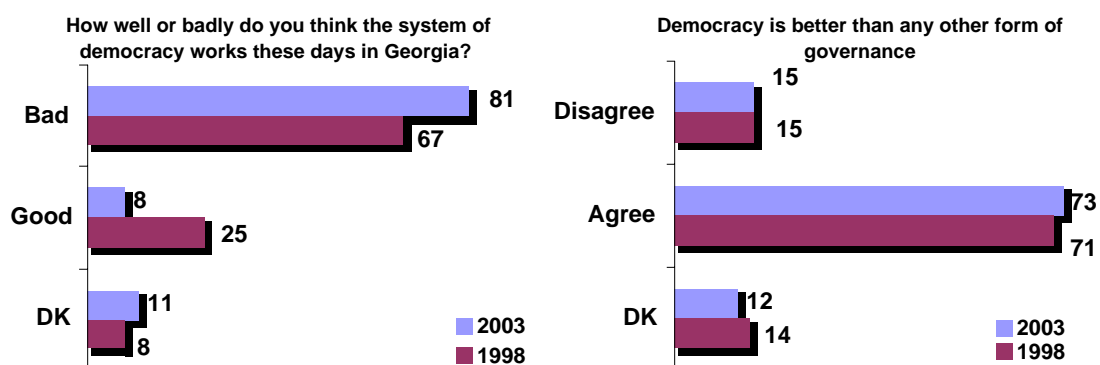
While evaluating the existing situation in Georgia, some hesitated to describe the current situation in Georgia as democratic but rather characterised as *“immature democracy”*.

*“The existing situation in Georgia can be considered appropriately to the conditions and the short period of a twelfth year old democratic state. Of course such a democracy is far from a final step of development” (Man, Public official).*

*“We have freedom, but we do not have democracy” (Man, Journalist).*

But evidently it is not sensible to see Georgia as a democracy, when a vast majority thinks that human rights are not respected. And it is difficult to accept the Georgian reality as a democratic one, when the vast majority of respondents (81%) thinks “the democratic system works badly in Georgia” (Figure 2). The number of negative evaluations has significantly increased during the last five years. This means, that the contradiction and tension between the assessments of the situation, on the one hand, and the strength of the normative support to democracy as the best governance practice on the other, has increased, since the attitude to democracy remained strong and stable. Evidently this increased tension worked as a strong trigger for the November revolution.

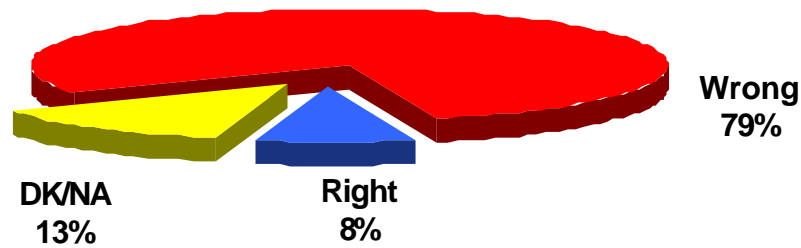
Figure 2: Attitudes toward democracy



Of course, if we take into account all the negative experiences of the Georgian situation including the economic situation (Figure 3) we could not expect that a majority will evaluate the ongoing political events positively. But it is now clear that for the majority these pessimistic outlooks did not block the drives for change and democracy. The view that political as well as economical processes are developing into the wrong direction (79%) did not hinder, but trigger the support for the events.

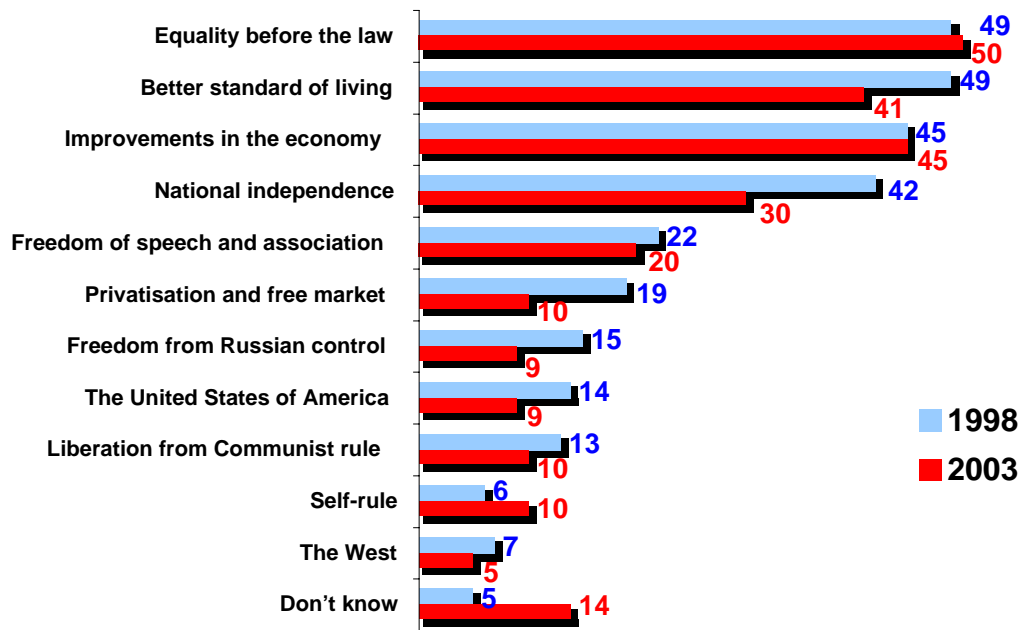
Figure 3: Expectation of political and economic processes in Georgia

**In which direction will political and economic processes develop in Georgia?**



The Georgian population is close to a norm and morality of democracy and civil society (Figure 2). Almost half of the respondents associated democracy with “equality before the law”, “improvements in the economy” and “better living standards” (Figure 4). The equality before the law, i.e. the classical principle of civil society, is ranked first and stable. Simultaneously a very high ranking is assigned to an economic, more existential issue, i.e. “better standard of living” (8% less relevant in 03). The “improvement in the economy” is the further source heading the list of preconditions for democracy and civility in Georgian’s public mind. Very interesting is the fact that one of the most relevant triggers for democracy and civil society, the “national independence”, decreased since 1998. It is consistent that other values linked to freedom and independence from powers are less relevant five years after 2003: “Freedom of speech and associations”, “Privatization and free market”, but almost 10% more respondents hesitate to make any clear association.

Figure 4: Characteristics associated to democracy 1998 and 2003



We can argue that the significant number of respondents has taken the norm of the Western democracy model and did not derive the associations from their own very negative and pessimistic experiences. We remember: a vast majority of the same respondents (89%) noted that “many, or almost all public officials are engaged in corruption” and almost half of the respondents noted that their living standard has decreased during the last 12 months and only a small minority reported positive effects of economic development during the last 5 years for society (9%). The necessity for change and the establishing of the main democratic standards, the equality before the law in connection with economic improvements is clear to the majority of the Georgian society. But surely the heading requirements for filling the democratic ideal with reality will be the economic performance and the sharing of welfare. In this sense the conclusion cited at the beginning is basically reflected in people’s mind: *“In an economically impoverished country like Georgia the establishment of truly democratic institutions is impossible, on the contrary, the strengthening of democratic institutions should help for economic improvements”* (Woman, Cuga).

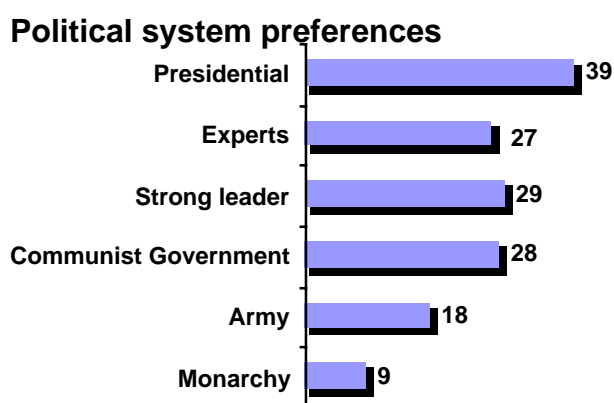
Civil society and democracy are challenged from the way of how democracy is promoting economic activities and of how these are positively supporting civil and democratic processes. The way to do this is surely a problem and a dilemma not solved even by the most developed democracies of the world. But the strategies merging

democratic development with a simultaneous liberalisation of economy and markets in an optimal way are not found yet for countries in such difficult situations like Georgia or other countries on the way to an independent future. One fact is obvious: The privatisation and the idea of free market are ranking on the top of the agendas of the modern Western companies and leading centers supposing them as the guidelines for civil and democratic societies. In Georgia this principle ranks at the end of the scale.

### 2. 3. Political system preferences

The respondents were asked to decide between various types of political regimes and had to evaluate of how acceptable they could be as a form of governance for Georgia (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Preferences for political systems



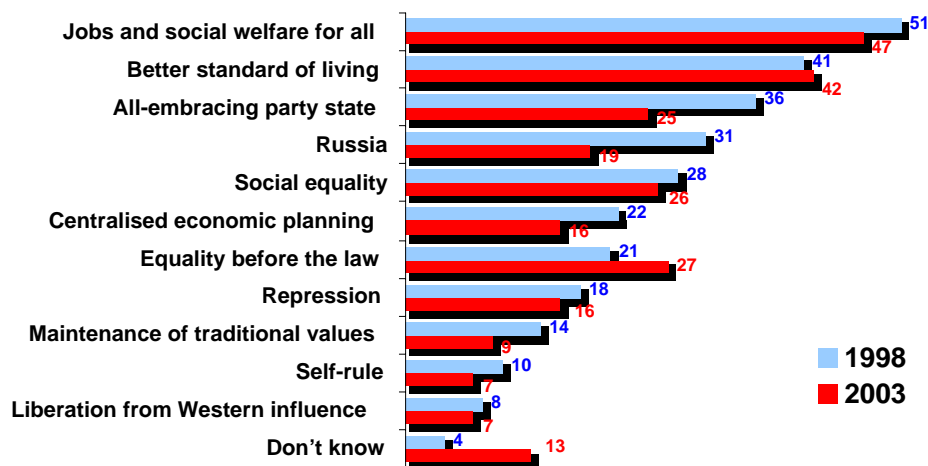
The preferences are headed by the presidential model: “having a presidential system like the existing one” (39%), followed by the strong leadership model: “having a strong leader, who does not have to bother with elections and/or parliament” (29%) and the communist government which looks after all aspects of economic, social and political life” (28%), the expert model: “having experts, not government, making decisions according to what they think is best for the country” (27%), the army model: “having the army rule, so as to guarantee law and order” (18% ) and the monarchy: “having monarchy rather than elected politicians” (9%). As we see the political system with a president as a signor government body has got the voices of the majority. However this support is significantly decreased after 1998 when almost a majority of 58% were for this governance model. In general the support for almost all of these political systems has decreased since 1998. Does this low expectation in

regard to each model of governance express a political resignation and pessimism of the Georgian people? There are reasons to interpret the result as a symptom of disorientation, which has much to do with the strong distrust in regard to the existing state and law enforcement institutions (the increased insecurity of responses in Figure 4 and Figure 6 support this interpretation).

#### 2. 4. Soviet inheritance and transition effects

Missing a “strong leader” from communistic times still remains the second preference for a governance model although this preference has been decreased about 10% during the last 5 years. The nostalgic reaction for a strong leader is usually connected to communist government (28%); the support to it is still strong among Georgian population and it has not decreased since 1998 (29%). Communism is still associated with the values of security and equality (Figure 6): “jobs and social welfare for all” (47%), “better living standards” (42%), and “social equality” (26%) and even the “equality before the law” (27%), which has increased since 1998. The majority of Georgian society are still influenced by the generation living under Soviet times characterised by the principle of “no freedom but also no responsibility”.

Figure 6: Characteristics assigned to the communist period



The participants of our focus group mentioned that for a common citizen the life was easier under Soviet rules since adjusting to the almost legalized but violated laws was much easier than living in chaotic situations or according to defined and controlled laws. It is interesting that also many of the focus group participants mentioned positive associations in regard to communism: *“In the communist period everything*

*was clear, and the life was much interesting. A lot of things were prohibited but we all have known what to do and how to get what we needed” (Woman, Independent Expert).*

In Figure 6 we see that the positive associations with communism are not only maintained but even increased. On the other side the negative associations to the totalitarian style of the Soviet regime are diminishing: nowadays only every fourth (25%) associates communism with “an all-embracing party state” (compared to 36% in 1998) and only every fifth (19%) associates communism with “Russia” (compared to 31% in 1998).

At this place a very interesting question should be raised: Are there signs that a revival of the communist or socialist order could emerge which is cleaned from Soviet styles as well as it becomes enriched by positive nostalgic reminders, that is a “cleaned and revitalised communist vision”? Or should we interpret the re-evaluation of the communist system as a simple reflection of human trends to respond with simplifications to a complex world? This could be related to general observations, for instance, that it is much easier not to make a risky choice, to have an address for blame and an apology for missing own responsibility in a crisis. One of the most interesting questions is of how the world visions are shaped in the different countries of our network (Belarus, Russia, Ukraine and others) between the future of a forthcoming democracy and the influences of the collective memories from the past of communism.

## **2. 5. The painful effects of the transition period**

How are the difficulties of economic and political transition perceived and evaluated? The break down of communism was followed by various difficulties of the transition economy, which were additionally intensified by unexpected political drawbacks. The high negative ratings of the population and the increasing negative assessment in 2003 are a good mirror of the fact that there was no improvement of economic and political development in Georgian society. In reality a further impoverishment and a decrease of positive trends took place. The most interesting fact explaining the revolutionary events of November is that the next five year expectation is negative for the political as well as the economic development in both, the individual and societal perspective.

That means that the high level of negative assessments was extrapolated into the future. The hypothesis of rising but frustrated expectations as a major trigger for revolutions is evidently fulfilled.

Figure 7: Effects of the political and economic development

Effects of the political development		POSITIVE		NEGATIVE		DK	
		1998	2003	1998	2003	1998	2003
Last 5 years	For you	26%	11%	70%	77%	4%	12%
	For society	24%	9%	68%	78%	8%	13%
Next 5 years	For you	45%	30%	18%	29%	37%	41%
	For society	46%	29%	16%	28%	38%	43%

Effects of the economic development		POSITIVE		NEGATIVE		DK	
		1998	2003	1998	2003	1998	2003
Last 5 years	For you	14%	12%	84%	82%	2%	6%
	For society	13%	9%	82%	83%	5%	8%
Next 5 years	For you	44%	35%	19%	28%	37%	37%
	For society	46%	34%	17%	26%	37%	40%

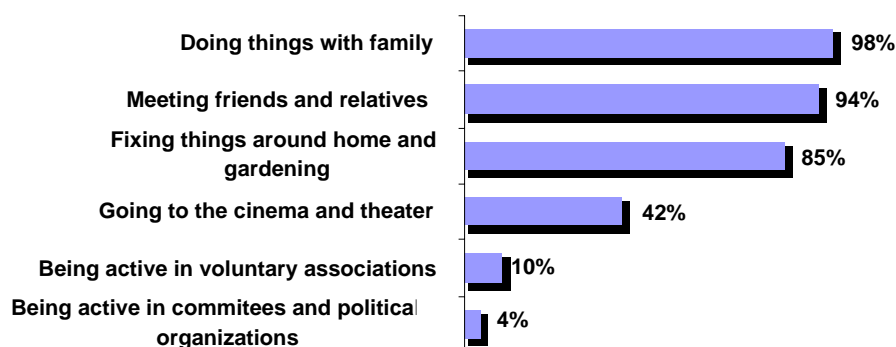
## 2. 6. Alienation and readiness to participate in political processes

The study was developed together with a frame of concepts and hypotheses including the complex influences of material and cultural, present and historical factors on the building of a civil society in peripheral regions of the world, mainly in post-socialist countries. However the survey concentrated on the economic and political sphere under a strict empirical guideline. But as it is evident factors like mentalities and historical preconditions play an important role. It will be the target of following studies to enlarge and enrich the analysis by these aspects. So we do not refer here to the complicated function of historical, traditional or religious orientations although they played a crucial role in arranging things and the way they were organized, (for instance the Orthodox Christianity was the major factor for closing up the Georgian-Russian relationships that finally legitimised the dependence of hundred years of colonization). The communist system played the major role enforcing a passive attitude towards the common social and political affairs among Georgian citizens. But we can see on the basis of previous discussions with the teams of the different

countries and by empirical research that such effects are also evident in the other post-soviet countries. We will be able to examine this in-depth in further comparative projects planned in Belarus, the Ukraine and Russia.

One of the fundamental hypothesis of the common framework is very clearly reflected in the results of this survey. Involving Georgian population into the social or political activities will be quite difficult. The bridges and channels making private activities as such of the larger society and of the state are strongly missing or blocked. In Georgia the deficits of the society-state relations are obvious. The vast majority of respondents is not engaged in voluntary as well as political associations, which link smaller groups and communities to the larger society and to its state. The society is privatised, that is restricted to family and friends. This microsphere of civil activity, self help and coping with problems is isolated. Nearly all prefer to be connected only to their families, relatives or close friends (Figure 8). When asked how important the participation in the different social fields is evaluated, the big majority preferred the microcosm of family and friends (mostly the family): 98% preferred “doing things with family”, 94% liked “meeting friends and relatives”, and 85% favoured “fixing things around the home and gardening”. Only 42% replied that they would like “going out to the cinema, theatre, concerts”. Public domains of “being active in committees and political organizations” (4%) and “being active in voluntary associations (religious, recreational, professional)” (10%) are quite seldom.

Figure 8: The range of activities and participation



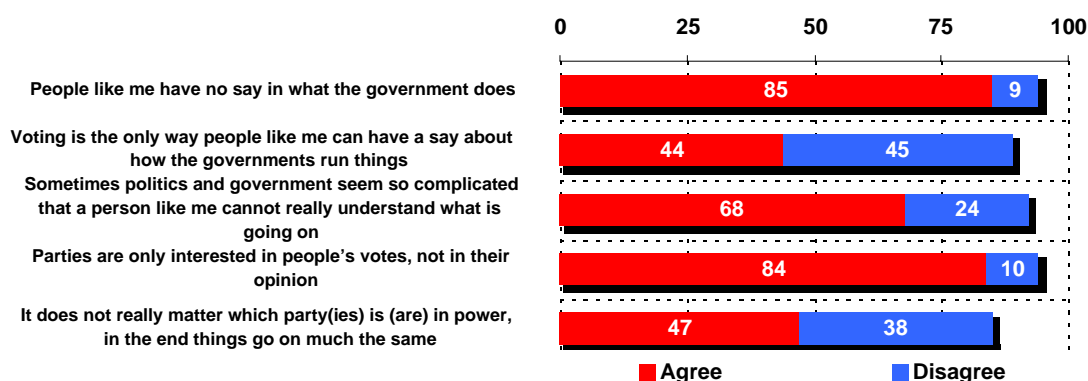
This very low level of non-private activities is not only caused by the passive disposition or the doubt that it is not possible to change things. In these private and narrow environments one feels safer in contrast to those public spheres where the main democratic principle of “equality before law” is never guaranteed.

These data reflect results from a further question where respondents were asked to say if they are a member of any specified organization or association. The big majority (about 87% of the respondents) was not a member of any one of the following associations, i.e. political parties, labour unions, art, music or educational organizations, sporting associations or church or religious institutions. Only 4% were members (including non-active) of a political party, 3% replied that they were members of a religious organization and another 3% associated themselves with a labour union. Therefore the matrix of links between private group relations of the society, the intermediate cosmos of volunteering organisations and the state is very restricted. One of the crucial preconditions of a civil society is strongly absent.

This alienation from the official public sphere and retirement into small circles of family and friends are the reason as well as the consequence of specific social dispositions reflected in further results:

The vast majority of the respondents (85%) agreed to the statement, that “people like me have nothing to say in what the government does”. 84% think, that “parties are only interested in people’s votes, not in their opinion”. These figures clearly show that the two spheres, interests and perceptions of the state, on the one hand, and the majority of public spheres on the other hand, stand far away from each other.

Figure 9: Estimation of the relation between society and politics



This was also stated in the focus group discussions; participants noted that the November revolution was mainly caused by these gaps between government and public.

Two thirds (68%) agreed that “sometimes politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me cannot really understand what is going on”. By this way the majority of Georgians seem to apologize for their passiveness. And in Georgia the word “complicated” is very close to “obscured”. A Russian politician noted that “being a politician is very easy; one has only to pretend not knowing the things that are evident to everybody, and knowing the things that are not known to anybody”.

The voices were divided in two equal parts (agree 44% and disagree 45%) regarding the statement: “voting is the only way people like me can have an influence on how the governments run things”. Perhaps this sceptical outlook is caused by the generalised distrust towards fair elections. This argument is supported by a further result; 70% of the respondents are ready to participate in elections held the next day (Figure 10). As we can see from another survey only 13% have the confidence to the conducting of fair elections and 75% of the respondents are sure that elections would not be free and fair. Therefore it is not surprising that one of the main motivations for the November revolution was the fraud of election results.

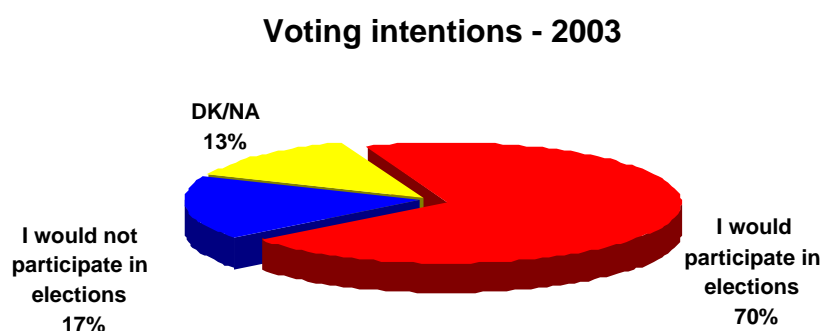
The voices are divided regarding the item about the political parties. A slight majority (47%) agreed that “it does not really matter which parties are in power, in the end things go on much the same”, while 38% of the respondents disagreed with this statement. The widely accepted opinion that from the seating in the government or parliament mostly the parties or government members benefit themselves seems to be justified. 38% of the respondents hoped that the political forces and parties help in improving the economic and political situation in the country and will be powerful. With these hopes, the people came to the elections in November the 2<sup>nd</sup> but the fraud of elections destroyed this last hope and worked as the trigger for an extensive mobilization.

## 2. 7. Elections – the only way to improve the situation or a useless effort again?

It was the question every Georgian asked himself after the November elections 03. 35% of the electorate who came to the election places could not find their names in the voter's lists but found their long time ago deceased relatives or neighbours therein. Others who tried their best to defend their voices were very disappointed to hear that the old governmental party discredited during the last decade again collected the majority of voices. The same violations of elections were observed during the past elections in 1995 and 1999. The public joined hopes for a real change and for transformations through the November elections and a peaceful revolution.

A majority of the interviewed respondents had a negative vision of the ongoing affaires and little hopes for a significant change. Meanwhile the using of violent methods was totally unacceptable for the vast majority, so that the only way to change the situation was possible through the elections. In June 03 the majority of the interviewed respondents were ready to use this rare opportunity (Figure 10). Seven out of ten persons (70%) replied that they would “participate in the elections if they were to be held tomorrow” and only 17% refused to participate in the elections.

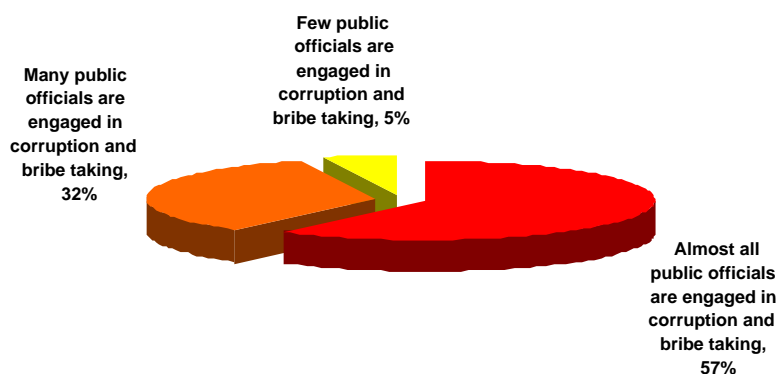
Figure 10: Voting intentions



## 2. 8. Corruption – the most significant barrier to a Georgian Democracy

A dramatic situation is mirrored in the common citizens' evaluation of corruption rate among the state officials (Figure 11). No one of the interviewed persons replied that “almost no public politicians are engaged in corruption and bribe taking”, and only 5% said that “few public officials are engaged in corruption and bribe taking”. More than the half (57%) agreed that “almost all public officials are engaged in corruption and bribe taking”. Every third (32%) shared the opinion that “many public officials are engaged in corruption and bribe taking”.

Figure 11: Perception of corruption



The focus group participants often mentioned the high rate of corruption among the different groups of state officials as one of the most significant obstacles against the democratic development in Georgia. This judgment seems to be increased even since 1998 when the number of those stating “almost all public officials are corrupted” was 22% lower.

Corruption concerns all spheres of life. Therefore, corruption negatively affects the interpersonal trust as well as the confidence to the state institutions. As stated in research the combining of the corruptive practice with distrust between persons (interpersonal distrust) in post-soviet countries hinders the implementation of democratic reforms<sup>3</sup>, and this is definitely the case in Georgian reality. It is difficult to imagine any economic success without a strong “backstage” from the side of public officials. The recent reports of post revolutionary government officials revealed that the major part of monetary help and investments were distributed among former public actors.

## **2. 9. Trust and Distrust: from the interpersonal sphere to the institutions and officials**

It is often observed that interpersonal trust is crucial for the development and the maintenance of democracy. Interpersonal trust is a precondition for the internal transformation and the change of social attitudes in a society. Trust is rather an individual characteristic, a relation between ego and alter, but it is strongly associated to successful and faithful social interactions between the agents of a society. There is no doubt, that trust to the others must be supported by guarantees that these know

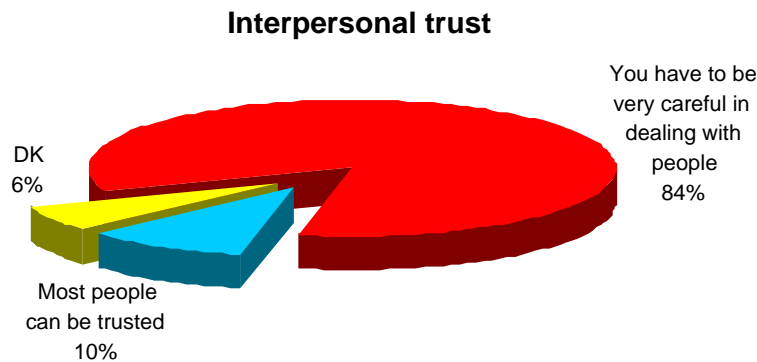
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<sup>4</sup> Ken Jowitt, *New world disorder: The Leninist Extinction* (1992).

their own rights. Trust goes hand in hand with the confidence to civil rights and patterns of a fair play accepted by all. Several researchers argued that communist regimes are characterized by a high level of interpersonal distrust.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, the level of interpersonal trust is very low among Georgians (Figure 12): 84% preferred to be very careful in interpersonal interactions as against 10% who agree to the positive answer “that people can be trusted”. Nevertheless the interpersonal distrust does not affect the support for democracy; distrust is equally distributed among the supporters as well as the opponents of democracy.

Figure 12: Interpersonal trust



The level of trust to the institutions and officials can be an adequate indicator for their good performance. If the institutions or officials do represent citizens, as it should be the case in democratic structures, they become supported by general trust. Looking at the low level of general interpersonal trust we cannot expect a higher degree of trust for the institutions. Rather we suppose that the governmental institutions responsible for the law enforcement and the officials are discredited in such a degree that even those who believe that most people can be trusted do not have confidence to them.

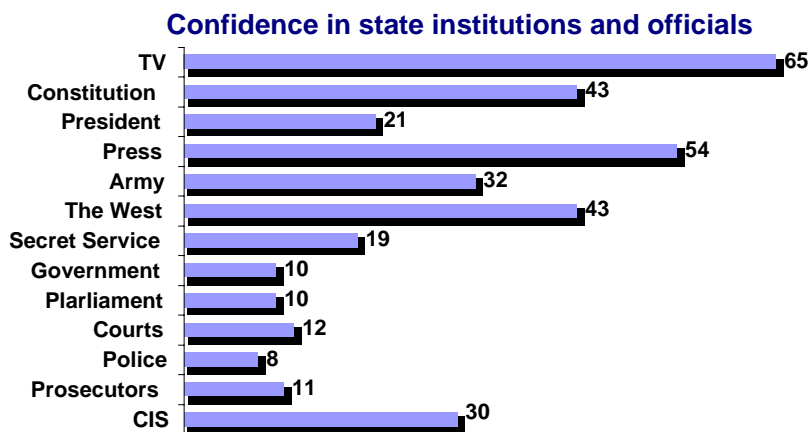
How much of confidence is addressed to the different agents of organisations, state institutions and officials? The lowest level of confidence is assigned to the state law enforcement institutes (police, court, prosecutors) and the government (Figure 13). Only 8% replied that they have confidence to the state police and only 10% are confident to the government and the parliament. The prosecutor’s office was trustworthy for 11%,

<sup>5</sup> Piotr Sztompka, *Trust: The missing resource in post-communist society* (1995). Distrust is a function of successful experiences in managing things but the gaining of these experiences needs time and consumes a lot of activities. By this way the distrust can hinder democratic advancement for long periods.

the courts for 12%. The state “secret services” gained 19% and 21% replied that they have confidence to the president.

The highest levels of confidence received the media institutions, the television (65%) and the press (54%). The media gained a real power during the last years and became the primary agents for change. This fact is evident after the peaceful revolution in Tbilisi. The people and the politicians were aware of the fact that the media played a key role for a peaceful development of the events. The media of Georgia used the opportunities of the modern IT (Information Technologies). 43% of the respondents believed to the “constitution” and the same number of respondents articulated confidence to the Western countries. The level of trust to the Western countries is higher than the confidence to the CIS (30%).

Figure 13: Confidence to institutions and officials



## 2. 10. Social and political code of conduct and acceptance of political violence

Specific social behaviors can be completely incompatible to a democratic system, others are desired and some build an integrative part of a democratic style of life. So the respondents were asked to evaluate of how the different kinds of social behavior are acceptable (Figure 14). Most of the statements focused the behavioural patterns of the first group, that means offending the requirements of a democratic social code. The results are not surprising. The majority of the respondents refused all of these destructive behaviors with the exception to the private sphere: “not reporting a relative to the authorities after he/she has committed an assault” received the support by 56% of the respondents.

The strongest refusal gained the statement “accepting a bribe while on duty”; 88% of respondents considered it as intolerable. It confirms the observation that the police inspectors and police are considered as the most distrusted institution. About three fourth (74%) were against “establishing a preferential deal with an official to achieve personal aims, for example securing a job or a better position”, and almost the same number (73%) thought that “avoiding a fair on public transport” is an offensive. Another statement referring to the avoidance of tax payments was rejected by more than two third (69%) and nearly the same number (67%) were critical of “claiming government benefits to which you are not entitled”.

Figure 14: Acceptability of behaviour (the figures show the refusal of this behaviour)



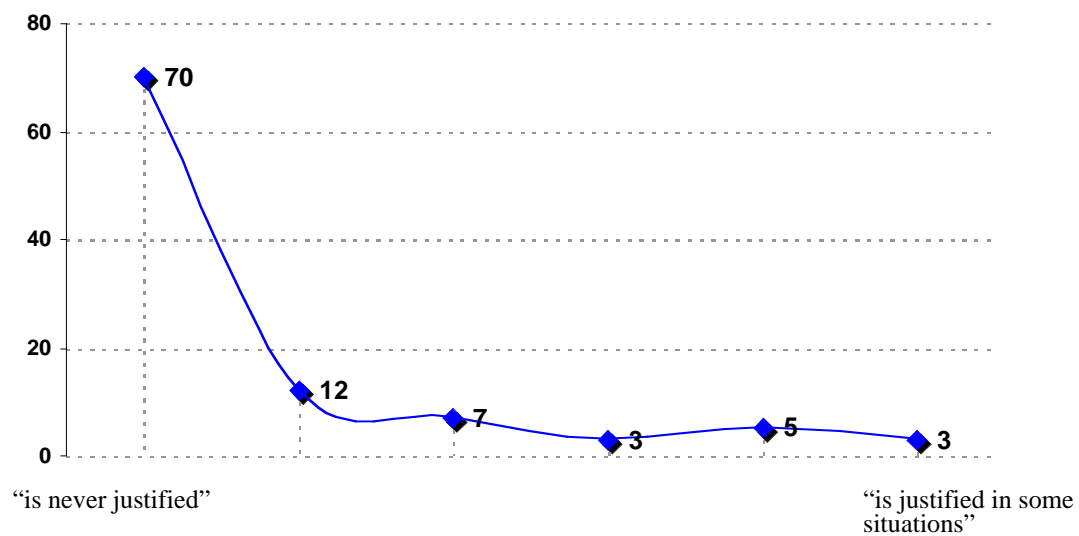
## 2. 11 Political passivity

The political culture of Georgia is characterised by a passive disposition and practice of common citizens. The needs and practice for an actively taking part in public affairs show a low level. The civil society is still in a very early stage of development. The results show that political violence is completely unacceptable to the public as well as the majority of people doesn't participate at civil and democratic codes and practice. Three fourth (76%) said that they have never signed a petition and would never sign it in and only every tenth (9%) agreed to sign a petition in the future. Nearly the same number replied that they had not and would not attend lawful demonstrations. Joining unofficial demonstrations and creating roadblocks was alien and unacceptable for 84%, while only 6% could imagine this in the future. The vast majority of the respondents (95%) answered that they had not and would not distribute illegal leaflets and newspapers or subversive materials. 96% refused the occupation of official or governmental buildings as unacceptable.

Additionally, the respondents were asked to rate their view on a six-grade scale between two statements (Figure 15): “using violence to pursue political goals is never justified” as against it “is justified in certain situations”. A clear majority (82%) put their opinion at the first and at the second points near to the total rejection of political violence.

Figure 15: Attitudes to political radicalism and violence

“Using violence to pursue political goals...



**2. 12. Structural blame and patrimonial state**

Which issues lay in the responsibility of the state and the government (Figure 16)? As we can see the vast majority of respondents address all social benefit issues to the obligation of the state and the government. By this option the past Soviet reality is completely transferred into the present reality. The vision of a patrimonial state is not revised but seems to be revitalised. These results can be explained by two streams of arguments. On the one hand the difficult material and existential situation of Georgian society is producing a strong consent claiming all these social services: high rate of unemployment, large numbers of socially unprotected and elderly people, expensive and unavailable healthcare services for the majority, the extinction of the middle class and the radical gap between a mass of poor and a very small number of wealthy households. Almost all respondents agreed that government should “provide a decent standard of living for the elderly” – the meaning of this declaration is that the provided pension to elderly is absolutely miserable. The Georgian citizens blame the government for these problems. And this structural blame is evidently favoured by the nostalgic attitudes to the communist period.

On the other hand the fact is essential that Georgian citizens are in an early stage of civil society where – as we have seen above – the active role taking in a public space far from the private sphere is low or not developed. From this reason an unwillingness and reluctance to take responsibility for public affairs by the majority of citizens is obvious. The things are either private or state matters but nothing between; there are no intermediate fields of activities to cope individually or collectively with the existential problems<sup>5</sup>.

Figure 16: The state as an all-embracing father

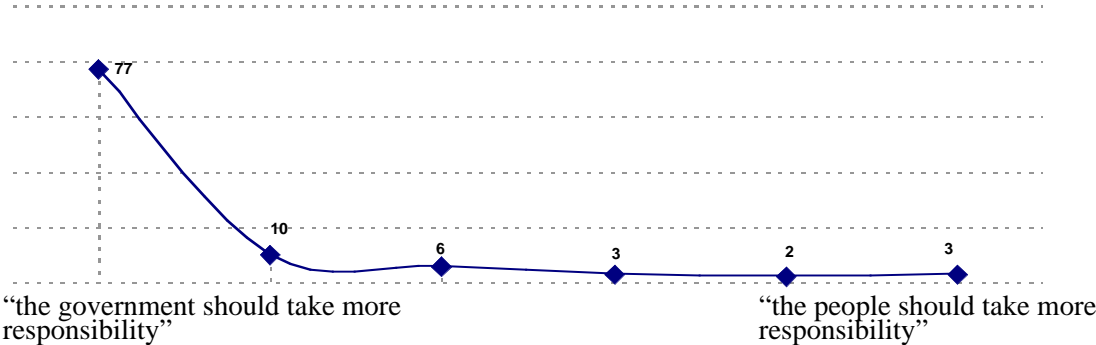
Provide a decent standard of living for the elderly	<b>99%</b>
Provide a decent standard of living for the unemployed	<b>98%</b>
Provide a job for everyone who wants one	<b>98%</b>
Provide healthcare for the sick	<b>97%</b>
Keep prices under control	<b>91%</b>
Reduce income differences between the rich and poor	<b>87%</b>
Provide housing for all	<b>85%</b>
Provide free electricity	<b>42%</b>

<sup>5</sup> The lower indicator of 42% for “Providing free electricity” can be explained by the experience with an international power company in Georgia, where people understand that regulation of the issue does not depend upon the government, but on a private company.

The low level of self-responsibility is confirmed by a further six-point rating (Figure 17). Again the big majority of respondents (87%) tend to put their evaluation to the first and the second points, they are assigning the responsibility to the state. Again both arguments explain this result, the general avoidance of the own responsibility and the really miserable socio-economic conditions.

Figure 17: Attitudes to responsibility

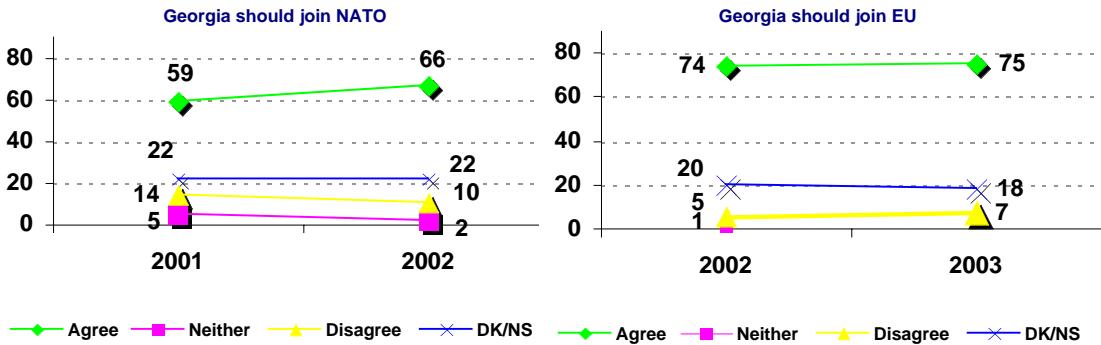
To ensure that everyone is provided for...



**2. 13. Future prospects and the place of Georgia in the World Society**

One of the most interesting topics is the question of how the international geopolitical developments have impacts on the national trends in different countries, here in Georgia as a part of the Caucasus region. Recently the “heartland” theory (Mackinder) is re-discussed, an old idea that the worldwide hegemony becomes decided within the game for the predominance in Central Asia and in the Caucasus. Evidently the Georgian events are obviously interrelated with the rivalries between the two big agents, Russia and US. The data deliver contradictory trends. On the one hand the Georgian people is normatively attracted by the Western model of democracy and mainly also by the European model. This is reflected by a high willingness to join the EU and the NATO (Figure 18).

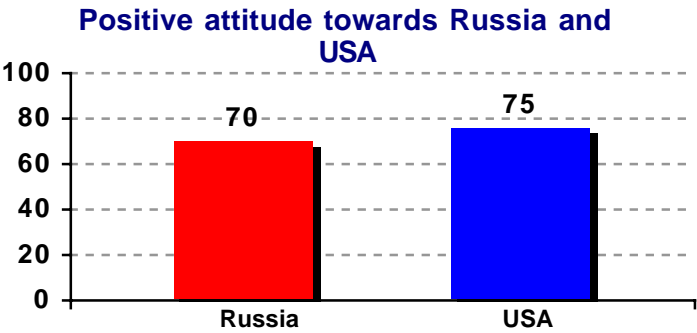
Figure 18: Attitudes to hegemons, joining the EU and the NATO



The values of Georgia are higher (75% resp. 66%) than those measured in the different regions of the Ukraine: in the pro West oriented region of the Ukraine 55% agreed with the entry into the EU and 42% with the joining of the NATO (Churilov et al. 2002, p. 180). Surely the perspectives for a democratic development in Georgia are strongly associated to the support from the welfare centers of the World society that is of Western Europe and the USA. The focus group participants identified the place and the role of Georgia mainly in Europe and within the neighborhood.

But simultaneously Georgia can profit from a strategy of “go-between”. As a small state and with a common memory to soviet and post-soviet period, surely bifurcated as a negative dependence but also as a nostalgic one, the sympathy to the Russian federation is not exhausted but even the same as for the transatlantic player (Figure 19). As we have seen above there is also a trend in Georgia to clean the communist vision from the authoritarian characteristics (Figure 6). Simultaneously the patrimonial state concept predominates the mentality of common citizens in Georgia.

Figure 19: Attitudes to the hegemons



The recent observations of the political diplomacy support the assumption that Georgia could develop a “go-between” strategy playing with different options and alliances. However the focus group participants hesitate to see today a particular role of Georgia because the existing economic hardships and the political disorganization are restricting the freedom of action space. But in the case of an economic progression Georgia is assigned a good potential to become a major partner for establishing and strengthening the peace in the Caucasus. The experts showed a particular uncertainty in face of the real plans for the external policy but in the meantime Georgia has an elected president. The very peaceful general attitudes of

Georgians and their tolerance are good preconditions that Georgia will be oriented to peaceful and constructive relationships with all countries.

According to the experts Georgia will follow – after the November revolution – the path to a democracy for which also an international support is needed. It is interesting that the aspiration for international unions and organizations was supported by a vast majority of survey respondents. The Georgian population articulates considerable hopes that the international support will support and promote the democratic development of the state. One is clear, Georgians see the future of their country as a developed democratic country and as noted by the experts the development of democracy in Georgia will depend to a great extent from the support from Western democratic countries which are – in contrast to many other of the countries in Eastern Europe – able to combine material welfare with civil and democratic ideals. But there are a lot of desires expected to become fulfilled. For us as scientists the monitoring, observing and comparing of the social processes ongoing from now on are not only interesting but also helping to understand and explain the future development. And it would be very interesting to give the same questions to public in the next years; they would deliver a real picture of the evolution and strength of democratic and civil culture among the Georgian population.

### **3. Country specific review of the results**

#### **3.1. Belarus: Social stratification and post-soviet pluralism**

##### **Introduction.**

The analysis of the empirical data, that let us describe the main strata of the transformation society, was realized at the sample of 2000 people, interviewed in Belarus in October 2002 at the basis of a representative national sample in the framework of the international research project “Living conditions, lifestyle and health”.

The respondents had to answer the question to what expenses they had enough money for. Depending on the answers of the participants of the survey, there were singled out four main strata (it is also possible to single out smaller groups, that differ with social status, scale and structure of the used resources, value orientations, style of living etc. in each strata).

So, we direct a very small group at the high level: people with the income that lets them do any, even very expensive purchases (real estate, cars, etc.) and having rests at prestigious world famous resorts - the share of this group is 2.2 % of the population.

The middle layer is bigger: 18.8% of the people who have enough money for purchasing quite expensive goods (TV, refrigerator), however it is inaccessible for them to buy a car or a flat.

The basic layer that represents two third of the Belarusian society (66%), includes the persons whose income is enough only for food and goods of the first necessity (clothing, shoes, hygienic means).

And finally, the lowest layer that makes up about 10% of the population. They are the people who do not have enough money even for normal nutrition.

#### **1. Living standard of the population of the Republic of Belarus**

##### **1.1. Sources of income**

Having singled out four layers, we have fixed the real level of population income that appeared to be not high.

What are the sources of income? The main source of income for the majority of the population is, certainly, the salary of the main job (60%), then follows pension and unemployment benefit (26%); growing agricultural products (7,6%). The amount of the other sources of income in the family budget is extremely low and is not more than 1,5-2% - these are additional incomes (constant and accidental) and relatives' help.

But the structure of importance of the second sources of income looks differently. Growing agricultural products is called as the main source of additional income in the family budget (40,2%); other sources are much less important:

- material help of relatives (11,8%);
- accidental earnings (8,3%);
- constant additional earnings (6,2%);
- pensions and benefits (7,4%);
- reward for services (1,8%);
- social benefits and premiums (4,9%).

Altogether, 93% of the surveyed have additional sources of income, however it is clear that they are not high, as far as a lot of people increase their income at the plots of land, growing agricultural products for themselves or for trade.

### 1.2. Self-assessment of personal material state in %, approximately

Assess your material situation as	Social strata				On average
	low	basic	middle	high	
Good	2	5	28	58	23
Middle	24	66	67	42	50
Bad	72	27	5	-	26
No answer/Do not know	2	2	-	-	1

The social distance between the extreme groups of the poorest and the richest is so clear and obvious that it hardly needs any additional comments. The difference between the basic and middle layers is much more interesting. Both of the strata consist of equal shares, two thirds of the interviewed assess their material position as “average, middle” and from this point of view they are alike. However the shares of the respondents who gave the extreme assessments in the basic and middle layers are like a looking-glass reflection: in the first layer 5% consider their material position to be good and 27% - bad; in the second layer, vice a versa, 28% call it good and 5% - bad. Such a coincidence can hardly be accidental, it is rather possible to speak about some objective borderline (though found out with the help of objective assessments), that singles out one layer the other. This conclusion is supported with the answers of another question, connected with the dynamics of living standard changes.

### 1.3. Dynamics of living standard changes during the last 10 years, in %, approximately

How did your material position change during the last 10 years?	Social strata				On average
	low	basic	middle	high	
Improved	4	14	50	68	34
Did not change	22	33	29	21	26
Worsened	71	50	17	7	36
No answer/Do not know	3	3	4	4	4

In accordance with the data of the research, only a third of the population managed to improve their well-being during the last 10 years – 34%, worsening involved also approximately the same number of people (36%).

Naturally the highest share of the people who managed to improve their material well-being during the last decade is traced in the high layer – 68%. Half of the respondents from the middle layer believe that they improved their material status (50%), 14% from the basic layer and only 4% from the low layer. The majority of the respondents from the low layer (71%) and half of the respondents of the basic layer (50%) say that their well-being worsened. A third of the interviewed from the basic and middle layer remarked that material status of their family stayed the same.

#### 1.4. Presupposed living standard of the population in the Republic of Belarus in %, approximately

What will be your material well-being in 5 years?	Social strata				On average
	low	basic	middle	high	
Will improve	12	20	41	42	29
Will stay the same	18	24	23	16	20
Will worsen	32	17	6	5	15
No answer/Do not know	38	39	30	37	36

Descending social mobility, negative dynamics of population's material well-being, inconsistent character of the carried out reforms – all that determines negative social mood and social-economical expectations in the society. The citizens see their future as very vague. Almost 40% of the interviewed did not know what to say when describing their future, answering the question “In your opinion, what will be your family's material well-being in five years?”

## 2. Social-political values

The reforms that started in 1991 were aimed at gradual transformation to democracy and market economy. This process has been taking place with large hardships practically in all the European post-USSR republics. In this context, the specific character of Belarus lies in the fact that the so-called “dictatorship of development” - a union of governing elite, objectively interested in modernization of the country and ready to realize it by all the accessible means (alas, not always by classically democratic ones) have been forming very slowly here after the country gained its independence. An excruciating and long process of search for “the own way” has been taking place with a hope to build a new democratic society with simultaneous preservation of the old social reality.

Are the citizens of Belarus satisfied with such a state of art? Rather no. More than a half of the population are not satisfied with the development of democracy in the country (25% are satisfied).

All the same 66% call democracy the best form of governing, in spite of the drawbacks it has. The majority of the citizens of Belarus (more than two thirds) believe that the society must get transformed, go to democracy by the way of gradual reforms, avoiding revolutionary, radical, unnatural innovations. So, democratic values, judging by everything, have already become close for the majority of the inhabitants of the country. These are values, and not contemporary political fashion. Supporting necessity of democratic reforms realization, the population assesses its way rather critically. It gives evidence that the attitude towards democracy is a conscious, rational phenomenon, but not formed by an external influence at the level of emotions.

Along with that, more than a half (59%) of the population of Belarus believe that human rights are not respected here, a third of the population believes that human rights are respected, the rest did not know the answer.

In accordance with the results of the survey (and by the way, this data have been reproduced with stability in the margins of statistical error during the last four years) on average about a half of the surveyed citizens are for the establishment of the Western type democracy in the

Republic of Belarus, as they see it. A third of the population believes, that a regime of a “strong hand” is preferable for Belarus; every fourth respondent can’t determine his choice.

Priorities of political values are closely connected with economical preferences. It seems obvious: in the society of transformation the form of governing is not so important as it is, but it is important as a means of transformation of the basic spheres in the life of society, and first of all of economy. It is necessary to say that objective difficulty of economical reforms and also unclear state policy in this sphere result in the disorientation of mass conscience concerning the choice of economical priorities.

Almost a third of the population (among old people and people with low educational level – almost a half) is not able to determine the model of national economy development. The other answers are distributed very regularly: groups of 9-10% expressed their agreement with the one of the extreme variants - only “planned” economy or “ungouverned market” - (social outsiders want to get back to the planned economy, unlimited market environment attracts the youngest most often). Another part of the population supports different variants of mixed type economy almost by equal groups.

By the way, the form of economy with the state property prevalence is supported most actively by the people aged 46-60: their world-view was formed during the years of the Soviet Union, and unlike pensioners they still can work and it is easier for them to get used to the changes; finally, this is the age of the contemporary nomenclature – what gives understanding that it is impossible to get back to the past, but there exists a desire to preserve power of the state in economy. More often youths aged 23-30 and people with high level of education are for the mixed type of economy with prevalence of private property. Correlation of the ones who insist on the immediate transformation to market with the ones who are for the gradual character of market innovations is 19% or 32% respectively - approximately the same as the correlation of the shares of “revolutionaries” and “reformists” in the question about the speed of movement towards democracy.

Thus, at the basis of the social surveys it is possible to state that unified and acceptable ideas about the preferable type of social dynamics and character of transformation of the basic spheres in the life of the society have not formed yet for the majority. Three main segments can be singled out in the mass conscience by today: almost a half of the adult population is for democracy and market economy of mixed type. About a third are adherents of the “strong hand” regime with limitation of human rights, however, it is quite possible that the majority of these people view such a regime only as a means to liberal transformations realization, as far as there are only a few people who want to get back to the completely planned economy. However, if you add the ones who are for the planned economy to the ones who are for the mixed type of economy with priority of the state property, it will be also a third of the population. Finally, from a fourth till a third of the surveyed are referred to the group with no answer, hesitating, disoriented in general people, they have not formed definite political and economical priorities yet.

A fifth among the adherents of the liberal-democratic model of development is for decisive and fast changes by the way of “shock therapy”, the rest are oriented at gradual transformation.

By other words, the society is mainly solidary only in its thought about necessity of carrying on reforms, but the speed of their realization and scale of reforms are the problems that call

rather opposite opinions in different social layers. Besides that, analyzing the results of the surveys, it is necessary to take into account that not all the interviewed have clear ideas about the questions they answer. Dubious character of the mass conscience in transformation society is its main trait, it includes a kind of peculiar “post-soviet pluralism” when the majority of the population accepts the right for simultaneous existence of the opposite opinions and positions in one point of political chronotop.

David Rotman

### **3.2. Russia: The revival of state centered hegemony**

The paper "How Georgians view democracy?" raises a series of very interesting issues for the further comparative study of democracy and civil society in the four post-soviet countries. I would like to make a brief discussion of the main problems raised in the paper and give some comparative considerations of the Georgian situation.

Among the four countries under review Georgia apparently has the worst preconditions and the most negative social and economic premises for the development of democracy and civil society. It is a small country riddled by several serious ethnic and regional conflicts, with a small and weak economy deprived of significant amount of export commodities. Twelve years of crises and extremely unstable economic development combined with a corruption-ridden economic and political system produced very high levels of income inequality. These levels, in particular, are considerably higher in Georgia than in Russia:

- the share of people that "did not have enough money even for food," according to the data of Yuri Levada Analytical Center, was 19.5% in Russia in September of 2003 (33% in Georgia);
- those who "had enough money for food but had difficulties for buying clothes" were 36.5% in Russia (41% in Georgia);
- those who "had enough money to buy food and clothes but not enough to buy consumer durables" were 34.5% in Russia ("had enough money to buy food and clothes but not enough to buy other goods" were 19% in Georgia)
- those who "could easily buy durable goods but have difficulties buying really expensive goods" were 8.9% in Russia (no data for Georgia)
- those who "had enough money for buying expensive goods" were 0.5% in Russia (2% in Georgia)<sup>5</sup>

This socio-economic background combined with the extreme levels of privatization of the Georgian state agencies and state functions were responsible for the negative attitudes in the public opinion which are discussed in the Georgian paper. Some of them, such as high levels of alienation from politics and state, predominance of private domains over public and very low involvement of people into social and political activities, a complex of tolerance and resignation towards all-embracing corruption, low levels of interpersonal trust and confidence in institutions, dependence on the patrimonial state are also characteristic of the Russian public opinion. While in Georgia 82% agree with the statement that "people like me have no

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<sup>5</sup> The Russian Public Opinion Herald: Data. Analysis. Discussions. No. 2(68), 2003, p.81.

say in what government does", this figure in Russia is 75%.<sup>6</sup> The nostalgic attitudes towards the Soviet past are also very pronounced in Russia. 49% of respondents considered in 2002 that people like them lived better during the period of Brezhnev.<sup>7</sup> 44% agreed in 2003 that it would have been better if everything in the country had been as before 1985 and only 35% disagreed with this statement.<sup>8</sup>

However, there are some significant differences in the public opinion trends in Georgia and Russia, which explain different outcomes of the recent political developments in both countries. The first difference refers to the attitudes towards democracy. According to the Georgian research, almost three-quarters of the population in Georgia consider that democracy was better than any other form of governance. In Russia only one third of the respondents support this statement, while 39% think that under certain conditions authoritarianism is better than democracy. In 2001, only 11% of Russian respondents considered that democracy was more important for them than order, while 75% supported the opposite statement.<sup>9</sup> Characteristically, the level of trust in the media is very high in Georgia (65% trust TV and 54% newspapers), while in Russia only 23% consider that media "are quite reliable", 40% - "not quite reliable", 23% - "not reliable at all."<sup>10</sup> On the whole, democracy in Georgia is perceived as a highly positive value. Democratic deficits in the actual political situation are interpreted by the Georgian public opinion as a motive for positive, democratic change. One of the possible readings of the Georgian report, in my opinion, is that the political and psychological reasons for the "revolution of roses" were related to a gap between the positive idea of democracy and the reality. High priority of the democratic values in Georgia is combined with very low levels of trust in the elites, which also produces support for democratic change. In Russia, on the contrary, low levels of trust in the elites are combined with relatively low priorities of the democratic values, on the one hand, and disproportionately high levels of trust and approval of the highest authority (the president), which produces the aspiration for stability at any price.

The second difference between Georgia and Russia closely relates to the first one. Extreme and prolonged economic and social crises in Georgia, vertical drop in the living standards of the majority of the population produced a universal desire for change. As the paper puts it, rising but frustrated expectations triggered the democratic overturning of the political regime. In Russia, the overall result of economic and social frustrations was the opposite: it was the growth of patience and resignation, on the one hand, and almost unconditional support for the established authorities in all levels from federal to regional and municipal, as the recent series of general elections showed. Stability became the main slogan not only of power holders but of the majority of the population as well. This kind of stability can be described as "backward looking", because people mainly lean towards the values of the recent, mainly "brezhnevite" past, which included high levels of state protection (although maintaining very low living and civic standards) and low levels of personal responsibility.

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<sup>6</sup> Lev Gudkov, Boris Dubin. "Necessary Acquaintances": Peculiarities of Social Organization Under the Conditions of Institutional Shortage. // The Russian Public Opinion Monitor, No. 3(59), 2002, p.36.

<sup>7</sup> Boris Dubin. The Face of the Epoch. // The Russian Public Opinion Monitor, No. 3(65)3 2002, p.25.

<sup>8</sup> Yuri Levada. Homo sovieticus": the Fourth Wave. Time of Changes in Public Opinion View. // The Russian Public Opinion Herald: Data. Analysis. Discussions. No. 1(67), 2003, p.14.

<sup>9</sup> Ekaterina Levintova. Relationship between Elite Discourse and Public Opinion in Post-Communist Russia (1992-2001). // The Russian Public Opinion Monitor, No. 5(61) 2002, p.26.

<sup>10</sup> The Russian Public Opinion Herald: Data. Analysis. Discussions. No. 2(68), 2003, p.81.

The changes that occurred in Russia during the last year suggest introducing some modifications into the Russian agenda of the common research project. The factors hindering civic development in Russia were significantly strengthened in the following areas:

1) The state and the authorities consequently suppressed autonomous manifestations and spaces in the political, economic, cultural and educational spheres.

2) The so-called "Khodorkovsky's case" showed that big business seeking transparency was perceived as the main enemy by the authorities, because it was looking for the independence from political power. Historically, Russian business was always dependent on the authorities and mutual violation of established laws was the necessary "glue" that gave the necessary cohesion to both state and economic machines.

3) The parliamentary elections of December showed that the multiparty political system actually ceased to exist, giving place to a rebirth of party-state machine through the executive exercises absolute control over the legislative.

4) A series of cultural and educational measures implemented in Russia during the last year, are aimed to the creation of single-dimensional cultural and educational space, subject to the direct control of the authorities.

Taking these changes into account, I want to add some new research questions into the agenda of the Russian part of the joint project:

1) What are the prevailing trends in the Russian society at the regional level? Do they coincide with the overall simplification of social structures and links that authorities evidently try to impose on it? Or does the society and its specific modes of identification produce this simplification and does the state only reproduce the main societal trends?

2) What are the implications of the economic situation for the regional society? Do they make the society more docile and governable, or do they produce more complex social ties and modes of behavior that are increasingly autonomous from the state tutelage?

Tatjana Vorozheikina

### **3.3. Ukraine: Rivalries within the urban system**

Differences and similarities of the Ukraine compared with the Georgian situation.

General differences are:

1. Compared with Georgia (without the rather autonomous parts as Adzhariya) in the Ukraine are several influential cities besides the capital, for example Donetsk and Dnipropetrovsk. Therefore a Revolution like in Tbilisi will be impossible in Kyiv without a rather strong support by these cities (i.e. its regional political elites).

2. The preparation for a political reform in the Ukrainian Parliament split the opposition. As a result the Ukrainian political opposition has weakened and has lost the strength to dispute with the power.

3. Compared with the Georgian situation the Ukrainian power has won more stability resources based on improvements in the economic sphere and measures in the social sphere.

General similarities are:

1. Positive attitude to democracy as a value, but rather strong distrust to the official public and political structures.

Social Institutions; trust Rating (all-nation polls, N-1800, conducted by the Institute of Sociology)

	1994	1998	2000	2003	
Family and relatives		4.45	4.51	4.56	4.48
The Supreme Council		2.29	2.05	2.09	2.16
Government		2.33	2.11	2.39	2.20
President		2.59	2.38	2.82	2.19

(Trust index: Scale 1–5 points)

2. High level of social indifference.
3. Political inactivity as a characteristic feature of the modern political culture of Ukraine.

*If your local government approved a decision which encroached on people's interest, would you take some kind of action against this decision?* (all-nation polls, N-1800, conducted by Institute of Sociology)

	1994	1998	2000	2003
Yes, I would	12.3%	9.2%	7.3%	12.3%
No, I would not	<b>56.1%</b>	<b>58.8%</b>	<b>60.1%</b>	<b>56.4%</b>
Difficult to answer	30.4%	31.8%	32.5%	31.1%

4. The predominant majority refuses violence as a method of political goal achievement.

The most important will be questions connected with the threat of the new liberal empire (the Great Russia), attempts of Moscow to have strong influence in the post-soviet space (i.e. Byelorussia, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Caucasus). Such kind of empire, in my point of view, will be also a threat for the stability in Europe.

Stegniy Oleksandr

### **3.4. Bulgaria: The heritage of a state-centered order**

Thank you so much for the very informative paper on recent developments in Georgia. I quite agree with the point that we have to discuss them from a comparative perspective. However, I very much believe that the range of comparisons should not be restricted to the former Soviet republics. I could detect quite a lot of similarities and certainly also differences in the post-socialist development and problems of Bulgaria and Georgia. The detailed and systematic comparisons might be very much facilitated by the fact that our Research Center REGLO has carried out annual representative surveys on Transformation Risks starting with 1992. So, we have a solid empirical background for comparisons. In the following I shall briefly outline only three fields of promising comparisons:

1. Exactly like our colleagues in Georgia, we have discovered a declining trend, but still rather strong influence of egalitarian and state-oriented value orientations among the Bulgarian

population. However, our analysis goes much further than the heritage of state socialism. Egalitarianism and „etatism“ has deeper roots in the Bulgarian cultural and institutional tradition. Most probably, our Georgian colleagues would identify such longer lasting heritage as well. Moreover, in the course of time we became more careful in interpreting egalitarianism and „etatism“ as a negative heritage of state socialism which has to be overcome as soon as possible. Now we see egalitarianism as one of the conditions for establishing and strengthening the desirable meritocratic order. As to „etatism“, now we see it as part and parcel of the efficient social order coordinated by a small but strong (efficient) state.

2. I quite agree that the issue of democratic participation and responsibility is a real puzzle in post-socialist societies. Indeed, all high expectations concerning the rise and efficient functioning of civil society have been disappointed in Eastern Europe. We have experienced a return to private life instead of growing interest in social affairs. This is one of the many reasons while democracy is still show-case or fragile in most countries of Eastern Europe. Given this experience, we can be more specific and thoughtful in our explanations and forecasting about public participation in democratic decision-making and control in Bulgaria. Comparisons with similar developments in Georgia might be mutually enriching. They might be also quite interesting in broader terms since Bulgaria has already synchronized its legislation with the EU standards while Georgia has not.

3. Although economic destruction went in Georgia much further than in Bulgaria, there are very sound grounds for comparisons focusing on this common and dramatic experience. It has strong political and cultural implications which are clearly identified in the paper on Georgia. We may continue monitoring these processes in a comparative Bulgarian-Georgian perspective.

Elisaveta Ignatova, Sofia, REGLO

### **3.5. The focus on local an regional peculiarities in research**

Thank you so much for your timely initiative to turn the discussion on highly intriguing local events in Georgia into a debate on globalization and regional development. Indeed, this turn is very much promising but it has its traps as well. I shall try to briefly indicate some of them in order to facilitate the preparation of a valuable INTAS project.

1. I guess, we need to keep the proper perspective in our interpretation of local events. I shall put the first passage of the Newsletter under scrutiny in order just to illustrate what I have in mind. I really doubt, for instance, that because of the events in November 2003 "a small country became a player in the world arena". To my mind, this is just a semantic misunderstanding. Yes, at that time Georgia powerfully attracted the attention of mass media worldwide. But this does not mean indeed that Georgia has become a global player since it simply does not have the resources to play in that way. The point is that we can easily be tempted to overestimate the relevance of what we are studying or going to study since it is very relevant for us as researchers. However, the proper approach to local, regional and global processes requires a strong self-control with a view to diverse realities.

2. Yes, I agree that there have been many specific and in this sense - at least partially - surprising events in what is called the Revolution of Roses in Georgia. However, there were also surprising - or not surprising - similarities of this glorious revolution with several other events in other parts of Eastern Europe. Let me take the famous fall of Milosevic. You may refresh your memory and identify striking repetitions of events, arguments and action

patterns. By the way, what happened in Belgrade was pretty similar to what happened in Sofia in January 1997. The point is that we very much need careful comparisons of local processes in Eastern Europe in order to try some more general conclusions about internal and external factors determining these processes.

3. Comparisons and conclusions could have an even broader range. For instance, we use to interpret the lack of social initiative and responsibility in Eastern European societies or pathological forms of individualization there as specific regional developments mostly due to the disappointment of high expectations. In order to substantiate the point, the Georgian colleagues point out at the small percentage of membership in political parties or at the turn to private life. But should we forget that the membership in political parties is even lower in Germany? Should we neglect the fact that Robert Putnam is very much concerned about the trend of "bowling alone" in the United States? The point is that many trends which seem to be specific for Georgia or for Eastern Europe could turn out to be global trends if properly analyzed.

Nikolai Genov