



Emancipative values in Georgia: An individual level analysis



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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Available online 6 February 2014

Keywords:

Georgia
Emancipative values
Democracy
Survey data

ABSTRACT

The main interest of the study is to determine whether and how an individual's perceived economic situation is related to emancipative values in Georgia. The analysis employs individual-level survey data from nationwide public opinion surveys conducted by the Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) in 2010 and 2011 in Georgia. Several dimensions of emancipative values are examined: gender equality, tolerance, participation, autonomy, interpersonal trust, satisfaction with life and religion. Level of education and age are brought in as alternative factors accounting for value change. The results are ambiguous and only partially confirm validity of the emancipative theory of democracy on an individual level in Georgia.

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1. Introduction

In the course of democratization and European integration the issue of value change remains very significant for Georgia. This article aims to bring Georgia's case into the body of literature and to promote the use of large-N survey data which has been mostly ignored in analysing democracy in Georgia. The present study is based on 2010–2011 data from three nationally representative surveys conducted by the Caucasus Research Resource Centers (CRRC) and examines the relationship between the economic situation and pro-democratic values and attitudes on an individual level in Georgia.

Georgia has been undergoing tremendous changes in its political, economic and social life during the previous decades. The Western-trained leadership, including the president, has made their goal to make Georgia a modern, democratic state explicit to both domestic and international audiences. Yet many obstacles remain for Georgia's democratization despite some progress that has been made since the Rose Revolution in 2003 with regard to the fight against corruption, fraudulent elections, and poor public administration, among other issues (Lincoln, 2006).

As Curry and Göedl (2012) argue, despite mass mobilization and protests that seemed democratic at first glance, the Rose revolution was a product of great frustration and universal disgust with how the system worked. It did not result in the growth of civil society or significant democratization in Georgia. According to them, the Rose revolution could not create a functional democracy in Georgia since the revolution was motivated not by emancipative values – for example, liberty, tolerance, autonomy and participation in decision-making—or an intrinsic preference for democracy, but rather for the wrong reasons. “All this [the revolution] was framed with a single, simple solution: Get rid of the bad guy (the old autocrat) and bring

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in the opposition candidate to turn things around” (Curry and Göedl, 2012: 68). In other words, achieving democracy was the primary goal of neither the government, nor the protesters. Instead, people in Georgia went to the streets because “they were angry with the system which did not work” (Curry and Göedl, 2012: 75).

The failure of Georgia to achieve a functional democracy can be easily explained by using the theory developed by Inglehart (2009). Even if one assumes that there was a political will to make Georgia a democratic country, people's values and their motivation cannot and should not be ignored while analysing democracy in Georgia. If people do not prefer autonomy and participation, a revolution with an expressed aim to pursue democracy can result only in changing one “boss” with another, instead of actually pursuing democracy.

The idea that mass values and beliefs influence a country's chances to achieve and sustain democracy is central to the theory of political culture (Almond and Verba, 1963; Eckstein, 1966; Muller and Seligson, 1994). Welzel and Inglehart (2009) extended this proposition and provided credible empirical evidence that universal aspiration for political freedom takes increasingly high priority when survival is taken for granted. According to them it is this intrinsic preference for democracy that is expressed in people's emancipative values which determines the actual level of democracy better than any other factor. Inglehart and Welzel convincingly argue that socioeconomic modernization is conducive to democracy because it is conducive to emancipative values. Socioeconomic modernization provides individuals with the action resources, for example, economic, intellectual and communicative resources, that enable them to struggle for democracy, while emancipative values give them the *motivation*, that is, make them willing, to do so (Welzel, 2007; Welzel and Inglehart, 2009). Thus, Welzel (2007) argues that it is not mass actions and protests as such, but mass actions and protests motivated by emancipative values that help to shift the power balance towards pro-democratic forces. By applying this theory to Georgia one can argue that the Rose revolution could not achieve functional democracy because it was frustration and disgust that motivated the protesters, not emancipative values.

Even though a lot has been written about the topic of democracy in Georgia, emancipative values and their role in democratization has been largely neglected. In addition, survey data are rarely used in analysing democracy in Georgia; As Inglehart and Welzel (2010) point out, one reason for that is “a tendency to view subjective mass orientations as volatile, relatively “soft” data” (551). However as the same authors recently showed, such claims are groundless and subjective mass orientations are as powerful predictors of democracy as any other widely used social predictors.

This article is an attempt to relate the emancipative theory of democracy as proposed by Welzel and Inglehart (2009) to the context of Georgia. The main interest of the study is to determine whether perceived economic situation on the individual level is related to specific values that conducive to democracy.

This paper consists of five main parts: an introduction, theoretical framework, methodology, analysis and discussion, and conclusion. The next section overviews modernization theories with a special focus on Inglehart and Welzel's work. This serves as a theoretical framework for this study. The third section discusses survey methodology as well as questions used to evaluate emancipative values. In the fourth part, an economic variable, age and education are correlated with emancipative values and the results are discussed. This part of the paper is broken down into three sections that focus on different aspects of emancipative values.

The results show that the theory of Inglehart and Welzel can be only partially confirmed at an individual level in Georgia. Satisfaction with life and interpersonal trust increase with the perceived economic rung, thus confirming the hypothesis, and the correlation between religion and perceived economic rung is also positive. Moreover, values regarding gender equality and tolerant attitude towards divorce are more strongly correlated with the level of education than with one's perceived economic situation. The results related to participation and autonomy are more ambiguous. On the one hand, people who perceive themselves on higher economic rungs tend to view government as an employee rather than a parent and agree that participating in politics is a civic duty – which is consistent with the theory of Inglehart and Welzel. But on the other hand, perceived economic rung is also positively correlated with obeying rules and supporting government on every occasion and is negatively correlated with being critical towards the government and participation in protests, which puts the previous results in question. This paper provides a starting point for a discussion about the methodological and theoretical issues related to applying the post materialism thesis on an individual level and emphasizes the role of education for enhancing emancipative values – which has been largely ignored by Inglehart and Welzel.

2. Modernization and democracy: revisiting theory and evidence

An early attempt to study democracy from a sociological and behavioural angle was made by Lipset (1959) and Deutsch (1961). Lipset defined some social requisites for democracy and indicated that economic development affects a country's chances to sustain democracy through changing people's goals and behaviour. At the same time, Karl Deutsch, a Czech political scientist, developed the concept of social mobilization by which he meant the process of change, whereby people break away from old commitments and traditional ways of living and become available for new patterns of socialization and behaviour. Deutsch (1961) suggested that social mobilization produces pressure for transformation of political practices by changing people's needs and increasing political participation. Both authors emphasize the role of people in the process of democratization.

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