

Research Article

**CIVIC SELF-AWARENESS AND PECULIARITIES OF THE GEORGIAN POLITICAL
PROCESS**

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Abstract.

The article reviews and analyzes the challenges of the Georgian political process. The author tries to focus on the content of the election programs of political parties and the perspective of their implementation. The article names the reasons that hinder the Georgian political process. The author argues in the article that the main responsibility for the formation of government should be taken by the society and it must make its own contribution to the development of the political process.

Key words: Elections, Political Parties, Democracy, Georgia, Political Process.

Today from different circles (political, cultural, civil) of Georgia we often hear phrases with similar content: "Georgian people deserve more", "Georgian society does not deserve this", "When should this disorder end" and so on. At first glance there is nothing special in all this and expressions with similar content can be found in any other country.

But if we look at the qualitative side of this protest, we realize that this complaint is often related to one and the same issues. For example:

1. Non-fulfillment of pre-election promises by governments;
2. Failure to take into account the public interest by the government;
3. Low quality of social background;
4. Few jobs;

We can extend this list and add many more problems. In other words, time passes but public order remains the same, which means that the political process does not unfold (Transparency International Georgia, 2012).

Let us now examine the reasons behind these unresolved issues.

Since 1991, 5 political forces have ruled Georgia.

1. Round table - Free Georgia;
2. Military Council of the Republic of Georgia;
3. Union of Citizens of Georgia;
4. United National Movement
5. Georgian Dream;

Out of these 5 political unions, only 2 are found in active politics at present - the current ruling party (Georgian Dream) and the former ruling party (United National Movement). Where have the other political unions that have been in power for 30 years gone? All but the National Movement have disappeared from active politics (Jibladze, 2019).

The political union (Round Table - Free Georgia) that came to power on the basis of the national liberation movement soon became unacceptable to the elite part of the society. They organized military coup against the political union. No political force that came to power as a result of the coup could be progressive and democratic. His own past and legacy would not allow him to be of this kind. However, Eduard Shevardnadze and the Union of Citizens of Georgia were able to maintain power for 13 years.

Later on, the government changed as a result of another unconstitutional event in the Georgian political process (The Rose Revolution in 2003). The new government came in an undemocratic and unjust way though at the expense of fewer victims and spent 9 years in power. In 2012, for the first time in the modern history of Georgia (since gaining independence in 1991), the Georgian society was able to change the government through elections. This is a great achievement for Georgia, despite many serious violations revealed in the pre-election process. There was a belief in the society that the government that came to power legally and democratically would lead the political process more democratically, but soon it became clear that the current government also uses the methods of the old government (resources of the population employed in the public sector, voters intimidation and bribery, pressure on business, non-fulfillment of promises). However, the principles of democracy are really more protected than it was during the previous governments. 8 years have passed since 2012 and in October 2020 the Georgian society will have to make a serious choice. It is important to respond to the violations revealed during the pre-election campaign, otherwise the result will be suitable for the election campaign and it will be too late to consider evaluations. It is important for active political parties to get balanced seats in parliament. If political parties get an insignificant number of seats, a political crisis is expected to follow to the formation of a government in Georgia.

1. It is unlikely that one party will be able to win seats needed to form a government. This fact usually means a high degree of democracy and should be welcomed by the society.

2. The prospect of constructive cooperation between the current ruling party and major opposition parties is also unlikely. This means the demonstration of their own forces and the existence of a large political trade, which will most likely turn into a political crisis.

3. The relatively weak political parties in parliament are unlikely to support just one major political party. They will split and make a deal with the strong political parties on different issues.

4. It is unlikely that the majoritarians will be recruited, as in Georgia their candidates are selected mainly on the basis of "unscrupulous loyalty".

The above mentioned hypotheses are connected to the causes of unresolved problems in the following way:

1. Irresponsible pre-election campaign (this applies to all government forces that have been in Georgia so far);

2. An irresponsible campaign leads to the failure of promises;

3. Failure to fulfill promises causes the emergence of dissatisfied people;

4. The emergence of dissatisfied citizens leads not to an immediate democratic change of government, but to pressure from the government and finally to an undemocratic change of government.

5. An undemocratic change of government will not develop a democratic standard in the country (Gamsakhurdia, 2020; Union of Citizens of Georgia, n.d.; Election Program - Parliamentary Elections 2016 (National Movement), 2016; Election Program of "Bidzina Ivanishvili - Georgian Dream", 2012; Election Program of Georgian Dream, 2016).

Where is the solution?

Georgian society must know that an undemocratic political process based on the wishes of any political force acts against society's own interests. Today, no political force enjoys the high credibility of the electorate. Nevertheless, the Georgian society is obliged to "educate" the political forces through elections, so that the future political process to be competitive and, consequently, part of the above-mentioned problems will be solved. After leaving power, a political party should not disappear from active politics. It should try to return to power, but it should not be a revenge. The ruling party should try to maintain power in such a way that when it is no longer in power, their successors have no desire for revenge. In such a competition, the political process and public self-awareness develop and the same problems no longer remain from one election cycle to another. We should also mention the participation of criminals in the political process because it is somehow a characteristic process for developing democracies. The Georgian phenomenon here is distinguished by the fact that almost all political forces that came to power tried to use criminal resources. Of course different forms were chosen for this. In some

cases the participation of criminals in the political process was absolutely open, in some cases it had and still has a latent face. In general, the Georgian society has often resorted to the alternative of law. That is why the prospect of establishing the rule of law has been facing challenges for a long time (Strategic Analysis Center, 2018). The society must choose what kind of state order it wants and therefore it must make a thoughtful and long-term choice during the elections, it must feel its own responsibility and it must fulfill its civic duty with dignity. After this the society can boldly demand an answer from a political force which has disappointed him and reflect its protest on the results of the next elections (we mean here local self-government elections, by-elections or, if any, presidential elections). In this way the political parties will “mature” and the political process in Georgia will have a better development perspective:

1. Political parties will try not to make unrealistic promises;
2. They will try harder to fulfill promises;
3. The political process will be conducted in accordance with the standard of high democracy;
4. We will pass on a better state to future generations;
5. The country will become a highly reliable international partner;
6. Political progress will lead to economic progress;
7. The income of Georgian voters will increase and more jobs will naturally appear.

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