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*Ilya Chavchavadze Center for
European Studies and Civic Education*

INTRA-PARTY DEMOCRACY IN GEORGIA

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THE TIME IS NOW!
Intra-Party Democracy in Georgia

“No one cares about an ordinary man.”

“We’ve been going in circles for the past 30 years!”

“Surely, something good will happen.”

“Good times will come!”

I don’t know about you, but I really struggle to listen to these unquestioning, memorized phrases, which are devoid of any real meaning. What will happen? When? And most importantly, *how*? When are we going to learn from our own mistakes and not fall into the same trap for the 100th time? What are we doing to improve our environment? What do we do to enhance our work ethic, to make liberty our natural state of being rather than constantly relying on someone else, to appreciate knowledge and skill, to see obedience to law as a virtue and corruption as an ignominy? It is a common practice to lament historical bad luck and place the responsibility on others: in the age of Sulkhan-Saba, we blamed France (treacherous Louis XIV!); during Erkle II’s reign, it was Russia, who always manipulated with our “shared faith” (how dare Tottleben betray us?!); during the era of the First Republic we blamed Germany (what more could they have done?); and today the focus is on the USA or omnipotent leaders, who will either return to Georgia to save us or is already here and will not let anyone

else in. How many of us actually acknowledge their role and true importance in and for public life? How many of us fully understand just how many untapped resources we carry within us? Resources which remain dormant and thus unable to serve our community? Resources, which we do not use out of a fear that we will be bullied? That fear is not baseless, since as soon as a person starts asking questions, a great number of adversaries suddenly materialize: some are absolutely sincere and selflessly destructive, while others serve governmental or oppositional clans and are focused on maintaining the status quo, in which they have a vested interest. Their ultimate aim is to suppress civil instincts among individual citizens and subdue free thought.

Party elites tell us that “These are the necessary measures for now!” and that “Now is not the time for criticism!” but they never reveal – and no one dares ask – who decided that on our behalf? Based on what moral or legal rights? As a result of what processes? And in exchange for what exactly?!

The idea of conducting research on intra-party democracy had been brewing for several years. The primary aim of the research was to determine the overall standards of intra-party democracy in Georgian parties and to detect any existing flaws. Ultimately, the Chavchavadze Center conducted the research during the cataclysmic global and regional pandemic of 2020. As expected, the study found serious issues with the quality of intra-party democracy within Georgian political parties.

While all major parties represented in the political arena were ambitiously confident about their democratic values, the study showed that the majority barely bothered to keep up appearances or follow basic procedures. The latest illustration of this regretful paradox was

the pre-election period for the 2020 parliamentary elections. Despite the fact that political parties had plenty of time to prepare their party lists, they did not compile and publish them until a few weeks before the elections, resulting in a great uproar among their supporters. For months, rank-and-file members and voters were kept guessing and wondering about who their favored party would name as a candidate. The naming of a decent and trustworthy character generated collective euphoria, while the leakage of an unacceptable candidate resulted in individual attempts to “reach out” to the party leader behind the scenes and by any means. Strange as it may be, despite all this, almost no one seemed to consider demanding the right to participate in the creation of the party list or the candidate selection process. Likewise, as a society, it appears we still do not understand that this system is sustained not solely by the ridiculous “Soviet legacy” but by very specific individuals and their agents, who occupy key seats on the political and media arena without any accountability whatsoever.

Accountability is certainly an exotic concept for Georgian political elites. Not a single major party selects its candidate by holding “primaries,” which would give a party elector an opportunity to choose their own preferred candidate. Therefore, ordinary members and supporters are always forced to be confronted with facts and accept the reality as it is, even if they often do not agree. Members barely take part in the governing of the parties. The party elites consider them “subordinates,” who should unquestioningly execute pre-determined decisions.

In all of the major parties, everything is actually determined by a single person, or at best a group of close confidantes of that person at any given moment (often, formally non-members of the party). Often,

the key posts are occupied by “avatars” – people who look respectable, have good rhetorical skills and embody all of the attributes associated with a politician but carry zero political weight or influence since they are merely temporary political agents for the true decision-makers.

There are no institutional mechanisms of political career growth and no meritocracy-based progress system. Leaders and other invisible party schemers who control the conjuncture only require “*new faces*,” which they use as carnival masks, but they do not want new, electable politicians equipped with real power and responsibility within the parties.

None of the major parties goes through the reflection and transformation stage post-elections. No one claims responsibility for the presented lists, candidates, form and content of a campaign, organizing or financing, and decisions made with lack of transparency. When supporters demand changes, they are once more silenced by the leaders’ agitator-puppets, with phrases like, “Now is not the time!” and “Don’t encourage nihilism!”

“Now is not the time!” has become the easiest way of condoning problems, silencing critics and maintaining the existing party political conjuncture. This slogan has become a weapon of sorts in an information war, which has persisted for many years and has worked through many election cycles. Nobody really knows when and under what circumstances the “right” time will come. Perhaps, only after the change of power or a complete destruction of the oppositional forces? Isn’t the counterargument to this that *this way* (if we do not speak about the persisting problems) the opposition will never win elections and the government will never improve?

It is clear that one of the key factors that stunt the development of real democracy in Georgia is the critically poor state of democracy

within Georgian political parties. This creates a perfect setting for anti-democratic and non-transparent behavior by scheming politicians, motivated by their personal or elitist interests, which fundamentally sabotages the entire political environment. Therefore, low-quality intra-party democracy and the missing institutional mechanisms are not challenges for any specific party but rather for all of Georgian society.

Those at the helm of power (whether in the country or in political parties) will never run out of reasons to argue that democracy should wait for just a bit longer. In the current system, the elites have a fundamental conflict of interest with allowing intra-party democracy. At the same time, the party elites get their positions, finances and legitimacy from ordinary members and voters. Therefore, this bleak reality can only be altered with the direct involvement of active citizens. Thus... we should think – we should dare to ask questions – and demand answers. And we should do all of this *now* because no one would want to hear, 20 years on, that they have been “going in circles for half a century”.

At this stage, the Chavchavadze Center aims to prompt discussions in our society about intra-party democracy. The research we present has revealed there is a low standard of intra-party democracy in Georgian political parties and that, in itself, is an important step forward. We will be thrilled to receive and take into account any criticism which will help refine or enhance the research and possibly make it even more relevant. We would like to pave the way for other researchers and shall spare no efforts in order that the public focuses on this long-ignored factor that has stood in the way of a genuine democratic transformation.

Nihilism is encouraged not by those who pose questions but rather by those who forbid them. A successful, pluralist and wealthy society

rests on the opposite principle. The change begins with us. Therefore, once again - we should think, ask questions and demand answers. To put it in a nutshell, we should believe in the citizen within us.

Zaza Bibilashvili

Chairman of the Board

The Ilia Chavchavadze Center for European Studies
and civic Education

1. INTRODUCTION: LITERATURE REVIEW

The model of governance based on democracy in itself implies a level of competition between political forces. Under a democratic administration, political parties compete with each other for political power. While discussing Georgia's political problems, we cannot ignore issues concerning the functioning of political parties as well as issues related to democratic processes within the party.

As suggested by Zudenkova (2014), political parties can shape citizens' political preferences, as well as provide the human resources necessary for legislative and executive governance. In order to find out how politics are shaped in any particular state, it is necessary to look into intra-party democracy performance (2014, p. 2). Grimwood (2019) describes three separate levels (internal politics, public/social and governmental) on which the political parties operate. On the internal politics level, the parties elect leaders and recruit members. Apart from that, the political parties shape the mission and vision of the organization on various topics. Due to these factors, political parties play a central role in the democratization process (2019, p. 2).

According to a widely accepted view in political sciences, in the past few decades, the trust index toward political parties has plunged significantly. According to Ignazi's (2018) assessment, during the post-World War II period, political parties managed to maintain a perfect balance between the state and the civil society, although it must be

said that they were not able to keep up with postmodernist and post-industrial trends. A gradually weakening connection between civilians and their selected leaders, reduced civil activism and the strengthening of antidemocratic powers proved to be a great challenge to political organizations (Scarrow, 2005). The situation was made worse by the ever-increasing (average) age of party members, the rise of extremist political actors and, as a result, the oppression of moderately liberal and democratic parties (Tsutskiridze, 2018). In the face of the legitimization crisis, parties attempted to return to the political arena by trying to reform the party apparatus, the key aim of which was to democratize the system by engaging the members and the supporters on a greater scale (Close et al, 2017). As a result, the concept of intra-party democracy started to gain popularity in the 1970s, when political science saw the wide spread of the concept of intra-party democracy. The concept identifies the primary existing challenges within the party and offers possible solutions to these problems (2017, p. 2).

Heywood (2013) defines two models of intra-party democracy. In the first model, “parties are democratic agents, in that power within them is widely and evenly dispersed... In the second model, democracy dictates that policy-making power should be concentrated in the hands of party members who are elected and, therefore, publicly accountable” (p. 231).

Based on Hofmeister and Grabow’s (2011) assessment, a democratic state should not be ruled by parties that cannot sustain democratic political structures internally. They note that almost every party acknowledges the importance of the intra-party democratic processes, but it is very rarely reflected on the actual party structure (2011, p. 48). The concept of intra-party democracy implies establishing some basic democratic norms within political parties. The main aim of intra-

party democracy implementation is to ensure the involvement of party members and supporters on a greater scale through the means of inclusivity and decentralization (Berge et al, 2013, pp. 1-3).

Greenwood (2019) highlights the following main criteria for intra-party democracy: candidate and leadership selection; decentralization and inclusivity; freedom of selection; representation; policymaking; fair disciplinary procedures; freedom of association and assembly; freedom of expression; transparency; and accountability (2019, p. 4-7).

Various authors identify the key factors which stand in the way of the existence of intra-party democracy. Michels (1911) developed the concept of the “Iron Law of Oligarchy” in his writing, which he defines as the rule of several influential people. According to Michels, in each political organization there always emerges a ruling class, which entirely controls the processes taking place within the party. The monopolization of power is a sure sign of the formation of the intra-party oligarchy, which, in turn, is incompatible with the existence of the intra-party democratic processes (1911, p. 48).

While assessing intra-party processes, Scarrow (2005) highlights three basic criteria – inclusiveness, centralization and institutionalization. According to Scarrow, inclusiveness assesses how wide the circle of party decision makers is, while centralization measures how much the decision-making process is determined by a single group or a decision body. Based on Scarrow’s own assessment In a highly centralized party, an executive committee “has the authority to make decisions that are accepted at all levels of the party”(p.6). In those cases, opinions of the regional party branches are not considered. As to party institutionalization, Randall and Svåsand (2002) suggest, that:

“party institutionalization may be invoked to cover a wide range of features, including a party’s autonomy from other actors, the

extent of its internal organizational development, and the extent to which supporters identify with the party and view it as an important actor” (as cited in Scarrow, 2013, p. 6).

These issues are common in Georgia today. This also relates to the author’s suggestion that newly formed parties are characterized by low institutionalization because it takes time to form formal structures and a broad organizational network; nevertheless, that doesn’t mean that long-established parties are always institutionalized (2005, p. 6).

According to Aylot and Bolin (2015), intra-party democracy is best reflected by the decision-making process in the party. To be more precise, in parties with low quality intra-party democracy, the consensus on certain issues is reached by several highly influential leaders or a group of leaders, while opinions of the rest of the party, the “ordinary” members, are not taken into consideration. This creates a giant chasm between the party elite and other party members. Aylot and Bolin describe a model of governance that is applicable to the present state of Georgian politics. In particular, they suggest that this kind of governance is characterized by the “top down” model, which implies that political processes are run from the top to the bottom of the hierarchy by the elites; their opinions are passed down to the rest of the party members and their supporters. This model completely opposes the commonly accepted standard of democracy according to which governance should be realized “bottom up” with the direct involvement of fellow party members (2015, p. 2).

While discussing the intra-party democracy, Weissenbach (2010) developed a concept of institutionalization which entails the establishment of behaviors and attitudes within the party as well as the establishment of organizational culture. Weissenbach points out internal (organizational development of political subjects) and external

(party's relationship with the society) institutionalization. The author suggested four basic dimensions for party institutionalization:

1. Roots in society: involves a combination of factors including party age, electoral support and close links with civil society organizations;
2. Autonomy: implies party's autonomy in the decision-making process;
3. Organization: involves existence of an organization apparatus which functions adequately at all administrative levels and acts in the party's best interest;
4. Coherence: implies a high level of integration in the party as well as moderate relations between various members and groups (2010, pp. 4-5).

According to Hofmeister & Grabow (2011), a lack of interest in political activism poses a significant challenge to intra-party democracy, which in turn encourages corruption and oligarchic rule in the party (2011, p. 48). Furthermore, a low level of intra-party democratization is illustrated by an intolerance toward alternate opinions, a lack of financial transparency, the absence of intra-party discussions and political pluralism (Scarrow, 2005, p. 4).

Based on Aylot and Bolin's (2015) assessment, intra-democratic development levels are heavily influenced by party systems. The authors determine four types of parties based on the approach of electing a leader/leadership candidate:

1. Party on the ground – the leader is elected by party members, by regional office or by party congress;
2. Party in central office – the leader is elected by party leadership (leading actors or managers);

3. Party in public office – the leader is elected by deputies who have a parliamentary mandate or by the members of the cabinet;
4. External sponsor – the leader is elected by the key donors (2015, p. 6).

While discussing the intra-party democracy it is crucial to take into account party systems and their characterizing features. Research conducted by Sartori (1976) seems particularly relevant to this point, specifically his theory of three basic types of party systems. According to Sartori, it is hard to talk about political pluralism in one-party systems, since the country's power is monopolized by a specific party. Two-party or multiple-party systems are characterized by a certain level of intra-party democracy, although it depends on the peculiarities of the country's political landscape (1976, p. 40).

Katz and Mair (1995) attribute the growth of intra-party democracy to the formation of “cartel” parties. They discuss the evolution of party systems from the beginning of the 19th century to the last decades of the 20th century and they distinguish four main stages of evolution:

1. Elitist parties existed until the end of the 19th century. In this type, the level of socio-political engagement of the civilians was incredibly low, the right to vote was a privilege of the few and all of the decisions were made by an influential leader (1995, p. 9);
2. The acceleration of the industrialization process (in 1880s) enabled the emergence of mass parties, which were characterized by mass suffrage, social reforms, and a more or less even distribution of the political resources (1995, p. 10);
3. The post-World War II period saw the rise of the so-called catch-all parties, which practically abandoned political activism based on collective identity in favor of individualism. In such parties, the

member recruitment process was determined not by a sense of shared social identity but by need to realize common policies. (1995, p. 13);

4. With the decline of the political parties in 1970s, cartel parties began to emerge, characterized not only by the intra-party rivalry for power and resources but also an elimination of a formal division between party leaders and its ordinary members; (1995, p. 19).

Which particular steps do political parties have to take to increase intra-party democracy? Hofmeister and Grabow (2011) distinguish six main factors which can have a positive impact on intra-party democracy in any given political organization: 1. Promotion of the participation of all members in the internal matters of the party; 2. Possibility for the members to voice their opinions within the party; 3. Possibility of participation for specific groups within a party; 4. Tolerance towards different opinions as long as they are within the limits of the basic party program; 5. Compliance with the rules and regulations for membership participation and decision-making processes within the party; 6. Respect of the party leadership toward 'ordinary' party members (2011, p. 50).

Scarrow (2005) discusses several important features of intra-party democracy, including the candidate selection procedures, the establishment of party policies, eligibility for party membership, a connection between a party and society, and party members' political activity. Scarrow poses a question: how involved are the rank-and-file members of the party in the selection process of a leadership candidate/a leader? This question is applicable to Georgia as well. Scarrow distinguishes various hindering factors to this angle, including high membership fees, a demographic quota and a certain waiting period before one can become a member. Based on her assessment,

party policy-making processes are held back by the lack of intra-party consultations and plebiscites. Often, political parties use an overly formal procedure for recruitment, which reduces motivation to join the party. Other hindering factors include the reduced social connection between a party and a voter and a low indicator of political activity (2005, p. 4).

Scarrow additionally highlights three key factors (candidate recruitment, selection of a party leader and setting party policies) which parties should actively work to improve. The author suggests that the recruitment process is particularly crucial since it's the elected candidates that determine party results in elections. Based on her observation, parties, which rely on the active involvement of supporters in the candidate recruitment process, mainly use the following two mechanisms: 1. "Primary" elections or "primaries" (direct election of a party candidate); 2. An assembly of party members which often takes a form of a "caucus". The entry requirements for party membership may vary from country to country. Countries that use the "primaries" system permit both postal voting as well as voting in person at a polling station. In places where the postal system is effective, this mechanism is easier to accomplish and tends to be more successful, although due to the high risk of forgery, this method is rarely used by most countries (2005, p. 8).

In her study, Scarrow pays particular attention to the party leader selection procedure and its importance to the improvement of inner-party democracy. In her opinion, it is enabled by organizing a party congress, direct selection by the party members or both. This level of transparency encourages ending any existing rivalry between party members and makes the intra-party processes more democratic. As for

setting party policies, it is important to organize a general discussion for the party members before the decision-making takes place (2005, pp. 9-10).

Parties' inner workings are regulated by the legislation in a number of countries. Regulations may include the candidate-selection process, selection of party leaders, and women and minorities representation in party leadership. The democratic value of the candidate and leader selection process is determined by the quality of centralization (decisions made solely by the party council vs with the involvement of regional organizations), voters (the more voters there are, the more democratic the process) and number of possible candidates (the more candidates running for a nomination, the higher the intra-party pluralism standard). When it comes to artificial encouragement of minority engagement, according to Norris (2004), many countries use the quota system, which entails nominating a specific number of people for party leadership roles based on their gender, ethnicity, religion, etc. (2004, p. 3). A number of regulations exist for party candidate/leader nomination and decision-making process in countries such as Germany, India, Australia, Spain, Venezuela, Portugal, Nepal, France, Belgium, etc. (Gauja, 2006, p. 4).

All these issues are relevant for Georgia. The "top to bottom" governance, corruption in parties, monopolization of power by influential leaders, lack of financial transparency, intolerance for alternative points of view, and absence of large-scale public discussions and political pluralism in Georgia pose notable challenges for intra-party democracy. According to Nodia and Skoltbach (2006), despite the fact that almost all Georgian parties acknowledge democratic values, their organizational structures are significantly influenced by

the democratic centralism principle. The parties are overly centralized and ordinary members have little influence on the party policymaking.

Tsutskiridze (2018) points out several factors, based on which Georgian parties need to improve their intra-party democracy:

1. Party membership – becoming a party member should be facilitated as much as possible. Minimum requirement for eligibility could be sharing the party’s manifesto.

2. Forming party organization – local party organization should be formed independently, without the involvement of party leaders. Local organizations should enjoy high-level autonomy and should not rely on the party’s central apparatus.

3. Candidate recruitment – decision making should not be a prerogative of top-level governing bodies (political or executive councils). In order to solve the above-mentioned issues and make the process more participatory, it is necessary to empower local branches: “for the local elections and in consideration of the electoral systems, local or regional organizations may be granted more power to form an electoral list via internal elections or decision making”(p.6).

4. Gender equality and the minorities engagement – a party should strive to develop initiatives that enable approximate gender equality as well as the involvement of the ethnic and religious minorities;

5. Educating voters, uniting interests and policymaking – each member/group/organization under the party should have an unchallenged ability to propose political initiatives.

6. Money and politics – parties should set a low threshold for financial contributions, which will prevent major donors from gaining strong influence over the decision-making process. Also, every party member should have equal access to all of the party’s financial documents.

7. Party's digitalization – technology can improve traditional political processes, enable wider access to party voters on and save a considerable portion of financial resources (2018, pp. 3-8).

According to Nodia and Skoltbach (2006), maintaining a horizontal distribution of power within a party and taking into account interests of various groups can be the key to integration within a political organization. The involvement of ordinary members of the party in discussions on political and program-related issues may positively affect their motivation even when such discussions have little influence over the party politics (2006, p. 178). One of the ways to increase the quality of intra-party democracy is the decentralization of an apparatus. Parties' aims are not limited to the improvement of country's overall condition but also include taking into account and solving distinct, for instance regionally specific, issues. Therefore, parties should try to delegate more power to regional organizations so their initiatives have a greater chance of being heard and serving as a kind of a bridge between the party and the local population (Nodia, Skoltbach, 2006, p. 185).

2. RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

The aim of this research is to assess the state and quality of intra-party democracy in Georgian political parties by looking at various existing components. An analysis of the current situation and the literature review prompted researchers to ask how developed intra-party democracy in Georgia is at this time.

During the evaluation stage, while categorizing the data, the study considered an existing intra-party democracy index (Rahati and Shapira, 2017) and five main components: participation, representation, competition, responsiveness and transparency.

For research design, the most common mixed methodological approach – the concurrent triangulation strategy – was used. In order to ensure validity, the study combines various methods. Since no complete, clearly arranged databases about the segment population (rank-and-file members of the party and supporters) are openly available to public, the non-probability sampling was done within convenience sample (those who meet certain requirements). Hence, the data obtained cannot be generalized to the whole segment population. Thus, study sampling does not represent the general sum and all the quantitative data given within the study reflects only the respondents' positions. However, that is enough to identify the existing trends in intra-party democracy within Georgian political parties. Researchers selected the segment population for the online

survey based on who should participate/should be participating in the party's decision-making process. Again, because the study is non-representative, we do not generalize the findings.

The aim of conducting online surveys was to detect any existing trends in intra-party democracy. Qualitative data was collected using in-depth, semi-structured interviews as well as using an online survey, which included open-ended questions. For the in-depth interview stage, face-to-face interviews were conducted with 10 representatives from six political parties (six women and four men). All of them are active members of political councils or majoritarian candidates (with the exception of Girchi). The interviews were recorded in September-October; the participant parties are listed in the table below. (The names of the actual respondents are confidential and are referred to by an assigned number code.)

Number Codes	Party
N1	United National Movement
N2	United National Movement
N3	United National Movement
N4	Georgian Dream
N5	Aghmashenebeli Strategy
N6	Girchi
N7	Girchi
N8	Lelo
N9	Lelo
N10	Republican Party

Despite numerous attempts, the leaders of European Georgia and Patriots' Alliance refused to cooperate for the in-depth interview.

The collected data from survey and interviews was processed side-by-side (in November) and then integrated. This process helps form interpretative conclusions around the research phenomenon. The overall process included data conformation and disconfirmation, cross validation, balancing out, comparing, and highlighting common and contrasting components.

The selected research design provides us with an opportunity to transform data: quantify the qualitative information and vice versa. By creating and identifying code patterns in surveys, qualitative data is transformed into quantitative information. By identifying such codes, it became possible to calculate certain characteristics and categories within the text. Respondents in the online survey were anonymous, and the interviews were confidential.

The online survey and in-depth interviewing took place in September-October 2020. Field work was scheduled during this period in order to complete it before the October 31 parliamentary elections. This was an ideal time for field work as parties select candidates, finalize the party list, promote candidate messaging in the media and engage in intra-party democracy (or vice versa) during the pre-election period. Researchers were able to observe the processes in real time.

Due to the ongoing pandemic, researchers identified and engaged members of political parties and their supporters online. In total, 183 respondents took part in the study by filling out a self-administrated questionnaire. The target group was contacted through Facebook and e-mail.

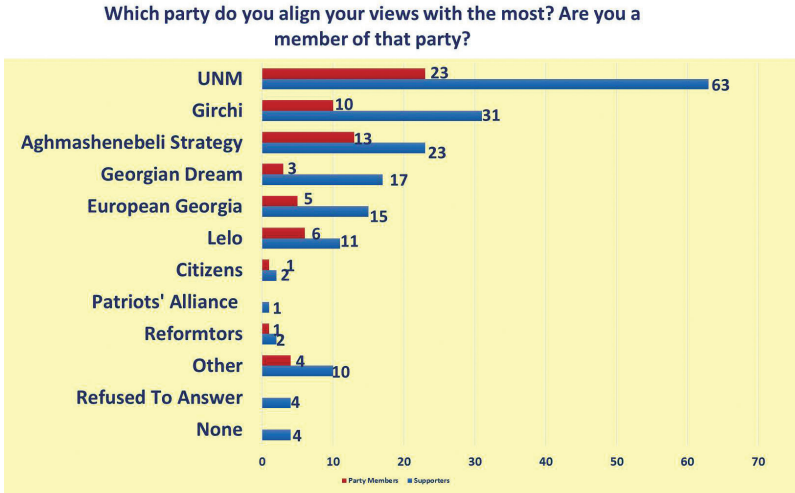
3. INTEGRATED ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

General data about respondents

The online survey was filled out by 183 respondents who held values that closely align with at least one of the political parties registered in Georgia. The represented sample was quite diverse: 54% (N=98) were involved in party affairs although only 36% (N=65) were members of a party. Respondents include members of their party's governing body (N=11), representatives of the regional or central offices (N=28) and supporters or volunteers (N=23). There was also an additional group of 36 respondents, who are not members of the party but are still members of the governing body (N=2); representatives of the regional or central offices (N=6); and supporters or volunteers (N=28). Out of 183 respondents, 85 did not specify the status of their involvement within the given party.

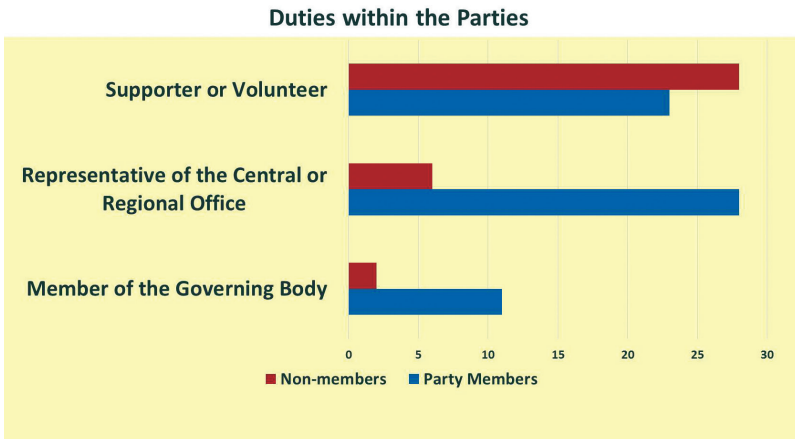
Graph N1 illustrates how respondents identified themselves by party affiliation and political views.

Graph N1



Graph N2 shows the distribution of duties among respondents in political parties.

Graph N 2



3.1 Intra-Party Democracy Index and its Components

Five components from the intra-party democracy index were selected to help determine if intra-party democracy exists in Georgia. For the purpose of this study, researchers selected supporter engagement, voter representation, transparency, responsiveness and internal competition. In order to determine whether intra-party democracy exists and, if so, in what form, the respondents were asked to assess the meaning of individual components and describe the true behaviors and environments within the parties. Based on these components' important details, an overall picture begin to emerge. Table N1 and Graph N3 illustrate how respondents assess intra-party democracy in their party according to the above-mentioned components on a 1-5 scale, where 1 is very weak and five is very strong. Table N1 provides an average of the scores given by the respondents.

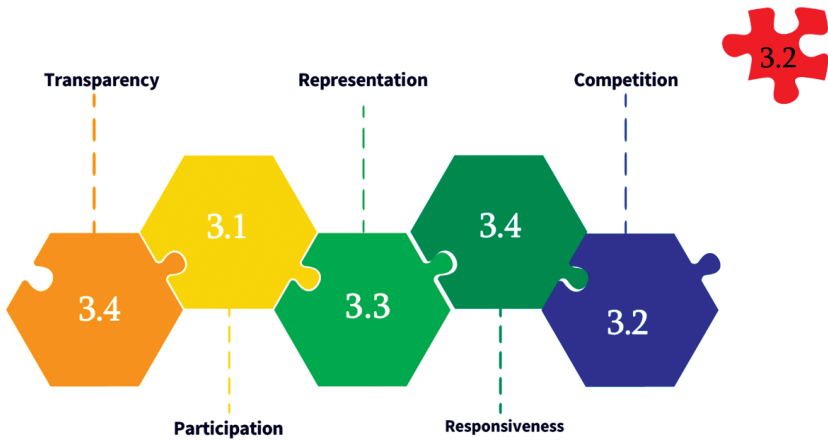
Table N1

Self-evaluation of party practices	Very weak	Moderate	Very Strong	Self-evaluation Index
Supporter engagement	25 %	23 %	52 %	3.4
Voter representation	34 %	22 %	44 %	3.1
Transparency	31 %	21%	48 %	3.3
Responsiveness	29 %	19 %	52 %	3.4
Internal Competition	32 %	22 %	46 %	3.2

According to respondents' assessments of the five selected components, the intra-party democracy self-assessment index is 3.2, although that score is a small part of the overall picture. Other factors must be taken into consideration as well for an in-depth understanding of the true state of intra-party democracy in the country. Graphs N3 and N4 provide a more nuanced interpretation of the assessment.

Graph N3

Intra-party Democracy Self-assessment Index Based on Five Components.



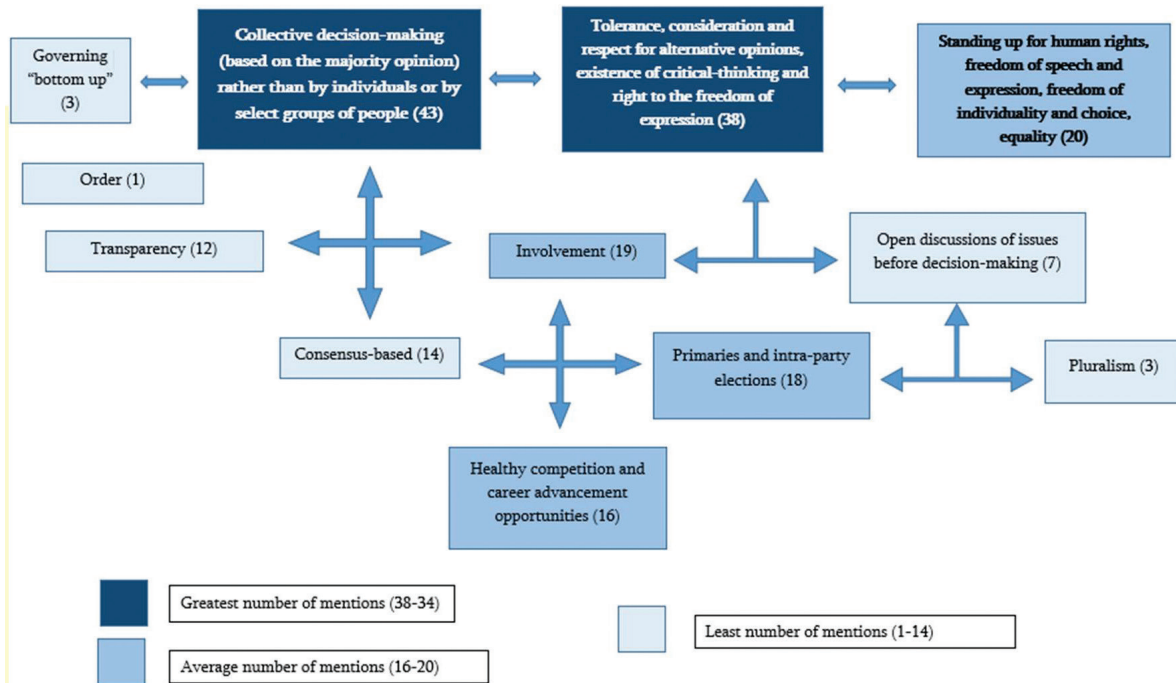
This data indicates that the majority of respondents gave relatively low scores to parties on the decision-making process and internal competition. All five components are discussed in more detail in the next section of the report.

3.1.1 Awareness of Intra-Party Democracy

The assessment showed that the respondents had an incomplete understanding of intra-party democracy; only a fraction understood each individual component, and no one appeared to understand the whole process. Their lack of awareness is an indication that they play a limited role in party processes and the parties lack transparency.

Respondents also showed what they knew – as well as what they did not, but should, know – when they were asked to define intra-party democracy. The majority said it requires involving members/supporters in the decision-making process, tolerance and respect for others' views. No one mentioned responsibility and accountability to voters as crucial features of leadership and governing, which are key components of the intra-party democracy index.

Only 133 out of the 183 respondents clearly answered the question “In your opinion, what is intra-party democracy?” An analysis of their responses reviewed 194 qualitative data units, which were grouped by patterns. By coding patterns of key words and phrases (12 codes in total), researchers identified reoccurring ideas and areas that overlapped. According to the respondents, intra-party democracy requires engaging others in the decision-making process; tolerating different opinions; having the right and freedom to criticize decisions and policies; making decisions as a group, rather than following a single individual; holding intra-party elections/primaries; and fostering transparency (See Graph N4: Awareness of Intra-party Democracy Matrix).



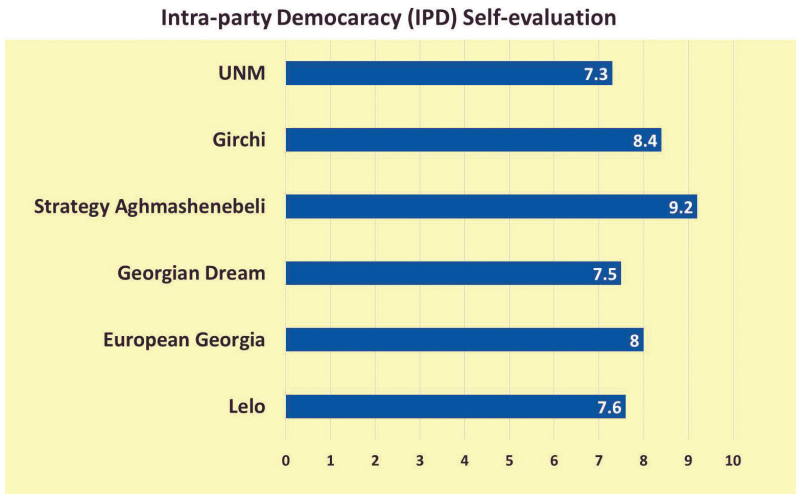
The definition of intra-party democracy offered by respondents in the in-depth interviews echoes some of the trends detected in the online survey. Respondents said that the definition includes multiple components and involves an institutional system whereby decision making is transparent and ordinary members participate in the process. That includes party decisions such as the formation of party list as well as the leader selection process. The respondents also said that these processes should require a healthy environment and fair competition. According to them, that includes informing grassroots members, being responsive to member demands, decision execution and control. The respondents also think that in order for such mechanisms to function effectively, party members should be able to express their opinion. It is also important that opinions of ordinary supporters and members should move from the “bottom up” toward party leaders, and party members should receive feedback.

Unlike the survey respondents, people who participated in the in-depth interviews were selected from the governing body of their parties. They were more likely to mention accountability and responsibility as components of intra-party democracy and spoke in detail about how the process should be improved.

One of the key components of intra-party democracy is the maximum involvement of party members in the decision-making process. It is worth noting that 54% of respondents said they “don’t know” or refused to answer when asked how decisions are made in their favored parties. This suggests that current political processes in Georgian parties lack transparency and wide engagement, which negatively effects the quality of intra-party democracy.

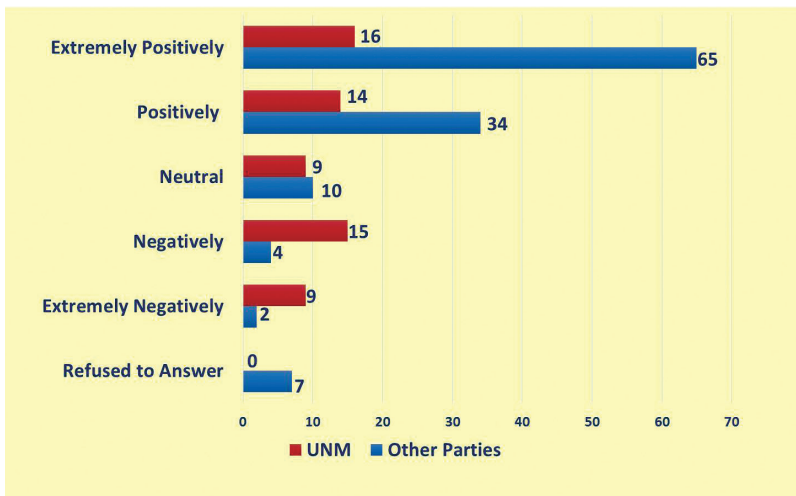
The self-evaluation of one's own party's intra-party democracy based on survey data provides a look at the existing problems in Georgia's intra-party democracy. The respondents assessed intra-party democracy standards within the parties. Out of all surveyed supporters, supporters of the United National Movement were the most critical of their own party, which is reflected in Graph N5. To provide sufficient data, only parties with certain respond rate (those who had at least 10 respondents for survey) were assessed.

Graph N5



Graph N6 shows responses from members of the United National Movement, compared to other parties.

Graph N6

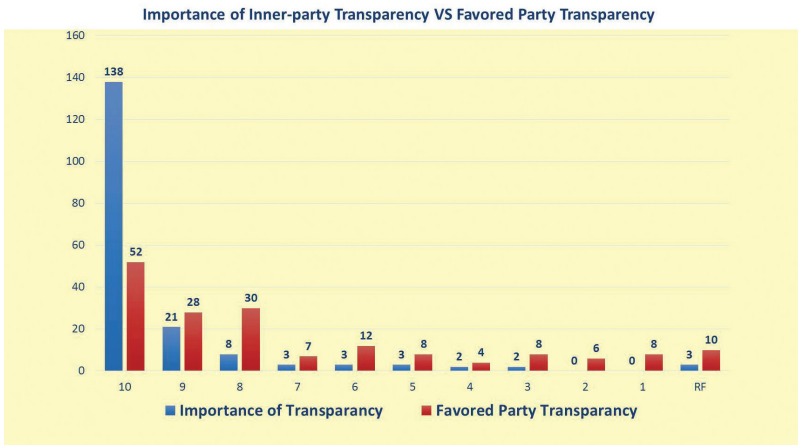


The qualitative data gathered from open-ended questions provided more clarity on the specific factors which might have resulted in a critical attitude (further study of those factors might be a subject for future research).

3.1.2. System Transparency

One of the components of the intra-party democracy index is the existence of transparent systems for decision making and other intra-party processes. For the purposes of this study, transparency implies that supporters are informed about the formation of party list, financing and the distribution of finances and other procedures and activities. In the online questionnaire, 93% of participants said that system transparency in a political organization is “important” or “very important.” However, the data shown in Graph N7 shows a stark gap between their vision and reality.

Graph N7



During the in-depth interviews, when speaking about intra-party democracy and describing the processes, the respondents identified the formation of the party list as a key issue, and one which they were particularly critical.

According to a Georgian Dream representative (Respondent N4), the lack of intra-party democracy is best reflected in the party list formation process: *“Nobody knows for sure how these lists are compiled.”* In the opinion of a Girchi representative (Respondent N7), the formation of the party list underscores the degree of transparency in the party. A United National Movement representative (Respondent N3) believes that, other than a few exceptions, intra-party democratic processes simply do not exist. Based on their assessment, the level of intra-party democracy has gradually worsened in the past five years. In comments about the list compilation process, Respondent N3 suggested behind-the-scenes agreements during the decision-making process: *“I have no access to the formation of the list, and we encounter the same problem yet again: behind-the-scenes decisions made by the select few! Even though I am a member of the political council, I find out about the key decisions through the media.”* As a positive experience of intra-party democracy, Respondent N3 noted the party’s 2017 congress, although they underscored that *“The theses and decisions based on which we assembled the congress and internal elections remained just words on paper. The elections were held democratically but the action plan was ‘stillborn.’”*

Respondents said that the existing party financing model is a key factor hindering the development of intra-party democracy. Based on this model, donors and sources of sponsorship are one or several people who are amongst the governing bodies. A Lelo representative (Respondent N8) said this practice negatively impacts intra-party democracy and the party should move to a sponsorship model, which would involve a wider circle of people.

During discussions about intra-party democratic processes, a lot of attention was paid to the parties' historical legacy. For example, respondent N10 noted a lack of tradition of changing leadership and making progress as well as the practice of establishing parties in the pre-election period. When assessing other parties, the Respondent N10 said: *"We have parties which are founded in the pre-election period and disappear afterwards. The only political organization that has survived after being in the government and is now an oppositional force is the United National Movement. Another issue is that very few parties have long history to begin with."*

3.1.3. Healthy Competition and Participation

Survey responses indicated that participation and healthy competition are some of the weakest links in the system. In the survey, 94% of respondents identified healthy competition in a political organization as "important" or "very important." One of the major criticisms was young members/party supporters face obstacles when they want to participate, and decisions are made behind-the-scenes. Respondent N3 said these practices are due to the leadership's desire to maintain their influence *"despite the fact that the younger generation is far healthier, and they are far more capable of more open, democratic and public decision-making which will benefit the country and the society."* According to Respondent N5, there is a lot of toxic competition in parties and the situation has gotten worse over the years.

The respondents argued that in order to ensure healthy competition, intra-party elections should be held, however, Georgia has little positive experience in this area.

Based on responses to open-ended questions in the survey, respondents appear to hold a real desire for more involvement in the decision-making processes, mutual respect within the party and tolerance for different opinions. Sixty percent of the respondents said they were either completely or mostly not involved in the intra-party governing process, e.g. in the formation of the party list, governing body elections, setting the regulations for internal elections, monitoring financial transparency, etc. It is especially noteworthy that by calling for more involvement, the respondents were not implying more engagement in routine-based party tasks but rather demanding improved internal competition and more participation in the decision-making process.

One open-ended question regarded involvement in the 2020 parliamentary elections: “If you are involved in the party’s affairs, what kind of procedures are taking place in your party at this stage (e.g., for list compilation)?” Only 46 – or 25% – of respondents answered, half of which were not involved in decision-making processes in their party; they were engaged in promotion, mobilization, communication, updating supporter lists, door-to-door campaigning, and working in election offices.

In one in-depth interview, a representative from Girchi said that supporters were responsible for all positive changes and the formation of ideological in the party, and their impact was notable after they became more involved. A United National Movement representative (Respondent N2) again mentioned the 2017 congress as a model example. In their opinion demand for healthy intra-party democracy was fostered by members who were frustrated by the inclusive decision-

making process, backdoor deals and the lack of information about party business. Based on their assessment, after one group left the party, the environment improved, at least initially. Today, however, they said *“considering the tricky circumstances which the National Movement members have to endure (persecution, blackmail, a great number of members called for interrogations), there is very little time to think about improving issues and intra-party democracy.”* During the interview, Respondent N2 mentioned the 2017 congress several times and stressed that, out of all the processes related to intra-party democracy, it was the most positive experience as it allowed members to help elect the new political council.

In Respondent N7’s opinion, more involvement in intra-party processes would help increase general interest in politics. Respondent N1 noted that greater transparency in the decision-making process and healthy competition would help increase participation in the processes. The study found that actual participation in party internal elections is minimal; only 33% (N=61) of respondents participate in internal elections and of those, 50 said they have only taken part a handful of times (1-5 times) and have no established practice of participating in the party. In one case, an individual who had been a party member for 15 years said they could not recall ever taking part. In contrast, 89% of respondents said internal elections should be held in their favored party (e.g., selection of political board members, chairmen, candidates for election lists, etc.).

The current intra-party election processes are not ideal and require revision. It is crucial that intra-party elections be held in an environment of healthy competition. The Respondent N9 said *“A competitive environment generates the best strategies and best candidates.”*

Based on the results of the survey and the interviews, both party members and supporters prioritize healthy competition and participation in party processes although currently institutional mechanisms for carrying out these demands simply do not exist.

3.1.4. Responsibility and Accountability

The respondents claimed that politicians feel accountable and responsible not to their supporters but rather to major donors. It was important to the respondents that supporters have influential leverage over politicians. They said opportunities for creating strong influence exist in party finance reform. They would like for parties to create committees with decision-making power that would oversee financial independence.

The respondents said that when members are assigned (rather than elected) to important positions, they feel less accountable to grassroots electors. Furthermore, they noted a lack institutionalization in parties and recommended cultivating horizontal governing systems to improve intra-party democracy, reinforce a straightforward party structure and clarify ranks and career paths in the parties.

The weakness of the accountability and responsibility component was clear in responses to the open-ended question “In case of defeat in the elections, should the party consider changing the governing body or its leader?” 167 respondents answered this question: 43 said that they did not know; 51% (N=85) answered “yes” and 23% (N=39) opposed the idea.

In addition, 98% (N=179) of respondents said election results should be analyzed, although only 30% (N=55) have actually taken part in such discussions. The responses indicate that while there is a high demand for the election results analysis, party leadership and formal governing body – as well as ordinary members – fail to take the initiative to carry it out. It should be noted here that the majority of respondents placed responsibility on the leader and the governing body. It appears that such discussions, participation, accountability and responsibility, especially post-elections, could give parties an opportunity to re-structure their leadership.

In relation to the post-election analysis, based on the data received from the in-depth interviews, it appears that parties either provide a very shallow analysis or skip this process altogether in order to escape responsibility for the election results.

In-depth interviews showed that post-elections result analysis, which is one method to assess responsibility, is barely cultivated and is limited to either an analysis of the electoral district results or non-structured meeting and talks.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study showed that there is a clear lack of intra-party democracy among Georgian political parties. The data collected points to existing problems in the system concerning the transparency, competition, engagement, representation, and responsibility components, which underscore the weaknesses in intra-party democracy. An analysis of the data shows that surveyed party members and supporters understand individual components of intra-party democracy but not the full process, which could be due to low standards for participation and transparency, lack of information and other factors. They are also rarely involved in the decision-making process and their role in the party is limited to technical tasks. The development of proper intra-party democracy is hindered by excessive dependence on leaders, monopolization of power by a specific leader or a leadership group, low standard of institutional development and the lack of financial transparency as well as an absence of responsibility and awareness. The low standard of institutional development indicates the absence of mechanisms that would periodically engage ordinary party members in the decision-making process. The respondents identified the list compilation process as the key process to assess intra-party democracy. They gave their own parties low marks for intra-party democracy and characterized party management as an authoritarian, elitist government system rather than democracy.

Interviews with party members and supporters from Georgia's active political parties indicated a real desire for strong intra-party de-

mocracy, an expectation that is unlikely to be fulfilled in the current environment. The study also demonstrated that more research is needed among the segment population (party members and supporters) in Georgia in order to more accurately assess the challenges that cause the intra-party democracy deficit and identify possible solutions.

Intra-party democracy in Georgia is a concept that has not been widely discussed. There is a real deficit in research on the subject in the country, which directly reflects the low level of civil awareness and the fact that parties and civil organizations rarely pay attention to this issue. At this stage, the key suggestion of this research is that political parties should adequately assess the quality of intra-party democracy and identify crucial issues. Research centers based in Georgia, specialized non-governmental organizations, should invest more resources for further research to ensure better civil awareness and to help accomplish superior results on the matter.

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