



Tima T. Moldogaziev, Gene A. Brewer,
J. Edward Kellough (eds.)

PUBLIC POLICY AND POLITICS IN GEORGIA

Lessons from Post-Soviet Transition

With a foreword by Dan Durning

ibidem

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The chapters in this book are a sample of research projects completed by scholars in Georgia as part of the University of Georgia Research Program in Public Policy. We thank all the participants for their attentiveness in our classes and their work on varied research projects. We trust that they developed useful skills through

participation in our program. We can affirm that we learned much from them.

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Dedication

Georgia is a hidden jewel nestled in the Caucasus region of south-central Eurasia. Her captivating physical beauty and panoramic landscapes have inspired generations of Georgians to repel hostile forces and preserve their beloved country. Georgia's rich culture is unsurpassed, and the Georgian people are known for their world-class hospitality and strong family values. Above all, Georgia is a country on the move—searching for an even brighter, more prosperous future in the years ahead. I therefore dedicate this book to the coming age of Georgian splendor.

Gene A. Brewer, Athens, Georgia (USA), September 2020

To my long-time friends from Georgia who first introduced me to this beautiful country: Vaso Jaiani and Levan Samadashvili

J. Edward Kellough, Athens, Georgia (USA), September 2020

To my friends in the country of Georgia and the state of Georgia

Tima T. Moldogaziev, University Park, Pennsylvania, September 2020

Preface

Supporting the Development of Public Policy and Administration Education in Georgia: The University of Georgia's Partnership in Tbilisi

Efforts of the University of Georgia (UGA) to help two Georgian institutions of higher education develop Western-style public policy and administration education programs began with a small step in September 1998. "University of Georgia" in the above sentence refers to the American university located in Athens in the state of Georgia. The "Georgian institutions of higher education" were degree-granting institutions operating over 6,000 miles away in Tbilisi, the capital of the country of Georgia in the South Caucasus region.

The small step was a visit I made to Tbilisi as a faculty member from UGA's Carl Vinson Institute of Government, a public service unit of UGA that had recently created a center to develop joint programs and partnerships with non-U.S. universities, mainly those in countries that had left the Soviet Union and had started the process of building democracies. The Carl Vinson Institute had just completed its first such project in Ukraine, where it had a partnership with Uzhgorod State University (USU) that introduced the study of public administration and public policy to interested faculty members and helped several of them develop relevant courses they could teach. The Carl Vinson Institute also encouraged USU to create a center to offer training programs for local government managers in the Transcarpathian Oblast, the region in which the university—now named Uzhgorod National University—is located. For that purpose, USU set up the Institute for Public Administration and Regional Development that exists to this day.

The 1998 exploratory trip to Tbilisi came after we learned about a possible partner institution for future joint projects. It was the Georgian International Training Center for Environmental Management and Planning (GITC). This private university had

been created jointly in 1990 with the help of the Georgian Academy of Sciences and UGA's College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences to offer undergraduate and graduate degrees in agribusiness management, environmental management, and modern immunology. GITC rose and operated with the assistance of two grants to UGA from the United States Information Agency (USIA). Grant funds were used partly to pay for faculty exchanges but mainly to finance the study of a dozen GITC students at UGA for a semester or more.

U.S. government funding of the joint program had ended in 1997, but GITC had continued to offer its degree programs. In 1997 it had awarded fifty Bachelor of Science degrees, and in 1998 the number of conferred degrees reached 59. From 1993 to 1997, graduate students had earned 64 Master of Arts degrees from GITC. Despite its previous successes, however, the future of the program was uncertain, I was told, because not only had USIA funding ended, but also GITC's rector, a dynamic and well-connected businessman, had died unexpectedly in 1996, leaving it rudderless.

During the exploratory trip to Tbilisi, I met with the leaders of the GITC, including Valeri Melikidze, an Academy of Science member whom GITC had appointed to lead its side of the partnership with UGA. Prof. Melikidze's terminal degree was in human geography, and he had a good record of carrying out applied policy-related research. Representing UGA, I proposed a partnership like the one the Carl Vinson Institute had had with Uzhgorod State University that focused on helping GITC develop the capacity to add new programs in public administration education and outreach. GITC's leadership found the partnership proposal to be acceptable.

Our new partnership came at a good time. The USIA had issued a call for proposals for grants to finance partnerships between universities in the United States and those in countries that were "Newly Independent States." In coordination with Prof. Melikidze, I wrote a grant proposal for the USIA's "NIS Colleges and Universities Partnerships Program." The grant proposal, entitled "Building New Public Administration Education and Outreach Programs at the International Training Center in Tbilisi, Georgia,"

stated that it would “strengthen education in Georgia on public administration and public policy in a democratic context.” It proposed to do so by helping GITC faculty members—present and newly added—to develop expertise in public administration subjects so they could teach them and provide training related to them.

While putting together the grant proposal, I learned that the USIA, with an office in the American Embassy in Tbilisi, had been investing heavily in another project to improve public administration education to Georgia. Beginning in 1995, it had funded activities of the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA), a prestigious group in the United States that had helped create the Georgian Institute of Public Administration (GIPA). This nonprofit educational institution offered a Master of Public Administration (MPA) degree in Tbilisi. NAPA not only helped to develop education and training materials for the new program, but it also supplied its faculty members: visiting American professors taught most of the courses in the one-year MPA program. This English-language program graduated about thirty students each year. In our partnership grant application, we made it clear that GITC would not be competing with GIPA, but that it would expand the opportunities for Georgian students to study public policy and administration through courses taught in Georgian.

Despite concerns at the USIA about the shaky financial situation of the Georgian International Training Institute, in the middle of 1999, it approved a grant of about \$250,000 for the UGA-GITC partnership. The joint project began in earnest in January 2000 with semester-long visits of Prof. Melikidze and three other GITC faculty members to UGA. These visitors, and others who came to UGA in the years that followed, had an opportunity to attend policy and public administration courses taught by UGA’s Department of Political Science faculty members, confer with them and other UGA faculty members on syllabi and course materials, and sample the Carl Vinson Institute’s extensive local government training programs. Although UGA’s Department of Political Science was not involved in administering the grant, many of its faculty members voluntarily participated in project activities.

In May 2000, when two Carl Vinson Institute faculty members traveled to Tbilisi, one for a one-month visit and the other for two

months, they found that GITC was defunct, but that its leaders were attempting to find the funding needed to resume operations. The UGA faculty members contacted Giorgi Margvelashvili, GIPA's rector, and Mzia Mikeladze, GIPA's dean, to offer their services to that institution. Both Rector Margvelashvili and Dean Mikeladze had been appointed in 2000 to replace the Institute's previous leaders. These new leaders of GIPA had big plans for its development, and they made use of visiting UGA faculty members to support GIPA's activities.

By the middle of 2001, after UGA had hosted three more would-be GITC faculty members during the Spring semester, it became clear that the Georgian International Training Center was dead, and UGA asked the USIA to designate GIPA as its grant partner. The request was approved, and UGA shifted its efforts to working with its new partner, which was developing both a new Georgian-language degree for local government managers and a program to provide local government training. Educating and training local government officials had become an urgent priority because Georgia had recently elected about 30,000 local government leaders who previously were appointed.

After GIPA received funds in 2002 from the Urban Institute to finance its planned Local Government Manager master's degree program and to provide related training, UGA faculty members helped GIPA prepare to teach the academic and applied courses that were part of the new program. Among its activities, UGA hosted semester-long visits of a young man and two young women who were preparing to teach courses in the new degree program. Also, when in Tbilisi, UGA professors helped several GIPA faculty members hone their training skills and prepare training materials. In addition, UGA facilitated the ten-day visit of Tamara Sulukhia, the woman appointed to head GIPA's Local Government Manager programs, who traveled to UGA to learn about its training programs for local governments.

Also, during 2002, GIPA Rector George Margvelashvili visited UGA for two weeks to talk to UGA administrators about issues of higher education management. Under his leadership, the Georgian Institute of Public Administration had changed its name to the Georgian Institute of Public Affairs, reflecting its new degree

program in Local Government Management and another new graduate program it had added in journalism (the Caucasus School of Journalism and Media Management). These new academic programs were the first of many that Rector Margvelashvili and Maka Ioseliani, who became GIPA's Dean in 2003, would initiate in the coming years. (In November 2013, a year after stepping down as GIPA's rector, Margvelashvili was elected President of Georgia, serving a term in office that lasted until December 2019.)

The UGA-GIPA partnership grant program ended in 2004. Its project activities had included fourteen trips to Tbilisi by eight UGA faculty members who spent a total of 53 weeks there and ten semester-long visits by Georgian faculty members to UGA, a total of 150 weeks. However, the expiration of the partnership grant did not mean the termination of UGA's work with GIPA. Instead, UGA was offered the opportunity to continue the partnership for three additional years.

The opportunity arose because the National Academy of Public Administration had decided to discontinue its cooperative work with GIPA, primarily because of a dispute between the two about a personnel decision made by Rector Margvelashvili. After NAPA halted its partnership activities, the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (BECA) invited UGA to submit a proposal for a three-year project that would take over NAPA's work with GIPA while also undertaking other activities to enhance GIPA's ability to sustain its operations when grant funds to pay visiting U.S. faculty members were no longer available. (BECA took on the responsibilities of the U.S. Information Agency when that organization was abolished.) In response to the invitation from BECA, UGA submitted a grant proposal with the title "Transition to a Sustainable Model of Public Administration Education." It was approved along with a \$300,000 grant.

Grant funds continued to finance the three-week courses taught by visiting American faculty members at GIPA, with the number decreasing each year. They also paid for an institutional assessment of GIPA and strategic planning activities, plus for the continued visits of GIPA faculty and staff members at UGA, though in smaller numbers and for shorter times. In addition, the grant

purchased equipment, including computers, for GIPA's use and provided small research grants for GIPA faculty members.

After the grant activities had begun, GIPA's primary strategy for sustainability became clear: it intended to generate the revenue it needed to operate by offering new self-financing degree and non-degree programs. Pursuing that strategy, GIPA initiated a continuing education MPA degree program for employed students unable to attend its more intensive standard program. Also, it started certificate programs in law and other topics, training in rural development, a new master's degree in International affairs, and a new Ph.D. in Public Administration.

When the second grant ended in March 2007, UGA's formal partnership program with GIPA was over, but in the years that have followed, some UGA faculty members have periodically taught courses at GIPA and have worked cooperatively on other ventures. GIPA has continued its growth. Its present offerings include nine bachelor's degrees in disciplines that include political science, sociology, applied psychology, business administration, and economics; ten masters degrees, including, in addition to public administration, public policy, international law, and business administration; and a Ph.D. in Social Sciences. It offers more than two dozen certificate programs, operates a radio station, and publishes an academic journal with Troy University, the *Journal of Politics and Democratization*. GIPA is now rated among the best universities in Georgia.

In 2017, UGA was awarded a new grant from the U.S. Department of State to provide training in social science research methods for faculty members and PhD students in Georgian universities. Because faculty members at UGA had experience traveling to Tbilisi and working with GIPA in the past, Maka Ioseliani, now serving as GIPA's Rector, agreed that GIPA would serve as a local host for the new program and provided classroom space, computer labs, and logistical support. The chapters in this book are based on papers developed by Georgian scholars who participated in this new training program offered in 2017 and 2018.

Dan Durning

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1

Lessons for Policy, Administration, and Politics from Georgia

J. Edward Kellough, Ph.D.

Gene A. Brewer, Ph.D.

Tima T. Moldogaziev, Ph.D.

This edited book presents original studies on issues pertinent to public policy, public administration, and politics from and about Georgia, all written by Georgian scholars. The research focuses on Georgia's struggle for independence and democracy in the South Caucasus region, public administration and policy, and Georgia's rightful place in comparative public sector governance studies. The lessons from Georgia are important in the twenty-first century because Georgia itself is increasingly important to study as a relatively successful post-Soviet transition story and because an understanding of Georgia can offer insights that are useful for other transitional and developing cases of interest. Most immediately, many of the governance implications of these studies are relevant to the broader Caucasus region and other post-Communist countries.

Though the chapters in the book focus primarily on Georgia's short history of post-Soviet independence and its ongoing struggle for political and economic freedom in the Caucasus region and beyond, Georgia is not a newly formed state. Rather, its recorded history dates back more than 2,500 years, and its capital city, Tbilisi, is more than 1,500 years old. Georgian culture is a rich tapestry of art, music, literature, religion, food, winemaking, and more. The Georgian language is one of the oldest in the world and consists of at least eighteen different dialects and a distinctive alphabet. Georgia was the second country in the world to adopt Christianity in the Fourth Century, and the Georgian Orthodox Church has been a state-sanctioned religion for much of Georgia's history – serving as a stabilizing influence for the country.

Geographically, Georgia is at the crossroads of Eastern Europe and Western Asia; Russia sits on her northern border and the Middle East lies due south. The Black Sea forms the country's western border. Georgia is thus situated at the confluence of several strong cultures and has experienced centuries of regional turmoil and contested borders. Much of Georgia's home territory was fought over by the Persian, Roman, Byzantine, Arab, Mongol, and Ottoman armies from at least the First Century B.C. through the Eighteenth Century, and more recently, Georgia was in the Soviet orbit and is still in a tug of war with Russia for control of its borderlands.

Georgia was once a destination on the Silk Road and its strategic position has accrued numerous benefits over the years, but it has also created turbulence and insecurity. While the Georgian culture has survived and even thrived through the years, Georgians have not had a unified, independent state for very much of their history. The zenith of Georgia's power as an independent kingdom came in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries. In 1783, the Treaty of Georgievsk allowed the Russians to take over the kingdom as its protectorate. Shortly afterward, the Russian empire began annexing Georgian territory and ruling over Georgia's regions. That form of governance lasted until recently. As the Soviet Union was collapsing, Georgia held an independence referendum and declared independence on April 9, 1991. Georgia then elected the first President of independent Georgia, who has been followed by five others. Georgia thus became a presidential republic with a single-chamber parliament comprised of members of several political parties. The judicial branch, which was weak during the Soviet era, is now being strengthened and reformed. Local governments outside Tbilisi have little formal power and even fewer resources, but they often act independently. Thus began Georgia's great experiment with independence and democracy, which provides lessons for other post-Soviet countries in transition.

At the same time, Georgia is important to understand because its transition from a post-Soviet system and away from Russia's sphere of influence has not been without pitfalls. The civil war in the early days of independence, separatist conflicts in the Abkhaz and Ossetian autonomous regions, which resulted in frozen

conflicts and an internal displacement of people, and persistent attempts by Russian President Vladimir Putin's administration to hold a tight grip on Georgia's post-Soviet trajectory provide others with a rich set of lessons to learn from (Lansky and Areshidze, 2008; O'Beachain, 2011). Yet, among former Soviet states, Georgia's economy has shown notable growth with significant foreign direct investment. Specifically, from 1995-2018 the Georgian economy grew every year, except for 2009 because of a Russian military incursion into the country, with an average growth rate of 5.5%. Meanwhile, from 1997-2018 foreign direct investment averaged 8.3% of Georgia's GDP. Most of this growth came after the painstaking reforms of former Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili, who fundamentally restructured formal and informal governance institutions in the country, often with what has been described as authoritarian undertones (Mitchell, 2009; Cheterian, 2008; Lansky and Areshidze, 2008).

Central and local government administrations in Georgia in post-Saakashvili years continue to press forward with reforms, albeit with a more measured tone toward Russia. As a result of reforms, recent assessments rank Georgia among the most successful examples of countries tackling public sector corruption, on par with European Union (EU) member states from the Baltic and Central European regions, countries that also completed their own transitions from Communist governance systems (Aliyev, 2014; Light, 2014; Ivanov, 2013; Common, 2011). As Georgia's economy expands and governance institutions strengthen further, its role in the Caucasus – and even more broadly in Eastern Europe and Central Asia – is likely to grow significantly.

Meanwhile, the independent nation state of Georgia has sought to forge its own path in international relations. While somewhat unsuccessful, Georgia has actively pursued EU and NATO membership in a westward-looking foreign policy (Meyer, 2017; Diesen, 2015). Though such membership may remain unattainable in the near future, economic and political ties with European member states continue to grow. The visa free regime with Schengen states is certainly a result of such improvement in ties (Loda, 2019). Additionally, since the breakup of the Soviet Union, the United

States has worked to strengthen diplomatic relations with Georgia. This is illustrated by presidential and vice-presidential visits from the U.S. to Georgia, educational programs sponsored by the U.S. Department of State, and the 2009 U.S.-Georgia Charter on Strategic Partnership that documents the importance of the relationship (Mitchell and Cooley, 2010). The future of Georgia's relations with the West, and how successful they may be, could be an important facet of international relations in the twenty-first century.

Beyond the intrinsic value of studying Georgia itself, understanding Georgian politics and public policy processes is important for what it reveals about other cases around the world. Whether considering the 15 sovereign states that emerged from the breakup of the Soviet Union, the seven states that formed from the division of Yugoslavia, or transitions from command-and-control systems more broadly defined, there are many important questions that scholars and policy makers must face. Much can be learned for future emergent countries by examining the first three decades a state has experienced under a more capitalistic economic system and new democratic regime. To policymakers in a newly formed government, these chapters offer both a sense of what could be expected in a new nation's future as well as which policy approaches have the most potential. Whether handling relations with a strong neighbor (such as Georgia with Russia), equitably integrating sizable ethnic minorities into society, politics, and the economy (such as Azeris and Armenians in Georgia), or finding its place in the world economy by increasing trade and remittances, certain emergent states will likely find strong parallels with Georgia.

Some of the greatest similarities and applications of lessons from Georgia will naturally be found with other former Soviet states. These countries must weigh what it means for domestic and international policy and politics to be neighbors with Russia (as well as China for countries in Central Asia). Many of these countries also have large ethnic minorities, at least in part because of years of Soviet dysfunctional border making and divisive politics toward various nationalities. Often, the minority citizens that now find themselves in dozens of newly independent countries communicate with other groups by speaking the Russian language instead of

their own national languages, which can pose questions for political incorporation and communication, and even susceptibility to Russia's influence (Brubaker, 2011; Pavlenko, 2008). These nations in transition also have had to sort out their position in the global economy, deciding questions such as whether to look to their former Communist compatriots for cultural, economic, political, and trade partners, or to search elsewhere. As we address such questions in Georgia, we also may gain relative insight that would apply not only to the other post-Soviet countries but also the Eastern and Southeastern European nations in general. For all of these reasons, we believe the studies in this volume are of great value not only to the reader who is interested in Georgia itself but to anyone interested in the policies and politics of post-Communist transition.

The chapters in the edited book take a variety of methodological approaches, which are driven by their respective research questions. The key here is that rather than U.S. (or Western) scholars studying Georgia or the Caucasus region, it is scholars from Georgia itself who author the studies. Unlike scholarship from overseas that seeks to understand how events in Georgia relate to them, often from an ethnocentric perspective and with limited understanding of local dynamics, scholars from Georgia have first-hand experiences regarding what works or does not work in the country or the region. In the development of this volume, we refrained from inserting our ideas about the complex relationships that exist and our prescriptions for how the country or region should be studied. The very incidences where parsimonious approaches by Georgian scholars could offer clear explanations for the political or public policy phenomena and outcomes should not be brushed aside. Also, the definitions of politics and policy utilized by the authors of this edited book are primarily at the micro or meso-levels of analysis, which are very different from the macro- or international themes that are prevalent in scholarship about the region that emanates from the West. Very often, when discussing Russian, European Union, or the US role in Georgia or the Caucasus region, we forget about the bread and butter issues that are more pertinent to Georgians in their own daily lives than to outsiders looking in.

The co-editors of the book worked with Georgian scholars on key components of what it means to conduct research in social sciences broadly defined. After several rounds of revisions and resubmissions of research, as well as a subsequent research conference in Tbilisi, Georgia, we ensured that all chapters in the proposed book are high-quality studies on important political and policy topics in Georgia and the post-Communist region. Our objective was not to claim ownership of work by Georgian scholars, but rather to assist in developing a sustainable base of scholars and a national research capacity for conducting governance research in Georgia.

Mapping Book Chapters

The studies in this book are organized thematically. Part I of the book focuses on Georgian independence and democracy in the South Caucasus region. As an independent nation state, the views of ordinary citizens and how they exercise their political rights are essential to national politics, and Georgia's struggle for autonomy and independence in the region is of utmost importance to most Georgians. In Chapter two of the volume, Anna Menagharishvili studies mass views about Russia, the EU, and NATO among Georgian citizens. She finds that better-informed citizens tend to share political elites' favorable views on forming a military alliance with NATO; however, better-informed ethnic minorities, who primarily speak Russian, tend to oppose a NATO alliance. This cleavage in public opinion extends to other issues relevant to Georgia's effort to break free from Russian influence and form Western ties.

Chapters three and four consider how Russia's desire for autonomy and regional influence affects Georgian politics and national security. In Chapter three, Marika Mkheidze explores the extent to which Russia exercises 'soft power' in Georgia through mechanisms like propaganda, and she illustrates how such propaganda can influence citizens' policy attitudes. This chapter builds on the previous chapter by laying bare the forms and effects of Russian propaganda. In Chapter three, Nino Okhanashvili explains how Russian desire to maintain influence in the South Caucasus region has been a key precipitator of ethnic conflicts in Georgia and

Armenia. She employs well-known theories of international relations and evidence collected from expert interviews and secondary sources to establish that Russia has hegemonic ambitions in the region. She concludes that Russia is seeking to advance its own goals and to maintain or expand its former sphere of influence by stoking ethnic conflicts in the region. Russia's hegemonic aims have largely framed Georgian foreign policy and national security in the early post-Soviet period.

Finally, in Chapter five, Aytan Hajiyeva focuses on the fundamental right to vote and examines the question of why ethnic Azeri women have a particularly low voter turnout rate. Since high turnout that is uniform across groups is desirable in democratic processes, this is a particularly important puzzle for an emergent democracy that is normalizing its electoral system, and it can be explained to a large degree by gaps in education and language abilities of women in the predominantly Muslim ethnic group.

Part II of this edited book turns to important policy and administration themes in Georgia. Starting with primary-level education in Chapter six, Ana Laitadze examines student performance in schools sampled from various regions of Georgia. Studying grade distributions, she shows that, while the effect is nonlinear, smaller class sizes tend to lead to better student performance. Pivoting into higher education, Giorgi Tchumburidze further analyzes the impact of Georgia's innovative "1+4 program" in Chapter seven, which was designed as a way to increase higher education enrollments among ethnic minorities who do not speak Georgian. While quantitative work does not yet show evidence of more bachelor's degrees among ethnic minorities in the program's short history, student interviews show satisfaction, encouragement, and positive signals to neighbors that may raise the impact in the immediate future.

In Chapter eight, Elene Jimshelishvili considers what all of this means for the workforce in the face of high unemployment in Georgia. She shows that better-educated workers who have certain skills are more likely to be employed. From primary school through the workforce, then, these chapters offer several ideas on which public policies (and where those policies) would be successful.

Finally, in Chapter nine, Natia Tchigvaria considers the implications of weakly enforced environmental regulations by contrasting public health statistics across Georgian municipalities. Focusing on mining, she shows that if a municipality contains a mine that releases toxins, certain kinds of diseases (typically cardio-vascular) are, on average, significantly elevated. As nations consider their environmental practices, these findings are worth considering.

Part III chapters place Georgia in a comparative context relative to countries within and outside of post-Soviet transitions. In Chapter ten, Sabina Alakbarova considers human resource management in public administration, contrasting the cases of Georgia and Estonia. While there can be arguments for centralized versus decentralized hiring practices in both countries, decentralization policies appear to be helpful for keeping turnover rates among public servants low. In Chapter eleven, Ulrich Eydam and Irakli Gabriadze examine the states that were either Soviet Union member states or its satellites and investigate the development of financial institutions. They show that legal institutions that define and guarantee property rights are key to developing quality financial institutions in these emergent economies.

In Chapter twelve, Lasha Arevadze considers the impact of government spending in the Commonwealth of Independent States. He computes the multiplier effect of government spending and shows that it does have an expansionary effect on macroeconomic growth that is comparable to other developing countries, though the effect can vary somewhat by fiscal circumstances. Finally, in Chapter thirteen, Davit Akhvlediani models patterns in Georgia's trade and shows that a Gravity Model is a useful framework for understanding Georgia's relations with its trade partners.

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Part I

Georgian Independence and Democracy in the South Caucasus Region

2

Georgians' Political Knowledge and Attitudes towards the West and Russia¹

Anna Menagharishvili

The political landscape of Georgia, a country nested between Turkey and Russia, has drastically changed since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, of which it was a constituent part. Georgia's 1991 declaration of independence marked the transition of the country from Soviet rule to democratic governance. With little experience as an independent state, Georgia quickly became a transitional country. This transition period can be described as "democratizing backwards," which refers to a situation where democratic institutions were put in place; yet, they were created before the rule of law and civil society (Rose & Shin, 2001). Now, Georgia had to quickly forget its totalitarian past and become a democratically minded country. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, almost no one thought the process of transition to democracy would be such a difficult, long, and painful one. Even in the very first years it became clear that democratic institutions alone couldn't create active, engaged and responsible citizens. The country faced serious challenges before identifying the direction it would go and the political path it would follow.

As Georgia is forging its own path, one of the main issues it faces is deciding which countries it should form international alliances with. Georgia is in a difficult geographical location because it represents the corridor between Europe and Asia, which raises further questions about which path Georgia will follow. With regard to economic and security relations, a natural path would be to ally more closely with Russia, which was the leading power in the Soviet Union. The other path is to turn to the West for international

1 The author would like to thank Professor Axel Gosseries from the Catholic University of Louvain.