

# COLOUR REVOLUTIONS REVISITED: RELATIVE DEPRIVATION – THE REASON FOR THE ROSE REVOLUTION IN GEORGIA?

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## Abstract

*The aim of this paper is to review political and material deprivation as a basis for social protest during the pre – revolution period in Georgia, within the framework of Relative Deprivation theory. The linkage between relative deprivation and the Gini coefficient, as well type of existing political regime and Soviet past is considered. The originality of this paper is conditioned by the new approach to Colour Revolutions, as previous studies are considered a precondition for comprehending social protest against rigged elections, the lack of democracy.*

*This research is based on a qualitative research methodology, the basic methodological approach being the method of the case study. Among with in – depth interviews and content analysis of academic materials, quantitative data of World Bank and Freedom House coefficients are also used. Empirical analysis proves the existence of political and material deprivation between social groups through the review of Gini coefficient data for the research period. This research shows the methodological value of considering relative deprivation in conjunction with the Gini coefficient as a more quantifiable method than existing approaches to explain the reasons for the Rose Revolution in Georgia.*

**Keywords:** colour revolutions, hybrid regime, relative deprivation, Gini coefficient

## Introduction

This paper presents research about the Colour Revolutions in post – Soviet countries and is designed to evaluate the factors which influenced society's decisions during the pre-revolution period in Georgia.

Regime change may be influenced by internal or external factors. Many current studies on this topic review the institutional factors which contribute to regime change, while others focus on social factors, such as social transformations.

According to some researchers, *the primary factor influencing Colour Revolutions in Serbia, Georgia, and Ukraine was a fraudulent national election, not a war, an economic crisis, an external shock or international factor, or the death of a dictator* (McFaul, 2005, p.2).

Other researchers add that, *the opposition's strength, built on the foundations of a free media, pluralistic civil society and open society, was*

*sufficient to mobilize impressive crowds so as to show their outrage at the attempts to tamper with election results* (Polese and Beachain, 2011, p.118-119).

From the abovementioned viewpoint, this paper reviews the case of Georgia's Rose Revolution, taking into account events and conditions in Georgia from 1991 to 2003. The Gini coefficient is used to measure material deprivation. Relative Deprivation theory provides a theoretical framework, which explains society's motivation to change the regime taking into consideration the existence of political and material deprivation as causes of social protest. Other contributing factors are the recollection in post-Soviet societies of past experience with a formally egalitarian regime, and an existing political regime type which allows social protest to bring about the desired results.

The aim of this paper is to evaluate society's role in regime change during the Rose Revolution in Georgia. The innovativeness of the model of this research paper stems from the fact that it is an attempt to explain the issue differently from the existing approaches – by using quantifiable variables.

This paper is divided into two parts: one theoretical and the other empirical.

In the theoretical part I will review the contents of academic sources, and will describe the theoretical frame of the research (Relative Deprivation theory); poverty (material deprivation) and inequality (relative deprivation) will be separated; I will show the link between the existing regime type and regime change.

The empirical part of the research will be dedicated to Georgia case study, considering the role of political elites (acting government and opposition), civil society, non – governmental institutions, taking into consideration the theoretical frame and measuring coefficients of the research.

In conclusion, the hypothesis will be confirmed or rejected.

As for the methodology, the aim of this paper is to theoretically and empirically answer an important assumption: did social protest as a result of political and material deprivation lead to regime change? As the paper does not cover verification of alternative explanations, one methodological limitation of the research is the analysis of the only case through two coefficients, but the theory aims to pay attention to interpretation and not to confirm the existence of any theoretical model.

For data analysis the following techniques are used: analysis of primary sources – World Bank and Freedom House data; secondary sources analysis – content analysis of scientific literature, not only in the theoretical frame, but also in specific cases; in – depth interviews.

Relative Deprivation theory is formulated as testable hypotheses. This approach enables empirical verification of how well theory explains social protest caused by political and material deprivation and its influence on regime change. The level used for analysis is the macro level – society, as the most relevant level for this type of behavioural explanation.

### **Relative Deprivation and Social Protest**

Relative deprivation has been linked to *definable and measurable social and psychological reactions, such as different types of alienation*” (Durant and Christian (1990)) by social psychologists and to social protests, discrimination, feelings of injustice and subjective ill-being (Olson (1986)). It has also been used to interpret measures of inequality and income redistribution (see for instance Yitzhaki (1979) and Duclos (2000)) (Duclos and Gregoire, 2001, p.2).

*Relative Deprivation measures material, political, or social deprivation that are relative rather than absolute. The term is linked to poverty and social exclusion. This concept is important for both behavior and attitudes, and participation in collective action. Some who suffer from status disequilibrium, in which their success in some areas is not matched by equal success in other areas, actually become withdrawn, alienated from the system they may silently blame, doubtful of their own personal abilities, and beset by feelings of hopelessness regarding theirs and the system's future. These are not, however, the persons who tend to join protests. What little empirical data are available point to the fact that persons who do join such protests have quite high hopes for the future; that compared to those of similar status who do not participate, those who do participate have a higher regard for their own personal capabilities and personal efficacy* (Arora, 1971, p. 347).

If considering the politics of the country within the research period, political participation in Georgia was restricted by the corrupted state system. For research purposes, *personal income should be considered as a coefficient of the individual's ability to consume commodities, as each unit of income represents a different bundle of commodities that a person is able to consume* (Yitzhaki, 1979, p.321-322).

We shall consider income as the object of relative deprivation.

Relative Deprivation theory explains the motivation of society during the pre-revolutionary period in Georgia. According to the aforementioned theory, *relative deprivation is defined as a perception of difference by the person between expectations (welfare, what a person believes he/she deserves) and reality when comparing themselves to others* (Gurr, 2005, p.30-31).

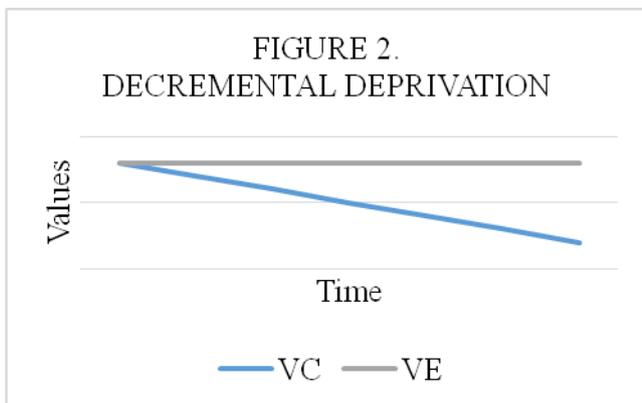
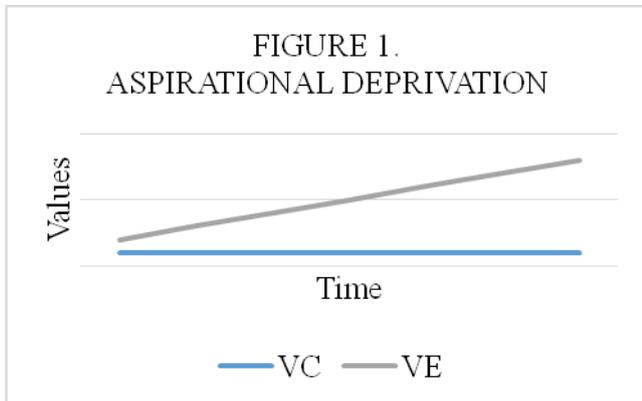
*A person is relatively deprived of X when: he does not have X; he sees another person or other people, who may consider themselves as having X unexpectedly (whether or not this is or will be in fact the case); he wants X; he sees it feasible to have X* (Yitzhaki, 1979, p.321).

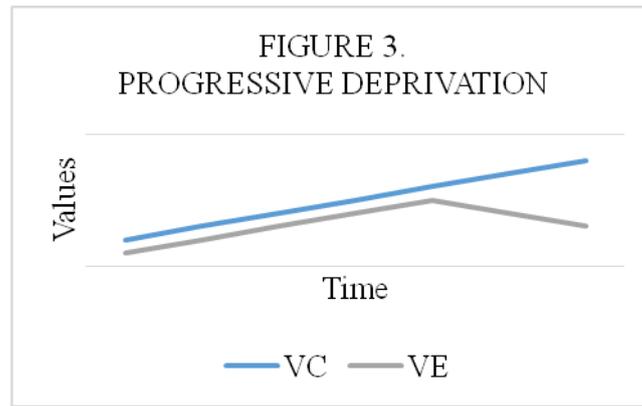
Gurr posits that *relative deprivation is the anger or distress that results from a discrepancy between "should" and "is."* More formally, his central proposition is:

$$RD = \frac{VE - VC}{VE}$$

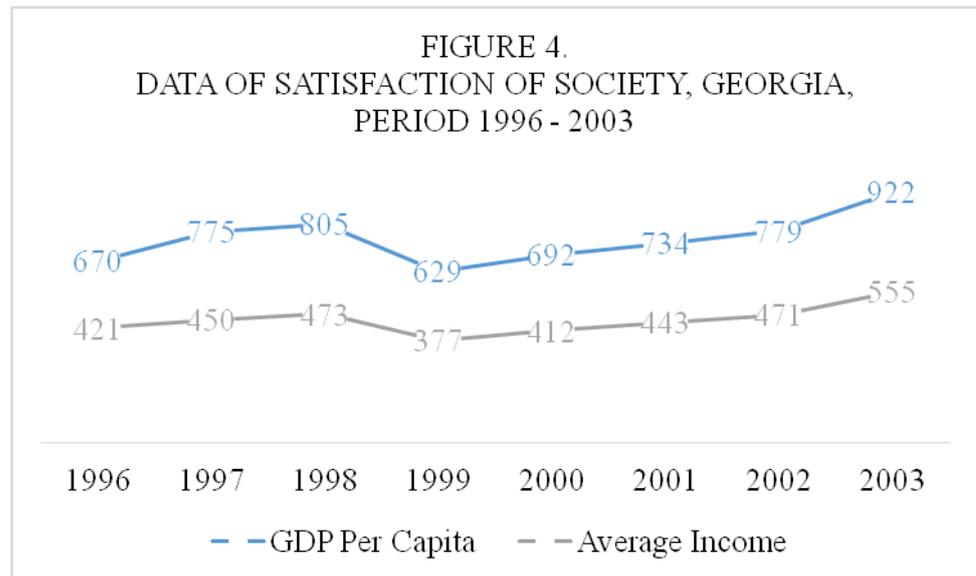
Where *RD* stands for "relative deprivation," *VE* stands for "value expectations," and *VC* stands for "value capabilities." Value expectations are the goods and opportunities, which people want and to which they feel entitled; value

capabilities are the goods and opportunities which they have or think it feasible to attain. Gurr identifies three patterns of deprivation: aspirational [Figure 1], decremental [Figure 2], and progressive [Figure 3]. Aspirational deprivation occurs when value capabilities remain constant over time while value expectations increase. Decremental deprivation occurs when value capabilities decrease over time while value expectations remain constant. In progressive deprivation, value capabilities decrease while value expectations increase (Crosby, 1979, p.107).





Based on data of satisfaction of society in Georgia for the 1996 – 2003 period [Figure 4], we can conclude that the type of economic deprivation is progressive.



For research purposes, average income is used as data on society satisfaction. The area between the GDP Per Capita and average income lines is an area of collective relative deprivation. The average income coefficient is measured by the formula:

$$\mu = (1 - G)$$

Where  $\mu$  - is average income coefficient,  $G$  - is Gini coefficient.

Average income is a multiplication of GDP Per Capita and average income coefficient ( $\mu$ ).

*The Gini Coefficient can be approached from either of two directions. First, it can be regarded as the salient summary statistic of the Lorenz Curve of the*

*income distribution. The Lorenz Curve, to be denoted  $L(u)$ , is the proportion of the total income of the economy that is received by the lowest  $100u\%$  of income receivers. From this point of view, the Gini Coefficient is the area between a given Lorenz Curve and the Lorenz Curve for an economy in which everyone receives the same income, expressed as a proportion of the area under the curve for the equal distribution of income (Dorfman, 1979, p.147).*

GDP Per capita and Gini coefficient data are taken from the World Bank database (World Bank Page).

In analyzing the underlying causes of the French Revolution, De Tocqueville noted that the greatest dissatisfaction manifested itself ironically in those areas and among those sectors which had seen a sharp economic improvement in the 1780s. More contemporarily, Olson advanced a thesis, which argued that, *economic growth may paradoxically increase the number of those who become poor and/or dissatisfied* (Olsun, 1993, p.64).

While the country's average income is rising quickly the median income may drop as a result of an unequal division of the expanding economic pie. Even if the majority of the public enjoys rising income many or even most may lose out in relative terms. This is especially true when rapid growth is accompanied by high inflation.

*The phenomenon of rapid economic growth can cause economic class disruption as well as the breakdown of traditional institutions and behavior patterns – all leading to socio – political instability* (Lehman-Wilzig, 1985, p.64).

The current model of explaining a society's protest foresees the existence of the three following prerequisites: conditions which are the reasons for society's dissatisfaction; conditions that assure the risk to society of political protest is justified; and conditions occurring when interdependence between the actions of a dissatisfied society and government abilities neutralize society's protest. It should be mentioned that the individual is indifferent to the income transfers among those who are poorer than he is and/or richer than he is.

According to the Freedom House Nation in Transit report, the democracy scores and regime ratings are based on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the highest level of democratic progress and 7 the lowest. The democracy scores and regime ratings are calculated according to the electoral process in country, civil society, independent media, national democratic governance, local democratic governance development, judicial framework and independence, and corruption levels. The following political regime types are considered: Consolidated Democracy; Semi – Consolidated Democracy; Transitional Government or Hybrid Regime; Semi – Consolidated Authoritarian Regime; Consolidated Authoritarian Regime (Freedom House Page).

The Gini coefficient measures the extent to which the distribution of income or consumption expenditure among individuals or households within an economy deviates from a perfectly equal distribution. A Gini coefficient of 0 represents perfect equality, while a coefficient of 100 implies perfect inequality (World Bank Page).

To simplify the model, the attitudes of the political elites and civil society will be reviewed, while the question of how to evaluate the role of the third actor - the middle class - will be overridden, because when taking into consideration the country's development parameters (according to the research - Gini coefficient), the middle class did not exist and could not influence the political environment. Taking into consideration the research interests and in order to be more precise, the term "deprivation" should be considered as both absolute deprivation (poverty) and relative deprivation.

*Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the type of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or are at least widely encouraged or approved, in the societies to which they belong. Their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities* (Duclos, 2001, p.1).

Taking into consideration current research interests, it is not important to separate social groups under absolute and relative deprivation. Both groups had sufficient motivation to rebel against the existing government, but according to the Gini coefficient data, which reflects relative deprivation in numbers, the part of society with a higher income than the average will be overlooked, as they could not influence political processes.

Once the basic theoretical assumptions and concepts have been defined and the main arguments discussed in advance, the principal task which has to be performed is to see whether the empirical work confirms the proposed hypothesis. The remaining part of this paper will revolve around this task.

### **Political Situation In Georgia (1991 – 2003)**

#### **Review of Alternative Explanations**

The research is based on scientific literature about the definition of political regimes and specificities of the post-Communist political systems, interviews with professors collected in Georgia and Ukraine and Romania during visits to Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, the University of Bucharest, and University Babes-Bolyai. Through primary sources which describe the ongoing situation in Georgia, considering the chronological frame, the theoretical frame and model will be described, and World Bank and Freedom House primary sources will be used which pertain to research coefficients and materials and describe calculation rules.

There exist several hypotheses about the requirements of a democratic transition. *Seymour Martin Lipset mentions that economic development is essential; Samuel Huntington and Ronald Inglehart name common cultural characteristics; Fareed Zakaria and Russell Bova underline the liberal regime experience, even under colonial rule; Robert Putnam outlines social capital and trust; Adam Przeworski argues that the most important is the growth of income equality. Everyone agrees that amongst democracies, some level of shared political*

*values and loyalties are needed, which is basic for political agreements on common rules. Without dialogue and negotiation within some recognized options, democracy will be temporary suspended, as Hobsbawm mentions (Jones, 2013, p.20).*

In the case of Georgia, political segregation, long-term absence of statehood, and a civil society fragmented according to personal loyalty led to the weakening of national society.

*By 2003, Georgia seemed to be headed for, if it had not already reached, the status of a “failed state.” That year, the influential Corruption Perceptions Index maintained by Transparency International (TI) ranked Georgia among the world’s most corrupt countries (124th out of 133 surveyed). The index is compiled using surveys of businesspeople and others, with the goal of naming what are thought to be the most corrupt places to carry on operations. The dim view of Georgia expressed in TI’s index put that country in the same dismal vicinity as Angola, Azerbaijan, and Tajikistan – all notorious hotbeds of corruption (Kupatadze, 2016, p.110).*

*The two prerequisites required for a social rebellion are: firstly, political institutions are incapable of providing channels for the participation of new social forces in politics and of the new elites in government, and secondly, the desire of social forces, currently excluded from politics, to participate therein. Inclusion desire arises from the group’s perception, that symbolic or material gains can achieve only by pressing its demands in the political sphere. Ascending or aspiring groups and rigid or inflexible institutions are the effects of which revolutions are made (Huntington, 2006, p.274-275).*

The academic materials on which this research is based provide characterizations of hybrid regimes. The materials mentioned above are valuable for research, because they explain the specificity of transitional regime politics. “Third wave of democratization”, by Samuel Huntington, defines the promoting and impeding of the factors of democratic transformation in post-Soviet countries. He argues that political elites are the main decision makers. Michael McFoul outlines the role of political elites and does not regard Colour Revolutions as a precondition of democratization.

For the data interpretation, it is important to analyze accompanying political and social factors in the countries in question. Some political scientists argue that countries with an authoritarian political regime give less opportunity for society’s protests to bring about desired results (Authors’ interview with Haran Olexiy).

For this purpose, data of Freedom House Nation in Transit report will be reviewed. According to political scientists’ opinions, social dissatisfaction was caused by the unequal distribution of economic welfare. The rigged election also contributed to society’s dissatisfaction (Authors’ interview with Ivan Gomza).

*Opposition and nongovernmental organizations managed to assure the society that political protest would bring about the desired result – a change of regime. In the case of Georgia and Ukraine, their existing regimes (Shevardnadze,*

*Kuchma) enabled public protest to bring desired results, which was not allowed in Belarus by Lukashenko (Polese and Beachain, 2011, p.128-129).*

*The main factors leading to success were also acknowledged: the activity of the civil society, which with international support, managed to monitor the election process, the creation of a broad oppositional front, which used non-violent tactics; the emphasis on the issue of social justice helped to overcome anti-western stereotypes and the polarizing strategy of the regime; international condemnation of the falsifications and the West's demand to renounce the use of force; and the roundtable with the EU and OSCE's mediation (Haran, 2012, p.336).*

A Professor at Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, Haran Olexiy argues that absence of opposition strengthens civil society (Authors' interview with Haran Olexiy).

### **Results of Gini Coefficient Data Review**

Information about the Gini coefficient in Georgia as a measurement of economic deprivation in numbers has existed since 1996, but a short historical overview of the period between 1991 and 1995 is important to comprehend ongoing political processes in the country and the grounds for future political choices.

According to the World Bank database, the Gini coefficient varied between 37 – 42% during the research period. The highest index of inequality was reported in 1997 – 42% (World Bank Page).

As for the other post-Communist countries where social protest led to regime change, in Ukraine, the Gini coefficient varied between 28-39%, and in the Kyrgyz republic between 28 – 53%.

It is crucial to review accompanying political and social factors, while interpreting Gini coefficient data. As it was mentioned, countries with an authoritarian political regime give less opportunity to for society's protest to bring about desired results. According to the Freedom House "Nations in Transit" report, during the pre-revolutionary period in Georgia and Ukraine existing regime type was transitional (hybrid), while in the Kyrgyz republic it was semi-consolidated authoritarianism. None of those countries were rated as consolidated authoritarians (Freedom House Page).

In other post-Soviet countries, Gini coefficient distribution was as follows (as calculated median, for the period 1991-2003): Azerbaijan – 18%, Belarus – 30%, Tajikistan – 33%, Kazakhstan – 33%, Uzbekistan – 36%, Armenia – 36%, Moldova – 36%, Turkmenistan – 38%, Russia – 40%. The political regime type in Azerbaijan, Belarus, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Russia is consolidated authoritarianism, in Armenia semi-consolidated authoritarianism, and in Moldova between transitional (hybrid) regime and semi-consolidated authoritarianism.

Corruption in Georgia for the pre-revolutionary period can be proven through the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) of Transparency International (TI). Scores range from 0 (highly corrupt) to 10 (very clean). Data exists since 1999,

according to which in 1999 Georgia occupied the 84<sup>th</sup> place among 99 countries (score 2.3), in 2002 85<sup>th</sup> place among 102 countries (score 2.4), and in 2003 124<sup>th</sup> place among 133 countries (score 1.8) (Transparency International Page).

### **Georgia for the Period 1991-2003**

After the restoration of the independence of Georgia, the country's policy may be divided into several main phases. The first phase began when Zviad Gamsakhurdia came to power and the independence of the country was declared, and continued until 1992. The second phase matches the international recognition of the independence of Georgia and the return of Eduard Shevardnadze. It continued until 2003. However, during Shevardnadze's rule one may allocate two sub-periods. The first is 1992-1995, when the country lost the war in Abkhazia and joined the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), while the second sub-period begins with the adoption of the 1995 Constitution and continues until 2003. When Gamsakhurdia was in power, Georgia was not recognized by the international society as an independent, sovereign state. Gamsakhurdia's ruling period in internal, as well as in foreign affairs, was characterized by populism. This political doctrine exhibited two opposite phenomena of democracy. The first, Gamsakhurdia's populist dependence on internal and foreign affairs, at first, gave him the possibility to gain society's support, and, the second, his ruling methods, soon brought the country's administration to the verge of authoritarianism.

*According to Ronald Grigor Suny, Gamsakhurdia's rising authoritarianism contributed to an estrangement, not only among ethnic non-Georgians, but also among some leaders of the national movement (Suny, 2000, p.163).*

*In 1992, after the collapse of Gamsakhurdia's government, Shevardnadze came back to Georgia. During this period, Russia's coercive diplomacy was conducted in several directions. An economic blockade was carried out with the termination of natural gas and telephone connections. Russia also rejected the allocation of credit, while the other former republics of the Soviet Union allowed borrowing (Gvalia, 2013, p.51-52).*

For three years, from 1992 to 1995, the interregnum (chaotic interim government) was between Gamsakhurdia's radicalism and Shevardnadze's mainstream policy, which was carried out with the participation of elite groups. But the interim government marked a time of disorder, which was characterized by the presence of strong paramilitary forces, foreign intervention and the military crisis in South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

In November 1993, the "Citizens Union of Georgia" was established as a new political party chaired by Shevardnadze which propagated civil consent and the rule of law. The party aimed to unite communists and young post-communists, and quickly turned into a mechanism for distributing political and economic benefits among the supporters of the new regime, a political process served private satisfaction and responded to the pressure of interest groups.

Since 1995, a new era in Georgia began with the adoption of the constitution, ensuring stability in the country. Membership of the Council of Europe (1999) commenced during the second period, and was regarded as an important recognition of Georgia's European orientation. In November 2002, at the NATO Prague summit, Shevardnadze declared his country's willingness to join the alliance.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Georgia, which had just declared its independence, became embroiled in a civil war after an ethnic-territorial conflict began in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The civil war ended when Gamsakhurdia left the country. After Shevardnadze came to power, the political situation became more stable, and it was possible to receive international and financial aid and support, but the country was left in a poor economic condition. The lack of the rule of law allowed corrupt public service officials to receive financial benefits by using service status to solicit bribes. The discrepancies in distributing welfare among society's groups increased.

*The country was evaluated as a "public order with limited access", where participation in political process was blocked by poverty, inequality and system hierarchy (Jones, 2013, p.151).*

Georgia was characterized by political and economic polarization. Georgian citizens, especially those from poor neighbourhoods or living outside Tbilisi, were banished from national politics. The governments since 1991 failed to fill that gap which existed between society and elites.

Political sociology defines power as an ability of an individual or social group to pursue a course of action. In analysing political action, chiefly struggles for power, we need to look primarily at the activities of social groups, rather than at the actions of individuals. There is a link between political culture, economic development and the construction of successful democracy. Political values and norms, especially in a dynamic period of change, affect legitimacy, the party system, the degree of participation and political conflict.

*The society's focus, on the one hand, is on economic issues, such as the fight against price increases, and on the other hand, on post materialistic values, self-expression, civil rights, protection and promotion of public participation in government decision-making (Bottomore, 1993, p.30).*

During the second period of Shevardnadze's governance, leading Western countries played an important role in the transition period. Georgia received the most support per capita from the USA of all ex – Soviet Republics. Despite the large amount of aid, most of the population was still living below the poverty level. In recent years, the policy implemented in Georgia was corrected. *Western states were defeated in Georgia, as they did not achieve their objectives. They were not able to create a stable economy and a democratic state. The IMF plan, created for former Soviet republics, was almost Bolshevik, one might say, taking into consideration its size and unbreakable conviction, which contributed to political instability and economic downturn, even though it had been developed to prevent*

*the above. In addition, it exacerbated tensions between economic and political liberalization (Jones, 2013, p.19).*

*Political inequality is almost an inherent aspect of political instability (Huntington, 1993, p.24-25).*

*One must take into consideration the external support which complemented a network of NGOs and political activists ready to act in a non-traditional way – they challenged the authority of the regime and thought of the best way to adapt the imported theories of action to their situation. This political opportunity boosted civic activism and was the basis for national and international networks aiming to challenge the authorities through domestic and global channels and set up a network of trainers in civil disobedience, who are now operating worldwide in relative secrecy. During the pre-revolution period, the main mistake committed by the regime in Georgia was to have built a weak coercive apparatus. This went along with the opposition's success in finding a charismatic leader, mobilizing the electorate, its ability to learn from the Serbians and apply their experience to the Georgian context, as well as the coordination with security forces to avoid repression (Polesse and Beachain, 2011, p.128-129).*

It should be mentioned that the majority of Georgians relied on the leader's personal courage, influence and financial resources, which are an obstacle to political stability and economic development.

To summarize research on this period, it should be mentioned that it was a defining course for foreign policy, which shaped the country's policy priorities in the following period. However, it did not overcome political and material deprivation, corruption and the absence of the rule of law, which may become a precondition for public protests.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of this paper was to evaluate society's role in the change of government during the Rose Revolution in Georgia in the framework of Relative Deprivation theory, relying on the Gini coefficient.

The summarizing task, divided into two parts, will reconnect the theoretical conclusions and generalize political processes.

In the empirical part of the paper, it has become clear that Relative Deprivation theory adequately explains the research hypothesis, according to which a high level of political and material deprivation became the reason for society's dissatisfaction, as Georgia was a post-Soviet country, with a more or less egalitarian society. The existing regime allowed social protest to bring about the desired result - regime change - considering the theoretical assumption that countries with authoritarian political regime give less opportunity for society's protest to bring about the desired result.

The calculation of the collective relative deprivation gap between average income and society satisfaction shows that the existing material deprivation was sufficient to trigger social protest.

Corruption and deprivation of political participation between the society groups contributed to the formation of the nongovernmental sector. Western-educated Georgian citizens, whose participation in decision making was restricted by the corrupted state system, managed to assure society, who experienced material deprivation and for whom, taking into consideration Soviet past, inequality was unacceptable, that political protest would cause regime change.

As a conclusion with regard to the empirical part, several considerations can be made: together with political and material deprivation, there were other factors that influenced the former, such as the lack of the rule of law, corruption and the rigged election. During the evaluation of foreign influence, it is important to mention the support for strengthening the capacity of non-state actors, which had an important role in mobilizing society. The acting authority let the social protest bring the desired result – the change of regime.

Furthermore, it should be mentioned that, *Over twelve years, Gamsakhurdia's and Shevardnadze's policies brought segregation to society and did not contribute to the reduction of the economic and ideological gap between social groups, nor could they ensure wider social participation in political decision-making, but if we take into account the number of elections held in Georgia since its independence, there were external signs of social engagement* (Jones, 2013, p.30).

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