



**Competing for Votes of Ethnic
Minorities in Georgia: THE 2017
LOCAL ELECTIONS**

Policy Paper



CSEM

**CENTRE FOR THE STUDIES OF ETHNICITY
AND MULTICULTURALISM**

Competing for Votes of Ethnic Minorities in Georgia: The 2017 Local Elections

Policy Paper

LEVAN KAKHISHVILI

*Founding member of the Centre for the Studies of
Ethnicity and Multiculturalism and a policy analyst
at the Georgian Institute of Politics*

TBILISI 2018

The views expressed in this Publication are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Centre for the Studies of Ethnicity and Multiculturalism (CSEM) and the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM).





According to the 2014 census in Georgia, the proportion of ethnic minorities in Georgia is 13.2 per cent. Ethnic Azerbaijanis and Armenians remain the largest minority groups in the country at respectively 6.3 and 4.5 per cent. Georgia's diverse cultural background, however, has not yet been utilized as a resource, for example, as a bridge to their kin-states for building better neighbourly relations with them and remains to be problematic due to lack of social, economic, and political integration of minorities. The subject of this paper is political participation of ethnic minorities focusing on party politics mostly. There has been a lot written on integration of minorities in Georgia but most of such literature has focused on cultural, legal or political aspects that concern the state authorities, while an important actor – political parties – have been somewhat overlooked as an agent of change. Consequently, this paper focuses on the degree of involvement of minorities in Georgian party politics, on what causes the low level of involvement and how it can change to benefit the development of Georgian political parties and by extension Georgian democracy.

Before outlining the major obstacles that prevent ethnic minorities from getting involved in political parties, it has to be mentioned that there is no legal incentive for political parties to proactively seek minority representation. For example, the Organic Law of Georgia on Political Associations of Citizens that regulates party politics, finances and other issues does not have any clause that would motivate parties to reach out to minority communities. The law, however, includes two clauses, one that bans political parties from stirring or otherwise promoting ethnic violence and conflict; and another that does not allow parties to limit their membership on a specific regional or territorial basis (see: Parliament of Georgia, 1997). This does not necessarily determine the low level of political participation of minorities in Georgia but the absence of any





legal incentives cannot influence the situation positively. For example, when it comes to increasing female representation in politics, the Law on Political Associations of Citizens provides positive incentives in the form of 30 per cent higher base funding for political parties “if, in the election list presented by this party ... at least 30% of female candidates are included in the first, second and every subsequent 10 candidates” (see: Parliament of Georgia, 1997). It is another matter whether this incentive works but in the case of ethnic minorities there is not even a symbolic attempt to establish legal norms that would at least in principle try to promote their representation.

The legal framework, on the other hand, is only one aspect of the issue under consideration and much more depends on the willingness of political actors to adopt practices that would promote increased representation of ethnic minorities in Georgian politics. Consequently, the following sections of this paper analyzes the current situation in terms of how minorities have been represented in the 2017 local elections, how existing stereotypes about electoral behavior of minorities contribute to parties’ neglecting their importance in elections, and how the practices of political parties, namely party-voter linkages, recruitment and nomination, as well as accessibility of parties, exacerbate the existing conditions.

Electoral Participation of Ethnic Minorities: Myths and Facts

Participating in elections as a voter or as a nominee is one of the most important ways of political participation (see Verba, Schlozman, and Brady, 1995). However, the latter is more important as it represents a direct instrument to influence political decision-making processes. In this regard, the 2017 local election in Georgia demonstrated that there are some positive improvements but significant challenges remain unresolved. There are three major aspects to electoral participation of ethnic minorities in Georgia: first, to what extent minorities are represented among the party nominees; second, misconceptions about electoral behaviour of ethnic minorities that is widespread among political





parties; and finally, the actual electoral behaviour of minorities. It can be argued that minorities' representation among the candidates competing for public office remains low. This can be explained with a widespread belief held by political parties that minorities vote overwhelmingly for the ruling party, which means that there is no point in investing resources, energy and time in reaching out to minorities especially in their compact settlements. Finally, the statistical data discussed below regarding the electoral behaviour of minorities shows a different trend of decreasing support for the ruling party. Consequently, political parties that operate under the aforementioned assumption should reconsider their views.

Ethnic Minorities in the 2017 Local Election

In 2017 Georgians voted for mayors, majoritarian and proportional representatives in the local councils. There were 22 political parties and five electoral blocks participating in the elections. This paper analyses the lists of mayoral candidates for all cities from all parties, the list of all majoritarian candidates from all parties and proportional lists from all parties in Tbilisi and proportional lists from seven parties in the regions. These were those parties that received at least one per cent of votes nation-wide in the 2017 elections.

Out of 64 municipalities in which mayors had to be elected, only nine had a candidate with a non-Georgian-sounding surname¹. Overall, only less than six per cent or 21² individuals of all mayoral candidates belonged to ethnic minorities. Towns such as Dmanisi and Bolnisi as well as the capital of Tbilisi, however, that have significant proportion of minority residents, did not have any candidate of non-Georgian origins. As for the majoritarian candidates out of 4,796 candidates 399 or 8.3 per cent were from minority communities. This is, of course, significant but it is important to note that the winning Georgian Dream party did not have any candidate from a minority community nominated in Tbilisi, which is problematic as about 15 per cent of Tbilisi residents are ethnic minorities.

1 National identity and belonging to a specific ethnic minority community is a subjective matter. To identify who perceives oneself as a person belonging to an ethnic minority, it is necessary to let the person themselves define their identity. This most acceptable way of identifying members of ethnic minority communities was replaced with a more practical option of separating surnames in categories of Georgian and non-Georgian sounding. This approach has its limitations and is not fully accurate, but as long as the reader understands its limitations, it still represents an efficient way of calculating the proportion of minorities on party lists.

2 All numbers provided in the paper and proportions of ethnic minorities are counted by the researcher and all errors with these calculations are the responsibility of the author.





Chart 1: Ethnic Composition of Majoritarian Candidates across Georgia

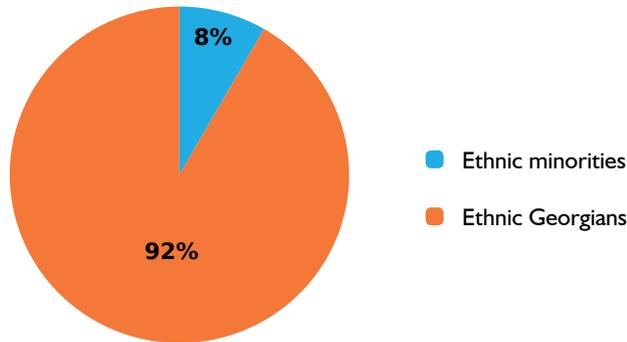
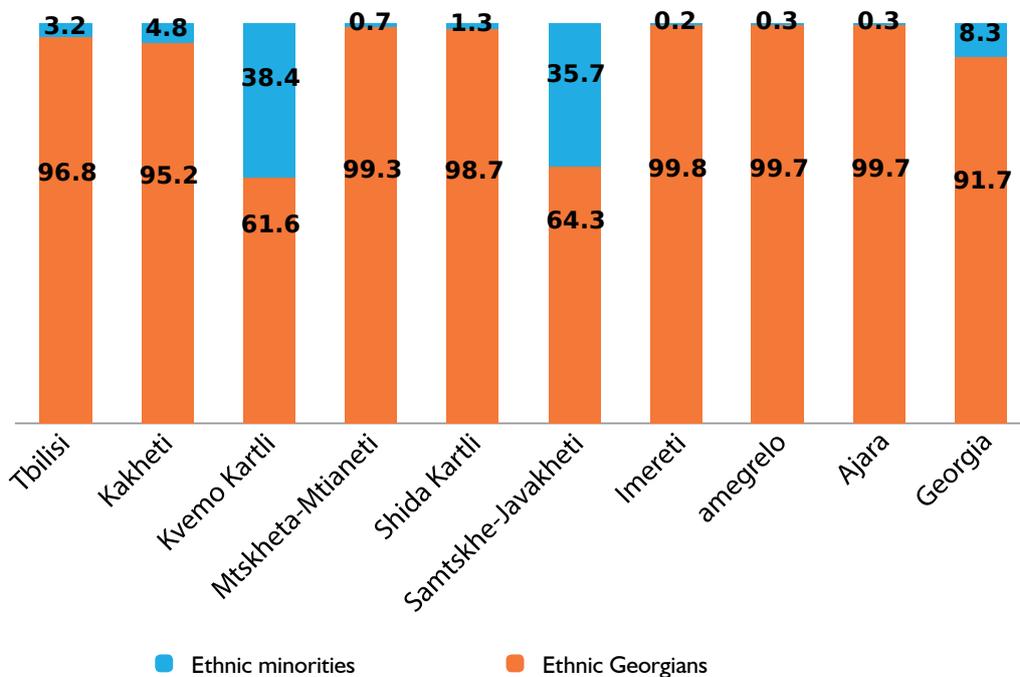


Chart 2: Proportion of Majoritarian Candidates by Ethnicity According to Regions



Furthermore, the situation in Tbilisi is far less favourable for minorities than in the regions in terms of minorities being represented in proportional party lists. Minorities constitute only five per cent of all candidates presented through proportional lists and only one per cent of all candidates are placed among the first ten nominees in a respective list. On the other hand, the proportional lists in the municipalities outside Tbilisi presented by those seven political parties (see Table I) who received at least one per cent of



votes in the whole country include almost eight per cent of non-Georgian candidates. In regional party lists, unlike Tbilisi, slightly over 40 per cent of the minorities are placed among the first ten nominees, while 18.5 per cent are among the first five nominees.

Table 1: Ethnic Minorities in Proportional Party Lists

Political Party (listed according to the number in the ballot paper from low to high)	Percentage of ethnic minority candidates among first five ranks	Percentage of ethnic minority candidates among second five ranks
European Georgia	16.2	17.4
Democratic Movement – Free Georgia	22.1	20.9
United National Movement	20.4	22.4
Alliance of Patriots of Georgia	15.5	26.8
Labour Party of Georgia	14.6	29.2
New Georgia	23.5	21.6
Georgian Dream	19.6	20.7
Total	18.5	21.8

Overall, considering mayoral elections, majoritarian and proportional lists, New Georgia demonstrated that it is possible for a small political party to mobilize relatively large numbers of people belonging to ethnic minorities. For example, apart from the high proportion of ethnic minorities in the proportional lists of New Georgia, the party had seven mayoral candidates belonging to ethnic minorities out of 42 candidates presented in total. Furthermore, 11 out of 74 majoritarian candidates New Georgia presented were ethnic minorities. However, the problem is that New Georgia received only a fraction of votes (1.23 per cent) meaning that nominations of minorities from smaller parties have less influence on overall situation than nominations from larger political parties. However, the case of New Georgia is still important and can be considered to be a positive development.

This should be considered as a positive development because the share of ethnic minorities in proportional party lists for the regions has risen in comparison to the 2014 local election. Analyzing those political parties that received at least one per cent of votes in both elections and share of



ethnic minorities in their lists, political parties have managed to increase the proportion of ethnic minorities in their lists from the average 4.7 per cent in 2014 to the average 8.5 per cent in 2017 (see: Table 2). What is even more important is that almost every political party that participated in both elections has raised the share of ethnic minorities in their regional lists. The only exception is the United National Movement, in which case the share of ethnic minorities decreased by 0.1 per cent. However, it has to be noted that this is insignificant, especially against the background of the developments within the party, which led to its split. Consequently, the only two new political parties listed in the Table 2 below are those that emerged out of the United National Movement's ranks. Therefore, it is clear that quantitative representations of ethnic minorities in the political party nominations has been improving.

Table 2: Comparison of the share of ethnic minorities in party list for the regions in the elections of 2014 and 2017

Share of ethnic minorities in regional lists – 2014 local elections	Political party or electoral block	Share of ethnic minorities in regional lists – 2017 local elections
3.8%	Alliance of Patriots of Georgia	6.7%
5.6%	Democratic Movement – United Georgia	6.4%
N.A.	European Georgia	10.9%
4.4%	Georgian Dream	5.3%
3.1%	Labour Party	4.0%
N.A.	New Georgia	19.2%
5.8%	Non-Parliamentary Opposition	N.A.
2.7%	Salome Zurabichvili – Way of Georgia	N.A.
7.3%	United National Movement	7.2%

On the other hand, ignoring minorities and their needs during the election campaign and party manifestos remains as a negative trend. The problem is that Georgian politics is dominated by the political processes in the capital. Therefore, issues characteristic to the periphery in general are not paid much attention. For example, the websites of major parties e.g.

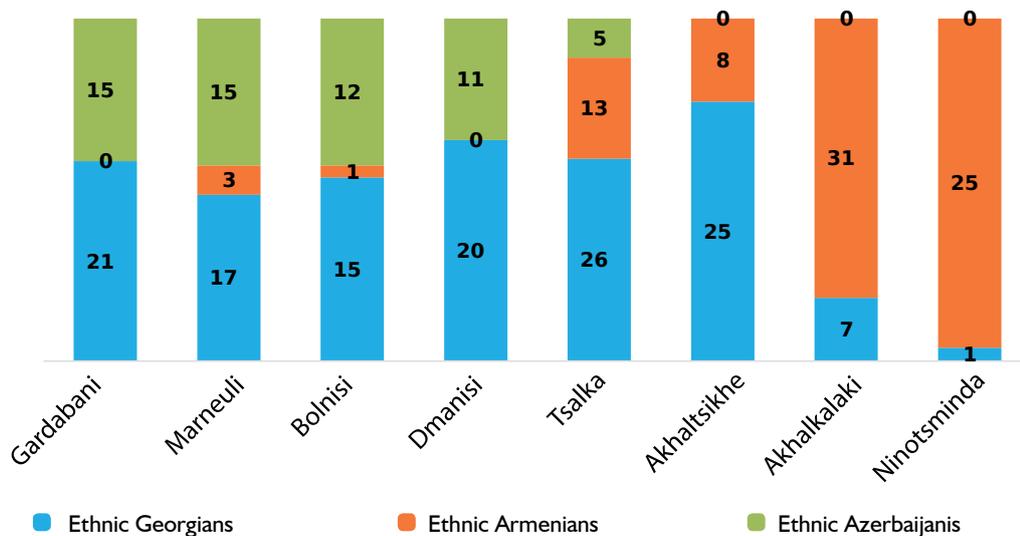


the Georgian Dream, United National Movement or European Georgia have sections dedicated to the pre-election programme but such sections only include the programme of the mayoral candidate for Tbilisi. This shows that the election of the mayor of Tbilisi is the highlight of the local elections and party programmes and promises mostly revolve around this pillar. However, this does not justify candidates neglecting the needs of minorities residing in Tbilisi, e.g. the needs of ethnic Armenians, Russians, Yezidi or Roma communities. Overall, there has been no significant focus from any candidate or political party about minority issues either in Tbilisi or in regions. This feature of Georgian politics needs in-depth analysis but it goes beyond the scope of the present paper.

Representation of Ethnic Minorities in Local Municipalities after 2017 Local Elections

As a result of the elections, 21 municipalities out of 64 in total have at least one person belonging to a minority community elected. A total of 165 minority representatives have been elected to these 21 municipalities. The chart below shows the ethnic composition of those Local Councils that have at least 20 per cent minority representation. Such municipalities are eight in total and represent those areas that have highest percentage of ethnic minority residents in Georgia.

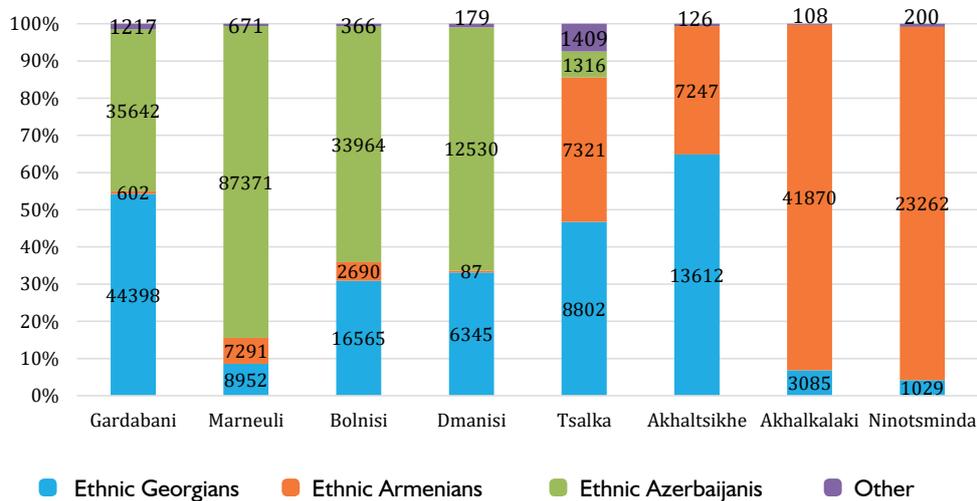
Chart 3: Representation of Ethnic Minorities in Local Councils





However, this chart does not reflect the ethnic composition of these regions proportionally. According to the 2002 census data (see: Center for the Studies of Ethnicity and Multiculturalism, 2018) there are six municipalities in Georgia in which ethnic Georgians represent a minority: Akhalkalaki, Bolnisi, Dmanisi, Marneuli, Ninotsminda, and Tsalka (see chart 4 below). However, as a result of the 2017 elections, there are only three municipalities – Marneuli, Akhalkalaki, and Ninotsminda, in which ethnic Georgians in the local councils do not represent the majority. Bolnisi, Dmanisi, and Tsalka have ethnic Georgians as a majority in local councils, which does not proportionally reflect the ethnic composition of these municipalities. This means that ethnic Georgians in these latter areas are heavily overrepresented and ethnic minorities – underrepresented.

Chart 4: Ethnic Composition of Eight Municipalities

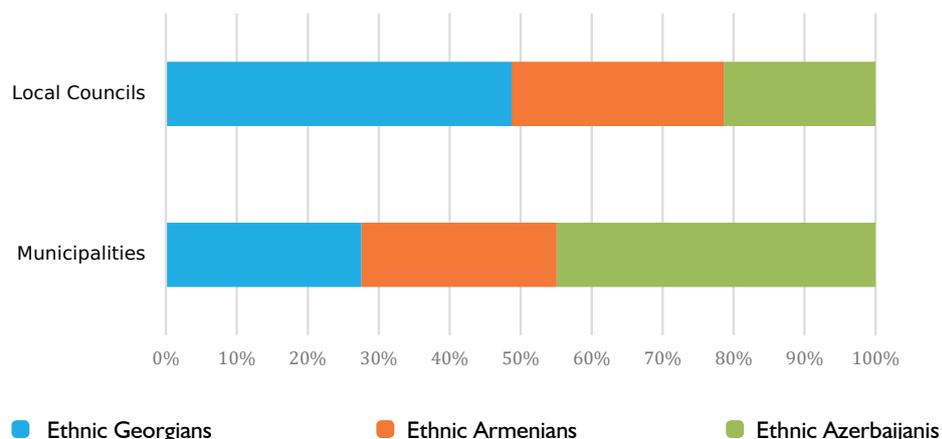


The chart 5 shows that in these eight municipalities there are 102,788 ethnic Georgians, 90,370 ethnic Armenians, and 170,830 ethnic Azerbaijanis and each of these communities respectively receive 132, 81, and 58 seats across the eight local councils in these cities. This means that on average 779 ethnic Georgians have one representative in local councils, while it takes 1,116 ethnic Armenians to get one representative in local councils and it takes 2,945 ethnic Azerbaijanis to get one representative. This means that not only are the minorities severely underrepresented in local councils but also ethnic Azerbaijanis are more disadvantaged than ethnic Armenians. One way to explain this is the fact that ethnic Armenians are heavily



concentrated in their municipalities and compose higher proportion of the local residents than do ethnic Azerbaijanis in their settlements.

Chart 5: Comparison of Ethnic Compositions of the Eight Municipalities versus Local Councils



As a result, it is clear from the data that minorities in Georgia are underrepresented not only on the national level but also on the local level. Consequently, it seems that reflecting the ethnic composition of the constituencies, for whose votes they compete, may not be the top priority of Georgian political parties.

“Warehouse of Votes” – Misconceptions about Minorities’ Electoral Behaviour

Politicians in Georgia do understand that ethnic minorities need to be represented in politics and that there are remaining problems in this regard. However, political parties that have limited resources need to think strategically and prioritize some regions over the others. Consequently, provided there is a persistent assumption that minorities always vote for the ruling party, Georgian parties believe it is pointless to invest time, energy, and resources in mobilizing public opinion in minority-populated regions. One politician, during a confidential interview with the author, called minority-populated regions a “warehouse of votes” for the ruling party, arguing that the ruling parties collect “on average 87-94 per cent” of votes in these regions. However, this assumption is not necessarily true all the time. In fact, there is an important trend of decreasing support for the ruling party among the minority-populated regions. If one looks at the data of the last three parliamentary elections (2016, 2012, 2008), which covers





a time span of a decade, it becomes apparent that ethnic minorities have been modifying their electoral behaviour.

Considering seven districts with highest proportions of minorities: Bolnisi, Dmanisi, Gardabani, and Marneuli (Kvemo Kartli region), and Akhalkalaki, Akhaltsikhe, and Ninotsminda (Samstkhe-Javakheti region), it is possible to observe how voting behaviour has changed during the past ten years (see Table 3). According to the Georgian Election Data (ForSet, 2018c) in the 2008 parliamentary elections, in these seven districts the then-ruling party, United National Movement on average received 85 per cent of votes and only 15 per cent of votes went to the opposition parties. This figure decreased to 72 per cent for the then-ruling party in 2012, meaning that the share of votes for opposition parties in these districts increased by 88 per cent (ForSet, 2018c). Finally, in the 2016 elections this trend led to the first ever case when the new ruling party, Georgian Dream, on average received less support in these districts than in the whole of Georgia. Share of votes for the opposition increased again by 90 per cent and amounted on average 53.9 per cent, which is more than half of the votes (ForSet, 2018c). This means that from 2008 to 2016 the share of votes of opposition parties in the seven districts has increased by more than 3.5 times. This is a significant trend that opposition political parties cannot afford to ignore if they want to get more votes in the next parliamentary elections.

Furthermore, in 2016, more than half of voters in all but two of the seven districts voted for a political party that was not in power. This shows that ethnic minorities cannot be assumed to be the “warehouse of votes” for ruling parties and demand more active engagement from the political parties. Considering that it is Georgian Dream’s second term in power and that since the independence Georgian voters have not tolerated the same political force in power for more than two turns, it can be argued that the next parliamentary elections is likely to be a ground for significant competition. On the one hand, Georgian Dream will need to become more active to strengthen its position in the minority-populated areas. While opposition parties need to become proactive and reach out to the minority communities during the period between elections so that they can fill the room that is left there by the potential decrease of popularity of the ruling party and the increasing level of trust towards political parties among minorities.

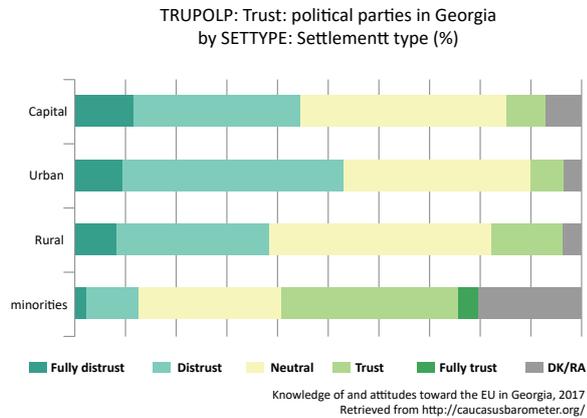
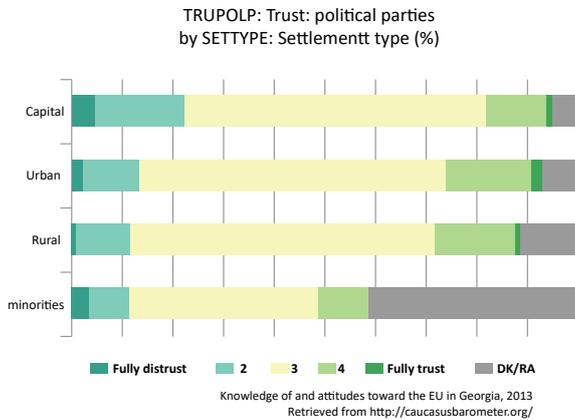


Table 3: Voting Behaviour of Ethnic Minorities in Georgia during the last three Parliamentary Elections

Parliamentary Elections						
	2008		2012		2016	
	Share of votes received by the ruling party (%)	Share of votes received by opposition parties (%)	Share of votes received by the ruling party (%)	Share of votes received by opposition parties (%)	Share of votes received by the ruling party (%)	Share of votes received by opposition parties (%)
Marneuli	86.2	13.8	78.91	21.09	45.39	54.61
Gardabani	73.59	26.41	55.5	44.5	44.2	55.8
Dmanisi	84.77	15.23	69.83	30.17	44.42	55.58
Bolnisi	83.29	16.71	66.99	33.01	47.77	52.23
Akhalkalaki	90.2	9.8	79.59	20.41	51.25	48.75
Ninotsminda	93.16	6.84	76.54	23.46	40.98	59.02
Akhalsikhe	83.59	16.41	75.04	24.96	48.8	51.2
Average of all districts	85.0	15.0	71.8	28.2	46.1	53.9
Share of all votes received by the ruling party	59.18		40.34		48.68	

Source: ForSet (2018c)

According to public opinion polls, there is an increasing trust among ethnic minorities towards political parties. The Knowledge and Attitudes towards the EU in Georgia is conducted by the Caucasus Research Resources Center (2017) once in two years and specifically identifies minorities as a segment of the society to allow analysis of their opinions without compromising representativeness of the data. According to the 2013 survey, only 10 per cent of minorities trusted political parties while 41 per cent was undecided (The Caucasus Research Resources Center, 2013). However, in 2017 trust towards political parties increased almost four-fold and reached 38 per cent. According to these figures, ethnic minorities in Georgia represent the segment of the society with the highest trust level towards political parties, which is a factor that requires further investigation to explain why this is so but it is not the primary focus of this research.



All these figures, decreasing support for ruling parties and increasing trust for political parties, indicate one important aspect of political participation of ethnic minorities: these communities are ripe for engagement and the political parties need to become proactive in order to cultivate this readiness.

Challenges in Party Politics and Room for Improvement

Georgian political parties often believe that they do everything within the realm of possibilities but there is a lot more that can be done. This paper identifies three problems with the practices political parties adopt in Georgia. The first problem is how parties establish the party-voter linkage, the second problem is how parties recruit the local elites in minority-populated areas, and the third problem is how parties make themselves accessible for ethnic minority voters.

Party-Voter Linkages in Georgia

The first challenge for political parties and a major one is the way they try to establish their connection with their voters: they lack emphasis on ideological programmes and overly emphasize charisma of leaders or direct benefits of their supporters in case of their victory (see: Kitchelt, 1995). Voters in post-communist political systems base their decision of for whom to vote on three factors: charisma of the leader, expectation of direct tangible or intangible benefits (clientelism), and expectation of indirect benefits in the form of public goods (programmatic party



systems). These factors, therefore, define the type of linkage between a given party and its supporters. The type of linkage parties should aim at is programmatic. However, this requires several conditions to be met: political parties should have a coherent ideology consistent with their names, the positions expressed by party leaders and other members should be in congruence with this ideology, pre-election party programmes should be created for every elections and be consistent with the adopted ideology. This is important for the voters because they will know what kind of public policies will be pursued if a given party wins the election and they will know what kind of indirect benefits in the form of public goods they will get as a result. On the other hand, charismatic as well as clientelistic linkages are weak, unstable and do not contribute to the development of parties.

Charismatic linkages determine the “high death rate” of Georgian political parties (see: Nodia and Scholtbach, 2006). This means that parties “die” when the popularity of its leader decreases. If a given political party aims at sustaining itself as an organization, it should not rely on the popularity of its leader and aim at establishing itself as an institution. As for the clientelistic linkages, they are similarly weak and unstable as direct material benefits determine the support of voters for a given party. Consequently, in case of the emergence of another political force with better material resources, the linkage will break and their supporters will switch sides. Georgian politics has witnessed such developments and Georgian parties should not be unfamiliar with this situation (see: Kakhishvili, 2017). However, they are still unable to form a programmatic – most stable – party-voter linkage with their supporters.

The described problem, obviously, is not only characteristic to the linkage between parties and ethnic minority voters; it is characteristic of the general situation in Georgia. However, it is a problem of great significance affecting all segments of the society and requires immediate action. Otherwise, the alternative is a shaky path towards strengthening democratization in Georgia.

Recruitment and Nomination Practices

There are two major problems with current practices of recruitment and nomination among Georgian political parties. Again, these practices are



problematic not only for minority involvement but also for developing internal democracy of political parties. The first problem is related to the lack of institutional mechanisms of recruitment of new members. The second problem is the lack of transparency in the process of nominating candidates for the elections. These problems make it difficult for parties to reach their voters and mobilize them more actively.

Recruitment is problematic for Georgian parties because there are no institutionalized mechanisms that would help them find new members. Furthermore, recruitment is not simply granting membership to a willing person, it is also about helping this person grow within the party and make them feel an organic part of the organization. According to one respondent of this research, one of the major problems that prevent minorities to engage in politics is a problem “internal to parties” and refers to “finding, promoting, and working with new faces.” On the one hand, it is not very difficult to find a young person who can join a given party but raising that person as a professional politician seems to be challenging for Georgian political parties. However, some political parties in Georgia are concerned that an “enemy might sneak in” as a member so the respondent claimed that the party needs to be cautious when, for example, nominating a recently joined member as a candidate.

On the other hand, raising professional politicians is intrinsically connected with the process of nomination as the latter is a reward system within parties. Here too parties come across a challenge. They need to adopt more transparent practices and give up patrimonial ways of selecting nominees for elections. As one politician argued in an interview with the author: “One of the most important aspect of party lists [of nominees] is related to the level of internal democracy within parties and is all about transparency.” Lack of transparency in the process of forming party lists remains problematic and requires political willingness of parties to open up and become merit-based institutions. This, communicated well with the electorate, in its own turn, would incentivize supporters of a given party to join and remain loyal.

This situation is directly connected to the low level of competition among local elites in the provinces of Georgia. According to one politician, these local elites “do not want to let go of power, try to be tightly connected with



the central authorities and aim at limiting competition as it is connected to business, power, etc.” Although this might only be a perception of a number of politicians, even if true, it is important for parties to understand that local elites can be cultivated through mobilization of supporters by political parties. It is necessary to raise new leaders on national as well as local levels including in the regions populated by ethnic minorities.

Accessibility of Political Parties for Ethnic Minorities

If active measures of recruitment are absent it is important to at least adopt passive measures so that the party is easily accessible for those limited number of citizens who are proactively willing to join a party of their choice. However, even here political parties fail to meet the minimum standard. For example, it is neither costly nor difficult to place a membership request form on an official website. However, as of November 2017, out of seven parties that received at least one per cent of votes in the 2017 local elections, only three have such a form placed on their website (one website was completely offline). Only one of those, however, have a form allowing supporters to request volunteering opportunities in the party, which has increasing importance when elections approach.

Furthermore, those ethnic minorities who suffer from the lack of knowledge of the state language, cannot even access those three websites due to the fact that all seven websites are only available in Georgian and English. On the other hand, even for persons belonging to a minority community speak Georgian, only one of the seven parties provide contact information for regional offices, while the rest of the parties limit their contact information to the central offices in the capital.

Although these aspects of accessibility are easily changable, running a website in the Armenian and Azerbaijani languages would show the minorities that a given party cares about some 13 per cent of its electorate. Yet another matter would be translating pre-election programmes and featuring issues that interest ethnic minority communities in the party manifestos. However, a lot of progress can be made in that regard as well.





Conclusion and Recommendations

Considering the myths that are widespread among Georgian parties about ethnic minorities' electoral behaviour as well as practices of political parties that do not necessarily facilitate engagement of minorities in party politics, it can be argued that inter-ethnic relations in Georgia remain problematic due to a low level of integration. This low level is determined by perceptual problems, i.e. myths and stereotypes, as well as logical problems, i.e. largely ignoring a significant segment of the electorate and their needs. Even so, Georgian parties have the potential to alter the situation to everyone's benefit and become more proactive to engage minorities and benefit from it. To this end, the recommendations below need to be taken into account.

Georgian political parties should:

- Become more ideology-oriented and turn their supporters' allegiance into programmatic party-voter linkage.
 - Parties should clearly identify their ideology and elaborate pre-election programmes as well as their positions regarding solving various public policy problems in accordance with this ideology. At the same time senior members of political parties should have close communication with young members for the purpose of the increased socialization and understanding the values of the party. And finally, while recruiting new member 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.
- Institutionalise their recruitment and nomination practices.
 - Parties need to have elaborated strategies on attracting new members, especially from regions densely populated by minorities, who will remain loyal to the party because of the values they uphold. For example, they can organize public educational events or series of events with special focus on compact settlements of ethnic minorities, which will be attended by those who are likely to share the values of organizers. Besides, websites and social media accounts need to have forms making it easier for supporters to apply for membership. Furthermore, it is important for parties to



have a set of rules according to which members get nominated as candidates before elections. One way of doing this is organizing local primaries in each region to determine the nominees especially for lists in local elections.

- Become more easily accessible for ethnic minorities.
 - Parties should translate their pre-election programmes and websites into minority languages so that ethnic minorities are aware of the pre-election promises parties make. Moreover, it is important to mainstream issues that concern ethnic minorities in the pre-election programmes in order for these communities not to feel neglected by the political parties.
- Engage with ethnic minorities by being prejudice-free regarding the electoral behaviour of ethnic minorities in Georgia.
 - Parties have to reconsider their views regarding how ethnic minorities vote in elections and be open to the idea that mobilizing the public opinion of minorities and political support for parties is possible given the higher level of trust towards political parties among minorities in comparison to ethnic Georgians.
- Ensure that their lists of candidates for local elections accurately reflect the ethnic composition of regions.
 - Minorities are underrepresented in regional party lists. To this end parties can adopt voluntary quotas for ethnic minorities in those regional lists in local elections where minorities are significant portion of the population. However, it should be noted that quotas are often negatively viewed by ethnic minorities but if political parties ensure that quality of representation is equally important as quantity, these voluntary quotas will be a positive development.

Georgian civil society organizations should:

- Assist political parties in becoming more programmatic.
 - Often political parties themselves are not fully aware of where their stance fits in terms of the ideological spectrum. CSOs with their high expertise are capable of helping parties identify their ideology. Moreover, CSOs need to evaluate to what extent party pre-election programmes correspond to the official party ideology.



CSOs can also offer trainings for junior party members so that they enhance their understanding of their party's ideology.

- Monitor pre-election party programmes to ensure that they correspond to the party ideology and that they pay significant attention to minority issues.
 - Monitoring pre-election party programmes should be a routine exercise among Georgian CSOs. It will ensure that every party has a programme that is relevant to the party ideology, which decreases uncertainty about what kind public policies the society should expect after the victory of a particular party. Additionally, such monitoring can also ensure that minority issues are paid adequate attention in party programmes.



References

- Central Election Commission. (2017). *Municipal Elections, 2017*. [online]. Available at: <http://cesko.ge/eng/elections/2017>
- Central Election Commission. (2017). *Results of Municipal Elections, 2017*. [online]. Available at: <https://results20171021.cec.gov.ge/>
- ForSet. (2018c). *Georgian Election Data* [Data file]. Available at: https://data.electionsportal.ge/en/data_archives
- Nodia, G. and Scholtbach, A. P. (2006). *The Political Landscape of Georgia Political Parties: Achievements, Challenges and Prospects*. Delft: Eburon Academic Publishers.
- Kakhishvili, L. (2017). *Is Democracy Possible without Stable Political Parties? Party Politics in Georgia and Prospects for Democratic Consolidation*. [online]. Available at: <http://gip.ge/6401/>
- Kaladze.ge. (2017). *Program*. [online]. Available at: <http://kaladze.ge/program>
- Kitschelt, H. (1995). "Formation of party cleavages in post-communist democracies: Theoretical propositions". *Party politics*, 1(4), 447-472.
- Parliament of Georgia. (1997). "Organic Law of Georgia on Political Associations of Citizens (Consolidation version)". *Legislative Herald of Georgia*. [online]. Available at: <https://matsne.gov.ge/en/document/view/28324>
- The Caucasus Research Resource Centers. (2013). "Knowledge of and attitudes toward the EU in Georgia". Retrieved through ODA - <http://caucasusbarometer.org>
- The Caucasus Research Resource Centers. (2017). "Knowledge of and attitudes toward the EU in Georgia". Retrieved through ODA - <http://caucasusbarometer.org>
- UNA Georgia. (2008). *Diversity.ge: National Integration and Tolerance in Georgia*. [online]. Available at: <http://diversity.ge/eng/map.php>
- Verba, S., Schlozman, K.L. and H. Brady. (1995). *Voice and Equality: Civic Voluntarism in American Politics*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.
- სტატისტიკის ეროვნული სამსახური (საქსტატი). (2016). მოსახლეობის 2014 წლის საყოველთაო აღწერის ძირითადი შედეგები. [online]. Available at: http://census.ge/files/results/Census%20Release_GEO.pdf



