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# POLICY BRIEF

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## Is Democracy Possible without Stable Political Parties?

*Party Politics in Georgia and Prospects for Democratic Consolidation*

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### Executive summary

Strong political parties represent the cornerstone of consolidated democracies. Parties contend for office in elections. Therefore, a strong link between parties and voters is of primary importance to the success of elections. Strong and stable party-voter linkages ensure that democracy is stable, as voters are aware of what to expect from elected parties. Consequently, party ideological programs are key. As Georgia's democracy matures, the country's political parties must follow suit in order for democracy to be consolidated. Accordingly, Georgia's parties should consider the nature of their linkages with the electorate. Studies show that party-voter linkage is most stable when on programmatic lines, a factor which diminishes the chance of unexpected policy turns. Therefore, this paper examines the challenges Georgian parties face on their path toward becoming more ideology-driven. The paper examines how party programs correspond to party ideologies, how party programs reflect public opinion, and why and how young people decide to join political parties. This is achieved by: analyzing public opinion data from three different nation-wide polls; undertaking content analysis of seven major political party programs; and conducting focus group discussions with junior members of seven parties regarding their motives for joining the party of their choice. Findings show that: only three parties out of seven have ideologically-matching names and/or rhetoric and pre-election programs; more successful parties tend to better reflect public opinion than do less successful parties; and young Georgians tend to be more likely to prioritize personal networks, career opportunities, and ideology than the importance of a charismatic political leader when making decisions about which party to join or give loyalty.

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## Key Findings and Recommendations

### *For political parties in Georgia:*

- Public opinion data and pre-election programs indicate a gap between what the public needs and what is offered by parties. Parties must reflect the needs of the public, which are easily accessible through public opinion polls, but also must serve a function as public opinion mobilisers regarding the values on which their ideology is based. In short, parties must reflect needs while nurturing values.
- Focus group discussions indicate that some Georgian parties are identified as potentially programmatic and some as potentially clientelistic. Unexpectedly, however, no political party is labeled as charismatic party, indicating a more optimistic view of the Georgian political party system than is widely held by experts and scholars. However, parties must nurture the widespread appreciation of ideology and values among their junior members in order to transform into programmatic parties.
- Senior party members should be open to the ideas of their junior members and welcome their participation in decision-making processes, as this makes parties more internally transparent and democratic. Such horizontal governance and openness is highly likely to ensure the loyalty of the younger members.
- Research shows that a lack of qualified human resources is a recurring challenge for Georgian parties. Therefore, parties must either raise politicians from their own ranks or recruit from outside. While recruiting new members, however, parties must be careful regarding their methods of persuasion, as financial benefits and career opportunities do not seem important for gaining new and loyal members. Therefore, parties should identify prospective members who share similar values.

### *For the government:*

- This study finds that financial resources are deficient for Georgian parties. Competition, healthy and strong, is key to ensuring successful, democratic elections. Parties lacking resources are unable to ensure compete effectively. Therefore, a more effective party financing mechanism is necessary to ensuring democratic consolidation.

- Pluralism in parliament is a key component of democratization. The current electoral system favors larger parties, with smaller parties remaining outside parliament without an effective platform for advocating for the interests of their constituents. There is a need to reform the majoritarian electoral system (e.g. adopting a regional proportional system) to ensure better chances of representation for smaller parties.

*For the civil society organizations (CSOs) and think tanks:*

- CSOs and think tanks should work to ensure the accountability of political parties before their voters. Analysis of pre-election programs and research on societal needs and preferences help parties establish stronger linkages with their constituents.
- CSOs and think tanks should provide trainings for junior party members on the ideological foundations of party programs. Trainings in this field will raise awareness as to why values and ideologies are important for party-voter interactions.

*For media organizations:*

- Georgian political parties assume that the media sphere is not equally accessible for large and small parties. Ensuring neutral coverage and giving a platform to smaller parties as well as larger parties will ensure more political competition.

*For donor organizations:*

- Donor organizations can play an important role by prioritizing the development of the political party system in their grant schemes. Providing support for parties through CSOs and think tanks can play a significant role in enhancing the internal democracy of political parties, their accountability before voters, and their awareness of ideological platforms, among other things.

## Introduction

It has been said that Georgia fulfils “the basic conditions of a functional definition of democracy.”<sup>1</sup> However, functional democracy also requires functional political parties. Even in minimalist terms democracy is “a political system which supplies regular constitutional opportunities for changing the governing officials, and a social mechanism which permits the largest possible part of the population to influence major decisions by choosing among contenders for political office.”<sup>2</sup> The contenders for office are political parties, the stability of which is the key to democratic elections. The stability of parties is especially important in the Georgian context: the country’s political system has been developing toward parliamentary rule since constitutional amendments came into force after the 2013 presidential elections. Furthermore, there have been discussions since the 2016 parliamentary elections about amending the constitution to make the president elected by delegates from the parliament and municipal councils rather than by direct popular vote.<sup>3</sup> Parties tend to become more important in a system in which parliament holds more power. Therefore, Georgian democracy is unimaginable without strong and sustainable political parties serving as the foundation for democratic consolidation.

The stability of political party systems depends on two factors: the stability of the parties, and the stability of party-voter linkages. Georgian political parties are characterized by a “high death rate.”<sup>4</sup> This means that Georgian parties often do not often survive the loss of power or decreasing popularity on the part of their leaders. Furthermore, party-voter linkages in Georgia are assumed to be of the weakest type – charismatic. There are three types of party-voter linkage: charismatic, clientelistic, and programmatic. Charismatic parties have constituencies loyal to the party’s leader. In comparison, clientelistic parties have constituencies who expect “personal and selective tangible and intangible advantages derived from [their party’s] victory.” Finally, programmatic parties have constituencies who expect “the production of indirect advantages in the form of collective goods if the party of choice wins the election.”<sup>5</sup> In the post-Soviet context, programmatic party-voter linkages which “reinforce the consolidation and stability of democratic regimes”<sup>6</sup> is rare. Consequently, Georgian political parties, if democracy is to be consolidated, face the challenge to transform into programmatic institutions. Such a

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<sup>1</sup> Kakachia, K. and Kakhishvili, L. (2014). Georgia’s Political Transition: Halfway towards electoral democracy? In: Sully, M. (ed.) *Governance and Sustainability: Black Sea Region*. Vienna: Institute for Go-Governance.

<sup>2</sup> Lipset, S. M. (2000). The indispensability of political parties. *Journal of Democracy*, 11(1), 48-55.

<sup>3</sup> Broadcasting Company Rustavi 2. (2016, October 10). Population may be deprived of the right to elect the president - "Georgian Dream" is announcing constitutional amendments. Retrieved from <http://rustavi2.com/en/news/58783>.

<sup>4</sup> Nodia, G., & Scholtbach, Á. P. (2006). *The political landscape of Georgia: political parties: achievements, challenges and prospects*. Eburon Uitgeverij BV.

<sup>5</sup> Kitschelt, H. (1995). Formation of party cleavages in post-communist democracies: Theoretical propositions. *Party politics*, 1(4), 447-472.

<sup>6</sup> Kitschelt, H. (1995). Formation of party cleavages in post-communist democracies: Theoretical propositions. *Party politics*, 1(4), 447-472. Also see: Lijphart, A., Rogowski, R., & Weaver, R. K. (1993). Separation of powers and cleavage management. In R. K. Weaver & B. A. Rockman (Eds.), *Do institutions matter? Government capabilities in the United States and abroad* (pp. 302-344). Washington, DC: Brookings Institute.

transformation strengthens party-voter linkages as voters will have clear expectations regarding what policies will be pursued should a party of a given ideology win an election. Such predictability, by extension, determines democratic stability and consolidation.

The goal of this paper is to study seven major Georgian political parties<sup>7</sup> in order to identify challenges to the development of Georgia's political party system and provide recommendations for relevant stakeholders to promote the process of democratization in Georgia. For these purposes, three objectives have been established. First, the paper explores to what extent the structure of parties' issue positions can be arranged along a one-dimensional left-right nexus and to what extent these issue positions correspond to the parties' respective declared ideologies. To this end, party stances on economic and social issues have been analyzed through the content analysis of pre-election programs of the seven parties. Second, the paper further explores pre-election programs to analyze to what extent parties address the issues about which the public is concerned. Public opinion has been inferred from three public opinion polls conducted prior to the 2016 parliamentary elections, taking place in November 2015, March 2016, and June 2016.<sup>8</sup> Finally, in order to gain an understanding of the nature of party-voter linkages in Georgia, representatives of the youth organizations of the seven parties were recruited to participate in focus group discussions, the aim of which being to identify reasons for why Georgian youth join political parties. This paper assumes that there are three main reasons for joining a party:<sup>9</sup> interest in following a charismatic leader; interest in obtaining direct tangible or intangible benefits from the victory of a certain party, and belief in the ideology or value preferences expressed by a given party. Throughout the research period, (February-March 2017) seven focus group discussions (FGD) were organized with the participation of 48 young political activists (30 male; 18 female) ages 18 to 33.

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<sup>7</sup> Georgian Dream, United National Movement, Alliance of Patriots of Georgia, Free Democrats, Democratic Movement – United Georgia, Labour Party, Republican Party.

<sup>8</sup> Caucasus Research Resource Centers. (2015, November). NDI: Public attitudes in Georgia, November 2015. Retrieved from <http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/nn2015ge/codebook/>.

Caucasus Research Resource Centers. (2016, March). NDI: Public attitudes in Georgia, March 2016. Retrieved from <http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/na2016ge/codebook/>.

Caucasus Research Resource Centers. (2016, June). NDI: Public attitudes in Georgia, June 2016. Retrieved from <http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/nj2016ge/codebook/>.

<sup>9</sup> Note: choosing to become active in politics and selecting a party to join are viewed as two separate decision-making processes. There are other factors that determine a decision to become involved in active politics but this paper limits the reasons for choosing a certain party to three possible factors, each of which reflect Kitschelt's theoretical framework.

## Structure of Issue Positions in the Political Party System of Georgia

Well-defined ideologies result in strong linkages between a particular party and its voters. Therefore, the first aspect of Georgian parties to be considered is how their respective positions are structured on a left-right spectrum. Content analysis of seven programs for the 2016 parliamentary elections was conducted focusing on economic issues including jobs, poverty, rising prices and inflation, and wages; and social issues such as pensions, affordable healthcare, and education. Judging from party names and the public statements made by party representatives, out of the seven parties under consideration in this study, two parties lean toward the left – Georgian Dream (GD) and the Labour Party (LP); and five parties lean toward the right – the United National Movement (UNM), the Alliance of Patriots of Georgia (APG), the Free Democrats (FD), the Democratic Movement-United Georgia (DMUG), and the Republican Party (RP). Only three programs out of seven closely match the declared and/or inferred ideology of the respective party (see the Table 1 below).

The analysis makes clear that pre-election promises tended to be leftist and only one right-leaning party – the Republican Party – stayed loyal to its ideology across all issues under consideration. However, it should be noted that in certain occasions a party program exhibits right-leaning values (e.g. the program of FD), but when it comes to specific issue positions the party emerges with more left-leaning positions. On the other hand, given Georgia’s overall social-economic conditions, parties may intentionally choose to feature left-leaning positions, as was suggested by participants from the DMUG. And finally, there are cases when positions on economic and social issues are leftist but the non-economic and/or social values featured in the election program are conservative (e.g. the case of APG, whose program is centered on notions of “Georgian spirit”, tradition, religion, and patriotism, among other things).

**Table1: Consistency of party programs and their declared and/or inferred ideology**

Left-leaning parties		Economic Issues	Right-leaning parties				
GD	LP		UNM	APG	FD	DMUG	RP
✓	✓	Jobs	✓	✗	N.A.	✗	✓
✓	✓	Poverty	✗	✗	✗	N.A.	✓
✓	✓	Inflation	✓	N.A.	N.A.	✗	✓
N.A.	✓	Wages	✗	N.A.	✗	✗	✓
		<b>Social Issues</b>					
✗	✓	Pensions	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
✓	✓	Healthcare	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓
✓	✓	Education	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓

✓ - The issue position of the party corresponds to the declared and/or inferred ideology

✗ - The issue position of the party does not correspond to the declared and/or inferred ideology

N.A. – The program does not mention or devote significant attention to the issue

Several conclusions can be made. First, leftist ideas and pre-election promises may simply be semantics and not actual promises, as parties appear to understand that most voters expect improvements in living standards in the short-run perspective. Therefore, these promises might be no more than appeals to populism. Second, when a party's ideology and pre-election promises are not in line with each other, the possibility of developing programmatic party-voter linkages is impeded. This situation hinders democratization in Georgia. Finally, divergences between a party's name and its election program create confusion about ideological identity and may discourage value-motivated would-be activists from engaging in politics.

### Issue Salience: Public Opinion vs. Pre-Election Promises

The issues that are stressed and receive the most attention in party programs are an important indicator of the nature of party-voter linkages. These issues also demonstrate the ways in which parties communicate with their constituents and to what extent they are aware of public preferences. It is often believed that pre-election promises are insignificant in comparison with the charisma of party leaders. However, as polls show, party platforms are at least equally important. When asked whether or not party electoral platforms and promises are important, 60 percent of Georgians responded that they are "somewhat" or "very important."<sup>10</sup> The same figure for "trust toward specific members of parties" stands at 66 percent, lower than many assume to be the case in Georgia.<sup>11</sup> Public opinion polls do not completely correspond to voter behavior. However, they provide a strong indicator of the expectations Georgian parties face from their constituents.

This study examines the results of three public opinion polls conducted during the 12-month period preceding the 2016 parliamentary elections: November 2015, March 2016, and June 2016. These polls, which were commissioned by the National Democratic Institute (NDI), have been widely publicized, implying that the trends in public opinion expressed are easily accessible even to small parties. The three polls suggest that the Georgian public prioritizes economic and social issues first, followed by issues related to territorial integrity, foreign and security policy, and defense as well as issues related to governance, democracy, justice, and human rights (see Table 2).

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<sup>10</sup> Caucasus Research Resource Centers. (2016, June). NDI: Public attitudes in Georgia, June 2016. Retrieved from <http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/nj2016ge/codebook/>.

<sup>11</sup> Caucasus Research Resource Centers. (2016, June). NDI: Public attitudes in Georgia, June 2016. Retrieved from <http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/nj2016ge/codebook/>.

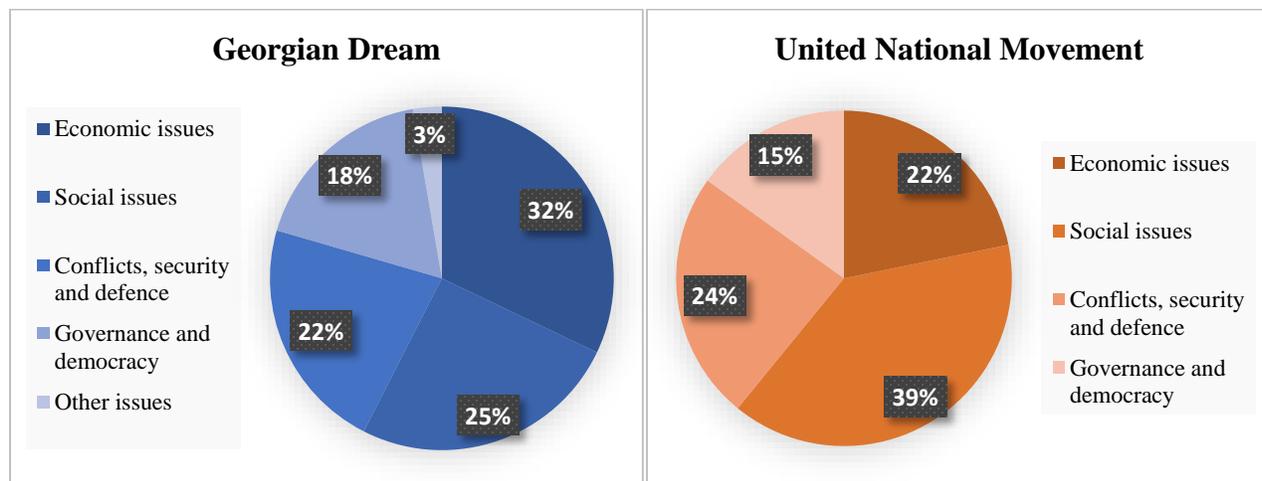
**Table 2: Public opinion and their priorities**

#	The Most Important National Issue	Date of the Survey			Average
		Nov-15	Mar-16	Jun-16	
1	Economic Issues: Employment, Poverty, Prices/Inflation, Wages				
1.1	Jobs	57%	57%	56%	57%
1.2	Poverty	29%	30%	29%	29%
1.3	Rising prices/Inflation	26%	35%	26%	29%
1.4	Wages	17%	18%	16%	17%
2	Social Issues: Healthcare, Pensions, Education				
2.1	Pensions	28%	26%	25%	26%
2.2	Affordable healthcare	20%	18%	20%	19%
2.3	Education	12%	13%	17%	14%
3	Territorial Integrity, Foreign and Security Policy				
3.1	Territorial integrity	29%	23%	28%	27%
3.2	Relations with Russia	10%	12%	12%	11%
3.3	NATO membership	5%	6%	6%	6%
3.4	EU membership	4%	3%	5%	4%
4	Post-materialist Values: Democracy, Justice and Human Rights				
4.1	Fair elections	9%	6%	9%	8%
4.2	Restoration of justice	9%	9%	9%	9%
4.3	Human rights	13%	11%	8%	11%
4.4	Freedom of speech	9%	5%	5%	6%
4.5	Court system	4%	2%	4%	3%

For Georgians, two of the top three most important national issues are always economic, with the other being territorial integrity. However, on average at least one economic issue is mentioned by 33 percent of the survey respondents. For social issues, that figure is 19.7 percent. The third category of problems – relating to conflicts, foreign policy, and security and defense – are mentioned by 12 percent of the population. Finally, governance-related issues, democracy, justice and human rights –related to what might be labelled post-materialist values – are the least likely to be mentioned as national problems: on average, the figure stands at 7.4 percent for each issue in this category. This discussion is consistent with issues identified by the public as most important when voting in parliamentary elections: 41 percent of the population thinks that a party’s stance on economic policy is of primary importance, followed by party stance on healthcare issues – 14 percent; national security – 11 percent; rule of law – 9 percent; foreign policy– 8 percent; and education policy – 6 percent.<sup>12</sup>

This paper relies on content analysis to discuss the issues stressed by political parties in their respective pre-election programs. Unsurprisingly, the most successful political parties – GD and UNM – better reflected public priorities (see Charts 1 and 2 below). GD, for example, allocates 32 percent of its over-24,800-word program to economic issues. That is followed by social issues, which accounted for one in every four words on average. Social issues are closely followed by territorial integrity, foreign and security policy, and defense affairs. Finally, governance, democracy, human rights, justice, and other related issues account for only 18 percent of the program. Furthermore, GD has the longest program in terms of word count (UNM’s program, for example, is fewer than 6,000 words). It should be noted, however, that the length of a program is less important as its content.

**Charts 1 and 2: Pre-election program priorities for Georgian Dream and the United National Movement**

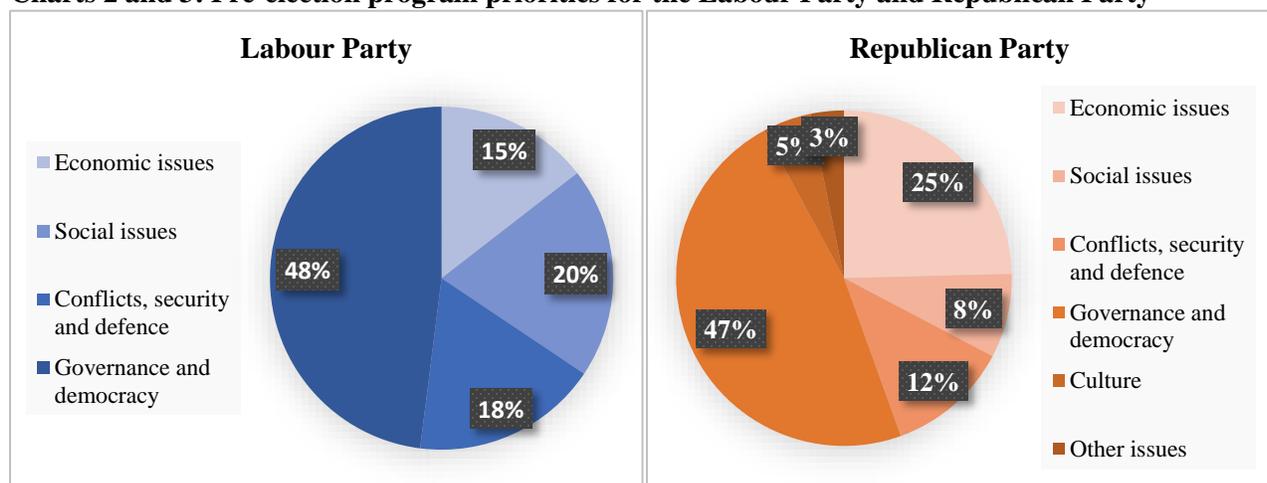


<sup>12</sup> Caucasus Research Resource Centers. (2016, June). NDI: Public attitudes in Georgia, June 2016. Retrieved from <http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/nj2016ge/codebook/>.

As opposed to the top-performing parties, LP and RP – which received the lowest numbers of votes in the 2016 parliamentary elections, 3.14 percent and 1.55 percent, respectively<sup>13</sup> -- distribute their priorities at variance from public opinion (see charts 3 and 4 below). Governance and democracy as well as cultural and post-materialist issues such as environmental protection take up 48 and 53 percent of the LP and RP programs, respectively. These are low priorities for the public. Similarly, the APG, which, although it passed the threshold and received six mandates in parliament with just over 5 percent of the vote, does not address the priorities of public opinion in its election program. Every third word on average is dedicated to issues including patriotism and Georgian spirit, Georgian feast, religion and patriarch, Georgian poetry, dances and folklore, and other related terms (that is one percent more than the 32 percent dedicated to economic and social issues combined). However, it should be mentioned that APG’s focus on conservative and traditional values is likely what makes it more appealing than liberal parties such as the FD and RP.

On the other hand, it must be emphasized that the results of the content analysis are inconclusive and suggest that the structure of priorities expressed in party programs is not the decisive factor influencing the electoral behavior of Georgian voters. That becomes clear when outliers are examined. DMUG, for example, closely reflects public opinion in its distribution of priorities; however, the party received only 3.53 percent of votes. Similarly, FD focuses most of its program on economic and social issues – 70 percent combined. Yet, the party failed to pass the five percent threshold. This may also be explained by multiple factors such as voters’ trust in the party to make strategic decisions, or trust in whether a particular party is capable of fulfilling pre-election promises. After all, these priorities are written on paper and most voters do not read the programs. However, they are a useful indication of the issues deemed salient by the political parties.

**Charts 2 and 3: Pre-election program priorities for the Labour Party and Republican Party**



<sup>13</sup> Central Election Commission of Georgia. (2016, November 16). Summary Protocol of the Central Election Commission of Georgia on the Final Results of 8 October 2016 Parliamentary Elections of Georgia. Retrieved from <http://cesko.ge/res/docs/shemajamebelieng.pdf>.

Georgian parties still have much to learn about reflecting the values and needs of society. On the other hand, however, a line should be drawn between societal needs and values. Political parties do have the responsibility to represent their constituents and fulfil their needs, but they also have a duty to mobilize public opinion around certain values that are not yet mainstream among the public. For example, raising awareness about social justice and equality is the moral duty of social democrats, while promoting respect for freedom of choice and individualism is the task of liberal parties. Therefore, the priorities of political parties can differ from those of the public, but this variance should be limited to post-materialist values. Parties should not disappoint their constituents by failing to take notice of their needs. In addition, they should act when conditions exist for nurturing certain values.

## The Nature of Georgian Political Parties and Why People Join Them

Parties can be classified according to the factors that citizens consider when deciding for whom to vote.<sup>14</sup> This is defined by difference categories of party-voter linkages. In contrast to the widespread belief that ideology is insignificant in Georgian party politics, this study found that most scholars and field experts underestimate the importance of ideology for Georgian political activists. The study examined four major aspects of motivations for becoming politically active: why young people decide to go into politics; what factors influence their choice of party; what factors influence their decision to stay active in the selected party; and finally, what is the order of importance of personalities, career opportunities, and ideology in their identification with a particular party. Ideas and values, this study finds, play roles of varied significance in every stage of decision-making. However, the importance of ideology is showcased when young political activists identify themselves with a party of their choice.

According to the preliminary findings of this study, there are three recurring reasons for why young people choose to get involved in politics. First, that involvement can be a protest against the existing state of affairs and the desire to change how the politics are made in the country. Second, youngsters wish to be active in order to develop their careers, gain experience, and do some good for society along the way. And finally, personal networks and the influence of friends can be significant factors in this process, as well. These findings represent a mixture of features of clientelistic (career, networks) and programmatic (value-driven activism oriented toward change) political parties.

Furthermore, the choice of a specific party is more often than not determined by personal networks. This implies that decisions about which party to join often depend on in which party one has friends. Although personal networks are the key variable among the participants of this

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<sup>14</sup> Kitschelt, H. (1995). Formation of party cleavages in post-communist democracies: Theoretical propositions. *Party Politics*, 1(4), 447-472.

research, there is a minority of young people whose choice of party may be determined by two additional factors: party ideology and party leadership.

Networks, friendships, and the types of relationships established within a given party appear to determine allegiance to the party among the participants of this study. As various parties attempt to recruit young members, they often headhunt current members of other parties. However, the commitment to remain in one's chosen party appears to depend on to what extent junior members of the party feel welcome in both the higher and lower ranks of the party. If junior members observe common interests and values<sup>15</sup> and feel that senior members pay attention to them – consider their opinion on various issues and contribute to their personal development – young people will remain loyal to the party. That is so even if the offers from other parties are attractive financially: according to the participants, the most common tools parties use to recruit young members are direct financial benefits (i.e. salary or a lump sum just before the elections) and the promise of better career opportunities. The former is used especially when attempting to win over experienced young people who have a longer track record of volunteering in a political party. Often, however, such offers are perceived as insulting by young activists who perceive financially-driven decisions to be damaging to their political identities and future career prospects. In rare cases ideology can play a role, as well. There are cases when a political party is not concerned with the development of its younger colleagues but junior members stay loyal anyway out of a strong commitment to the party's ideological values. Such participants tend to come from smaller parties and view their political careers through the lens of a constant struggle to improve the environment around them.

Finally, the process by which junior party members identify with their own party can also be insightful. The participants of the study were asked to rank, in order from the most important to the least important, three factors by which they identify themselves with their party. The results contradict the widespread belief that ideology is unimportant in Georgian party politics. Overall, ideas, values, and ideology topped the list of factors by which junior party members identify. Career opportunities and personal development came second, closely followed by leaders and personalities. While insightful, these findings must be treated with care for several reasons. First, in some occasions participants of this research were unable to correctly identify their political party's ideology. Yet, the same participants strongly argued that ideology is of primary importance to their identification with the party. This puts the findings under question because if a person is not aware of the ideology of their party has, this implies that ideology is insignificant. Second, ideas and values are usually not as important as personal networks and career opportunities while making first steps toward a political career. Therefore, how they emerge as the primary identification mechanism with a party that was not chosen for its ideological stance remains a mystery. Further research is necessary to uncover how the process of socialization within a party affects the values of its junior members. Third, there might be

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<sup>15</sup> Note: According to how participants describe the decision-making process of rejecting offers for membership in other parties, discovering each other's values and ideas happens after joining the party: being a member of the same party does not guarantee that two members will have a similar set of values.

cases when social desirability influenced the participants' honesty, and they answered in a manner they anticipated to be the most desired by the researchers.

Although the data gathered in this study is inconclusive and the findings should be viewed carefully, the research findings are significant. The findings argue strongly against the widespread perception that leaders are of primary importance in Georgian party politics. One can conclude that the nature of party-voter linkages in Georgia is changing and, in this process, political parties along with other actors can play a decisive role in how this transformation proceeds.

## Conclusion

This study found that Georgian political parties are currently undergoing transformation. Parties which are traditionally assumed to be based on the popularity of their leaders have shown themselves to be more complex. Elements related to clientelism and programmatic party-voter linkages can be observed in Georgia's party politics. This is important for the democratization process. Although democratic consolidation cannot be achieved without strong political parties, transforming party politics from fragmentation of the political establishment to competition between ideologies, values, and policy choices will ensure progress. This is especially acute in the context of rising populism in Europe as well as in North America. Although it is often argued that programmatic political parties are no longer needed for the functioning of politics, Georgia, as a post-Soviet country, is now undergoing a process of strengthening its political party system. This is a process that Europe and North America had more than two centuries to complete. Therefore, the evolutionary approach prevails over the revolutionary, and it is necessary to cement value linkages between voters and parties. This way, Georgian voters will know what policies to expect from different political parties. Parliamentary systems, toward which Georgia is moving, require developed political parties. Such development can be achieved only by weakening informal power networks and strengthening the programmatic features of Georgian parties.

## GEORGIAN INSTITUTE OF POLITICS

Tbilisi-based non-profit, non-partisan, research and analysis organization. GIP works to strengthen the organizational backbone of democratic institutions and promote good governance and development through policy research and advocacy in Georgia.



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