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Date of acceptance: August 16, 2016

Date of publication: October 5, 2016

Review article

UDC 32-055.2(479.22)

THE COMPATIBILITY OF WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS AND THE PROCESS OF EURO-INTEGRATION IN THE MODERN GEORGIAN REALITY

Manana Darchashvili, PhD

Georgian Technical University, Georgia

mananadarchashvili[at]yahoo.com

Emilia Alaverdov, PhD

Georgian Technical University, Georgia

emily-78[at]mail.ru

Abstract

Nowadays, women's involvement in politics is a quite hot discussion topic among public associations and politicians. It is highlighted in various events. It is a fact that the country has to make certain legislative changes for the purpose of women's (political) activation. It will help to fulfill the international obligations, and to establish (some/additional/further) democratic principles in Georgia and accelerate the country's process of European integration at the same time. Based on the attitude of women's political engagement issue in Georgia, with the support of Georgia's Euro-integration strategy, public organizations and politicians, public awareness and the certain support of political parties, it is possible that in the nearest future the mentioned issue will be given wider resonance and it will be defined the legislative level in order to be more supported, what will add to growth of the women's engagement

Key words: Politics; Government; Women's Involvement; Quota; Euro integration

INTRODUCTION

The above mentioned issue is a quite hot topic for public associations and politicians. It is shown by the various events which are related to the growth of female representatives in the country's political and social life. However, we have to say that the existing reality is far away from the demands of a democratic state. Therefore, in Georgia, by the support of civil society, the adoption of an appropriate legislation, in order to defend the gender equality in the representative establishments and to promote women's engagement in the country's political processes is in the agenda. It will guarantee the approach to the modern legal society standards. According to the urgency of the topic in Georgia, the aim of our research is to study and analyze the existing empirical materials. The question of our research topic is: "What is the nowadays attitude towards the issue and what kind of necessary conditions have to be created for women's involvement in politics"?

As the political involvement of women is one of the main indicators of modern democracy and important detail of European partnership (it is mentioned in many program documents). According to the existing situation, the hypothesis of our work is based on the state ongoing processes to create necessary conditions which will demand the growth of women's involvement in politics.

Georgia has taken the obligation for establishing gender equality according to the international legal and political standards since 1994, when it joined to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) - the mentioned convention was adopted by UN in 1979, it entered into force in 1981 - where except the national governmental report, the alternative reports of NGO-s must be presented (at least once in every 4 years). The recommendations of the committee are worked out on the bases of their discussions. In the adopted declaration and working plan within Beijing conference in 1995, (Beijing Fourth World Conference is considered as a new step for improving women's position) where Georgia took part, among the top 12 priority sphere the women's involvement in state governance and decision making process was claimed as one of the key points. Georgia as a member of United Nation is obliged to implement the Resolution 1325 which was adopted in 2000. In the mentioned resolution, the importance of women in decision making process and the necessity of women engagement in the humanitarian and human rights missions are highlighted. One of the contributing factors for the establishment of democracy in Georgia and its development will be the women's engagement in the country's political processes and the fulfillment of the taken international and local obligations.

THE EVENTS TO PROMOTE WOMEN'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE GEORGIAN POLITICS

We have to highlight that in 2013, with the support of public sector - Georgian Parliament adopted a resolution named "The Civil Plan for Implementation of Gender Equality Policy for the Scheduled 2014-2016 Events" (Reports of Session 48. 2015), and here also one of the 8 main directions, "Gender and Politics" - was the key one. The following steps should be taken in the decision making process in order to promote the women's participation and to reach the set goals:

1. The main goal for equal participation of men and women in the political life could be achieved by:
 - a) Cooperation with political parties in order to increase the information and knowledge of the political parties about gender equality and to consider the aspects of gender equality in the political parties programs.
 - b) The cooperation of government with political parties, encouraging the implementation of the quota of women representatives according to the Georgian law in electoral structures.
 - c) To considering gender balance in the electoral list.
2. To increase the number of women in electoral structures, government needs to refine certain relevant legislation.
3. To increase the number of within the decision making process in the ministries and other institutions and to eliminate the obstacles preventing the women's promotion in higher positions.

All this speaks about the fact that in recent years here in Georgia - many discussions and events are held and it has gained a systematic character. For this purpose either local or international organizations have held various events (conferences, discussions, surveys and polls, etc.). The Georgian government tries to eradicate this problem and engage as many women as possible in political life of country and establish international standards for gender equality. The urgency of this topic is caused by the fact that we have fewer women in the parliament than other countries in our region (Reports of Round Table 2013). It is highlighted that, “Women’s involvement in the political processes strengthens the political effectiveness and expands the political agenda”. (Donadze and Kiknadze 2006). That is why many various international and local activities in Georgia are carried out, in order to eliminate these shortcomings. Not less important is that the positive sides of women’s engagement in politics are often discussed. (Khomeriki 2006). Women’s activation is supported by the civil sector too, which pays much attention in the country nowadays and advocates the gender quota since July 2014 (Gender Quota for political parties, election blocs: it was mandatory for them to have different sex representatives in the name list. According to this system, in case of parliamentary elections in the Georgian parliament there must be 38 women, e.g. it is 25% of all parliament members). The gender issue is actively discussed on governmental level. The “Amendment of Gender Equality in Georgian Legislation” according to the international legal standards is especially discussed and planned.

It has to be said that the political parties in the pre-election period paid great attention to the gender issue and mentioned that in their plans and documents. However, we can claim that they did not fulfill their promises with regard to the mentioned issue neither in Parliamentary Election 2012) nor the presidential (2013) and the local self-governmental elections (2014).

It is true that according to the results of the parliamentary election in 2012 the number of women in the Parliament increased (twice), what exceeds all the previous indicators. But still the situation leaves much to be desired. As the number of women-candidate was very low, (see: Table 1) - the use of quota for 16 voluntary election subject was - 2 women out of 10 candidates will have state funding, and will get 10 percent of supplement (regarding to the recommendations of the Venice Commission and the amendments of “The Political Coalitions Law” (28.12.2011) in order to increase women’s political activity, but this was fulfilled only by 6 political subjects out of 16. (Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions 2015).

Table 1. (Data of Ceesco, for 2012 Elections)

List	Total number of registered women 788	Total number of candidates: 2742
Proportional	729	Total percentage of women candidates 28.74%.
Majoritarian	59	

Here we have to mention that neither of the both parties - Georgian Dream and National Movement did not fulfill the norm. The electoral list presented by “National Movement” was violated at the second dozen, as for “Georgian Dream” at the top ten. By the proportional system, “National Movement” included in the electoral list 17 women out

of 155 candidates, and “Georgian Dream” 33 out of 200. Though we have to say that in the framework of the project (“Strengthening democratic institutions in Georgia”) which was financed by the Embassy of the Netherlands, they express the readiness to involve more women in the country’s political processes. But then the situation drastically changed. It must be highlighted that, the aim of the United National Movement is to “engage equal number of women and men in the country’s political life. For this reason, they need to establish measures to encourage the political parties to meet the challenges. The amendments in the Election Code represent an example of this: according to these amendments, if a party has 2 women out of 10 in his electoral list it will gain additional 10% of the state funding. The party created a new unit: Gender Equality Department. Its aim is to support gender equality in the decision making and public opinion forming process and to promoting gender equality at all levels of the country's democratic governance. The United National Movement promotes women’s engagement in the peace making process at international and local level. To support such kind of activities, a General Council is set up in the Georgian parliament by the initiative of the “United National Movement” Fraction (See: Partiebi.ge).

According to the “Georgian Dream’s” answer: “The number of female representative must grow in both directions: within the parties and in general politics as well. A women wing is set up in the coalition of “Georgian Dream”. It is considered as a strengthening mechanism of intermediate-level working group. The leader of the women’s group is a member of the party’s political council, which is a decision making body. In order to increase women’s participation in the decision making process, one can be promoted from the intermediate level to an upper one. This way the political party has a chance of reaching the desired model in a short term, which is opposite to the model “activist women and decision making men”. As for the common political process, the aim of the coalition is to support the existing legislative norm which is scheduled in the parliamentary elections list. However, a norm is only a starting point and is not a satisfactory one. One of the top-priority issues of the parties or the future national or local elections is to have more women candidates in the list. Besides, a great attention is paid to the number of majoritarian candidates, they do their best to have more women candidates there too (See: Partiebi.ge).

As we can see, despite the fact that in the program document there is little mentioned about the women’s participation, they do their best to explain orally what they have not written and promise to engage as much women as possible. During the presidential elections of 2013, in the framework of this project, the view of the presidential candidate of the “Georgian Dream” coalition partially coincides with the view of the same party when it came to the parliamentary elections of 2012.

The presidential candidate of “National Movement” - David Bakradze gave quite short answer about the gender issue he said: that he did not think that it is a good idea to accelerate the transformation of all forms of mainstreaming forms and added that, of course, “National Movement” was happy to support the engagement of more women in the country’s political life and processes. As for the presidential candidate of “Georgian Dream”, he gave a detailed speech about the above mentioned issue and said that Georgia’s indicators of women’s political activation were far behind the European one. Before the elections of 2012 the parliament had only 6% of women representatives – the lowest indicator among OSCE member states. However after the same parliamentary elections the

situation changed in a positive manner. Nevertheless, the situation still leaves much to be desired either within the national legislative bodies and local self-government or the executive power. Women constitute half of the population; therefore the democratic justice requires their participation in the decision making process to be adequate. We cannot talk about real democracy if only 6, 10 or 15% of the women are in the parliament.

Georgia can learn much from the international experience. The first to be done is to put this issue in the social and political agenda. For this purpose, the political will of the ruling party and the will of political elite in general are needed. A very important point is the public work awareness. We have to overcome the stereotypes about the role of women and create such kind of society where each woman will have a chance for self-realization. Women must be engaged in the decision making process and take leading positions. In the way of transforming Georgia into a democratic republic and a human rights-based society, women's role is priceless (Results of Comparing 2014).

It is important that, despite the fact that the women issue is in the first line of the country's agenda (regarding the 2014 self governmental elections the amount of financial incentives was increased if the party had 30% women in their name list), the situation still remained unsatisfactory during the elections regarding the local self-government and the executive institutions. Moreover, no woman has been appointed to the position of mayor or governor. Out of 84 candidates for mayor 12 governing cities, there were only 12 women nominees. Of course, they received low amount votes, and in most cases even the lowest. Here, we have to mention that the ruling coalition "Georgian Dream" named only men candidates for the position of mayor.

When discussing women's involvement in politics, critics appeal to the women's passive attitude toward the politics, and in this case we have to show such kind of statistics, that will make it easier to explain the women's role in policy making. We have to mention the fact that during the elections from 15 July 2014, first time in Georgia happens so that the voter gender was paid a great attention (the report of 2014 by the local self-governmental and executive organs, 2014). In the first round the indicators of women voters was 50.2% (745.614), as for the second round it was 53.91 (332.865) (Preliminary data 2015).

When discussing the issue it is interesting to know the situation about self-governing community governor candidates in the regions. Only 10 out of 59 regions presented women candidates. Only one woman, a candidate from "Georgian Dream" won a governor position in Tianeti region. As for the capital of the country, Tbilisi, out of 10 district governor candidates only one woman got the position and became the governor of Didube (Commission data, 2014). In the late 2014 and early 2015, women movement became very active. The slogan "More Women in Politics" was the message for the community and the government and became their aim. The President of Georgia, Giorgi Margvelashvili, announced 2015 as the women's year (See: www.ipn.ge). On January 15 2015 during the meeting in his residence, he condemned violence against women in Georgia. His announcement was well-timed in spite of the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration when all humanity set up a future plan for women equality. He claimed that the presidential administration supports the promotion of women in politics and added that he wishes that not only more women have the opportunity to serve the country and families but make high-level decisions as well (See: www.ipn.ge).

When discussing women's involvement in the political life of the country at official level it is worth mentioning the international conference "To the Gender Equality – Challenges and Opportunities in the Region of European Neighborhood" which was held in cooperation with Georgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the United Nation the capital of Georgia, Tbilisi, in 2015. The key points of the conference were: women's political and economic empowerment, elimination of violence against women and girls, and increasing the role of women in peace and security issues.

During the meeting with the participants of the above mentioned conference, the president of Georgia in his speech emphasized syntax: the government had to encourage women to be more active and give them an opportunity to do so in order to build a strong, effective and active society. (See: www.interpressnews.ge).

For this purpose the country needs to create a stable sustainable system for promotion of women. Here, he mentioned the bill about gender balance which will give women an opportunity to come to politics, became more active, create healthier governmental system which will be more sustainable and stronger. In his speech, the ex-prime minister, Irakli Garibashvili, said that they took serious steps for women's activation and hoped that the result would be shown in the next parliamentary elections. (See: www.interpressnews.ge). As for the current premier minister, Giorgi Kvirikashvili, he appreciated the conference and said that it was "a great base", and added that "the country needs to have actively involved women in politics in order to build a democratic state, have suitable politics, economics and social development". (See: www.interpressnews.ge). It is worth mentioning that Giorgi Kvirikashvili claimed that Georgia has taken the obligation and has to fulfill the 2014 recommendations of the "Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women": "The state has to set up a legally based quota for political parties to increase women representatives in local and national legislative organs" (See: www.interpressnews.ge).

It is important that in "the Parliament in 2015 two legislative initiative-proposals were registered. The first one was made by the initiative of the women's political working group (9 local non-governmental organizations were included). It was meant to increase the number of women in the political parties' lists proportionally to a mandatory ratio of 50/50 (men/women). As for the second one, it was presented by two members of the Georgian Parliament - Teimuraz Chkuaseli and Nana Keinashvili - they said that in the presented list of candidates 1 of 3 had to be a woman. We agree with the view of T. Chkuaseli and N. Keinashvili. Both proposals were accepted by the Human Rights Defense and Civil Integration Committee. It was accepted with 6 for and only 1 against. We have to say that despite the active discussions about gender equality at a legal level with regard to the protection of the international law standards – concerning the amendment of "Gender Equality Law" – and despite the great interest of the social organizations and some governmental representatives, there are still problems which could not be solved with the help of the financial aid provided by the "government". No matter the positive attitude towards the above mentioned issue, on 2 December 2015, the Legal Affairs Committee did not support the idea to be discussed in the plenary session, the amendments about "Georgia's Election Code". This plenary session was an additional event in order to ensure gender balance. According to the above mentioned bill, Georgian Election Code had to be added an extra norm.

According to the norm, each party which intended to take part in the parliamentary elections had to present proportional list, in order to keep gender balance, the number of woman representatives must be 1 out 3 quota system (that is not controversial only in Georgia; each side has its own opinion about it, of course). It would ensure to have at least 25 members of the opposite sex in the Georgian Parliament (session of Legal Issue Committee 2015). During his visit to Georgia, on 19 February, 2016, the United Nations representative for preventing the violence against women, Dubravka Simonovich (Head of European Extraordinary Committee who worked out the convention on preventing the violence against women in general and violence within the family), in her conclusion about the women's participation in political and family life, emphasized that she supported the increase of the mandatory quota to at least 30% due to the small number of women representatives in the parliament. The mentioned issue was discussed within the framework of gender equality and women strengthening in the 32nd session of the Human Rights Committee in Geneva this year. It is important that from July 1-5, 2016, for the first time in Georgia - the 25th Annual Parliamentary Assembly's Session of OSCE took place, and the topic was: "25 Years of Parliamentary Cooperation: Trust-building Dialogue". The urgency of our topic is proved by the fact that the delegates of the OSCE member states took part in the discussion about the gender equality issue in the exhibition center "Expo - Georgia", where archive photos of 5 women-parliamentarians from the period 1918-1921 were put on display.

CONCLUSION

It is a fact that despite the frequent discussions about women's engagement in the politics at current stage, the attempts of the social organizations and some of the governmental representatives were in vain. But, as far as this matter is concerned, it is possible that in the nearest future - as a result of the cooperation with the social organizations and the support of the politicians, by increasing the social awareness and with the appropriate support by the political parties – this issue could be defined at a legal level and therefore further promoted. All this will give a great opportunity to involve more women in politics.

The problem can be solved in the nearest future by a deep and precise approach to the existing reality. Here are a few recommendations:

1. The authorities have to be more responsible according to the European-integration framework and have an active cooperation with their partner countries.
2. In order to increase the social awareness of the issue, politicians, social organizations and political parties have to promote this issue actively in order to gain more support at the legislative level. It would help the indicators of women's engagement in the country's political life to grow.
3. In order to inform the society about the existing problems, non-governmental organizations and political parties should actively use the mass media as means of information dissemination.
4. With the help of the mass media create special sections with the aim to increase women's participation in political life and to raise awareness about women's rights protection.

5. Last but not least government has to introduce mandatory quota for an equal participation of women in the representative bodies. All this will enable women to influence the country's political processes.

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