

**‘Georgian Way’ of Policy Advocacy:  
Non-state Actors’ Influence on Public Policy in Georgia  
A Comparative Analysis of Policy Advocacy under the United  
National Movement’s and Georgian Dream’s Governance**

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## **Abstract**

Georgia has often been the target of interest for public policy scholars, however, the ‘Georgian way of policy advocacy’, its peculiarities in modern Georgia, one of the post-Soviet country, is less explored. The research article aims to examine the relationship between the success of policy advocacy in Georgia initiated by non-state actors and the factors contributing their success. Thus, the article presents 16 cases of policy advocacy during 2003-2019, under governance of leading parties: The United National Movement and the Georgian Dream and provides the comparative analysis on advocacy achievements, opportunities and challenges.

According to the key findings of research, the consistency of undertaken actions, sound strategy and argumentation, heterogeneity of the advocacy group as well as a high level of internationalization are important elements for achieving success by non-state actors during the advocacy process. However, the mentioned elements are often not the ultimate determinants for getting the intended results. The main factors of success in Georgia turned to be a so-called ‘window of opportunity’ and its timely application for reaching the targets. The study also confirmed that in order to achieve a positive dynamic in the advocacy process, the influence of so-called ‘policy entrepreneur’ was essential under the rule of the both political parties.

In contrast to the world trend, another interesting point was the linkage of advocacy success to the changing of status-quo. Namely, as research data confirmed, the most of Georgian cases of policy advocacy were successful, where the coalition was in favor of changing the status-quo.

**Key Words:** Policy Advocacy, Window of Opportunity, Non-state actors, Policy Entrepreneur, Status-quo power.

## Introduction

The Public Policy studies have extensively reviewed the processes of drafting the policy agenda and its implementation. The various policy researchers provide the comprehensive analysis of how this or that particular issue appears on the agenda of the ruling party, how the state policy changes, what methods and mechanisms are used in the political process to discuss particular points, *etc.* (Baumgartner and Jones 1993; Cobb and Elder 1983; Downs 1972; Kingdon 1984).

The issue of engagement of non-state actors in the process of public policy development and the policy implementation is extremely actual for Georgia as for the post-Soviet country being on the path of democratic development for the last decades. The EU – Georgia Association Agreement, signed with the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and the Member States (2014), among other commitments, also defines the obligations for Georgian Government to pursue a participatory, accountable, transparent public policy development process in the country. It should be noted, that the pre-election programs of Georgian Dream, the current ruling party - (Parliamentary elections of 2012, 2016) also emphasize the importance of participatory, open governance policy by active engagement of the civil society. GD had a vivid commitment to support the non-state actors' participation in shaping the policy agenda as well as the decision-making process. Thus, there is a great interest from practitioners, from the national and international scientific community towards exploring the non-state actors' participation in the process of public policy development.

Despite of a number of scholarly articles and researches on Georgian practice of the policy advocacy, there are some uncompleted, less studied topics that need further research. Among them, there is a particularly interesting how advocacy processes and their outcomes change under the rule of different political parties. Consequently, the said comparative analysis will make a significant contribution to a better understanding of the policy advocacy trends in Georgia and enrich the existing studies from different prism.

Thus, the purpose of the article is to present a key findings of comparative analysis concerning the degree of success of policy advocacy initiated by non-state actors and the dependence of policy change to particular factors. It examines the composition of the advocacy coalition, its quantitative and structural forms, advocacy strategies and argumentation, the level of internationalization and the role of the policy entrepreneur in the advocacy process at different periods of UNM and GD's governance in Georgia.

## Literature review

Scientific literature offers a variety of definitions for public policy. This article applies Thomas Dye's definition, according to which public policy is "*anything that a government chooses to do or not to do*" (Dye, 1972, p.2). Focus on this definition derives from the fact that the article applies the term 'public policy' to those actions of the Georgian government that are implemented in response to advocacy efforts of non-state actors for changing the existing policies or maintaining the *status-quo*.

Although Dye refers to a government as the executor of public policy, he highlights the major role that non-state actors play in the process of policy implementation. The term 'non-state actors' may be applied to businesses, CSOs, trade unions, as well as diverse groups that take interest (are stakeholders) in specific policies (Howlett & Cashore, 2014).

The term used in this article non-state actors covers the above-mentioned groups that participate in public policy development and implementation processes and conduct conscious and targeted activities to maintain or change the *status-quo*. The team of authors applies the blanket term 'policy advocacy' (hereinafter advocacy) to [the unity of] actions performed by non-state actors to achieve the desirable public policy outcomes.

The term 'advocacy' is frequently used in discussions of policy changes in diverse research papers (e.g. Baumgartner et al, 2009; Jenkins, Leicht, and Wendt, 2006). Notwithstanding the absence of a single and universally agreed formal definition of advocacy, the term always refers to actions implemented by an individual group to achieve their policy goals.

**The article defines advocacy as targeted and deliberate activities that are implemented to change concrete public policies or maintain the *status-quo*.**

All authors usually highlight various details and characteristics while discussing the success of an advocacy process. Young and Quinn (Young & Quinn, 2012) examine differences and meanings of advocacy strategies. They also distinguish four types thereof [advocacy strategies]: 1) grassroots activism; 2) media campaign; 3) lobbying; 4) Advising. Authors strongly believe that if diversified, several types of strategies are in place, there is a greater chance that the government takes into consideration the position of the advocacy group (Young & Quinn, 2012).

The theory of advocacy coalition framework (AFC) developed by Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith suggests that the degree of internationalization may also be a variable to determine the success

of an advocacy campaign. Internationalization is defined as a potential impact international actors may have on internal policy making processes. For this article, internationalization is measured in terms of the following three indicators: (1) international dimension (2) international obligation/commitments, and (3) search for the best practice.

Interestingly, Kingdon suggests a model of ‘window of opportunity’ as an opportunity for advocates and supporters of new proposals to achieve desired policy outcomes (change) or advance issues of their choice on the policy agenda (Kingdon, 1995). While describing a policy change, the author focuses on the connection of three major streams: 1) problems 2) politics and 3) policies. In Kingdon’s view, the alignment of the above-mentioned streams creates a window of opportunity, while the actors who advocate for the implementation of specific changes are referred to as ‘policy entrepreneurs.’ Vital characteristics and resources for policy entrepreneurs include the following: 1) ability to make a statement and be heard (make one’s proposals properly heard). They should have the right position of power for making relevant decisions, expertise, and an ability to talk to politicians concerning the specific topics; 2) negotiation skills and having a good network of persons with political power, which includes mastering a combination of political know-how and technical expertise; and 3) persistency or consistence of behaviour when all possible platforms and outlets are employed in the advocacy process.

Diversity of theories about public policy change clearly demonstrates that the scholarly circles have not yet come to an agreement on this issue. Some researchers believe that policy change can be assessed against the *status-quo* change (Beland & Waddan, 2012). Others tend to measure the change of policy course by the fulfilment of demands of non-state advocates of a policy (Baumgartner & Jones, 1993).

Incremental model proposed by Charles Lindblom agrees with the opinions of the former group of researchers and the definition of policy change as a cumulative effect of periodically made minor changes (Deegan, 2017).

Authors Beland and Waddan also note that policy change is more related to *status-quo* modification rather than to its fundamental change. Modification is evidenced in institutional terms on the one hand (the degree of impact that institutional changes make), and, on the other - in wide economic, social, and political environments. In their opinion, changes are usually incremental and prompted by the above-mentioned factors (Beland & Waddan, 2012).

As opposed to the aforementioned view, the theory of punctuated equilibrium, developed by Baumgartner and Jones, highlights that political processes, notwithstanding their usual stability and incrementalism, still undergo major changes as authorities bow to pressure from non-state actors from time to time (James *et al* 2006). Moreover, they claim that a long-running advocacy campaign executed and sustained by advocates of change, if successful, will finally result in radical reversal of policy and not merely incremental changes (Macharashvili *et al*, 2015).

Although advocates and supporters of Punctuated equilibrium view change as a radical alteration to the *status-quo*, they actively discuss dividing the achieved changes in three major categories: ‘*major*’, ‘*moderate*’/incremental and ‘*zero*’ changes (Baumgartner *et al*, 2009). Based on this categorization, the level of policy change directly correlates with the success of policy advocacy process.

## **Methodology**

In analyzing advocacy processes during the rule of the United National Movement (UNM), the authors of the article use the key findings of the publication by Georgian scholars: Dr. Nani Macharashvili, Ekaterine Basilaia and Nodar Tangiashvili, who studied the public policy, policy communication and public opinion formation issues under the research project ‘*Policy Advocacy Success in Georgia: The Role and Limitations of NGOs in Influencing Public Policy*’ (Macharashvili *et al*, 2015). The authors of the present article share the basic methodology and the format of study applied by the above-mentioned scholars. They rely on their approaches in studying the factors of advocacy processes and their implementation during the rule of UNM. While analysing the Policy Advocacy in the period of the Georgian Dream’s (GD) Governance, the authors use the key findings of their own research project, conducted under the Social Sciences PhD Programme of the Georgian Institution of Public Affairs (GIPA, 2019-2020). Both studies applied the qualitative research methods including the case studies, in-depth interviews, focus group and secondary literature analysis. In total, the article presents comparative analysis of 8 cases of policy advocacy during the UNM’s authority and analysis of 8 cases with high-publicity features, conducted during the GD’s governance. The first eight cases (UNM) refer to different policy areas such as *human rights, media, political parties and the electoral system*. Selection of cases during UNM can be characterized by levels of the policy changes, i.e.: in 3 of them the advocacy process ended with a major change, in 3 cases actors achieved only incremental changes, and in 2 cases there was a zero change. As for the

selection of the cases during GD's period, it was accomplished from 4 thematic groups including *human rights, health-care, cultural heritage, and civil society*. Each thematic group had 2 types of cases with different outcomes of policy changes, which is - one case with successful and another one with failure or the less successful results.

The authors raise the following research questions:

- 1) What is the relationship between the success of policy advocacy in Georgia, initiated by non-state actors (1) and the factors (2) such as: a) the composition / structure of the advocacy group; b) strategy and argumentation; c) Internationalisation.
- 2) What were the similarities and differences between advocacy processes and their outcomes during the governance of different ruling parties, i.e.: UNM and GD.

Within the Article, **the policy advocacy is defined as an independent variable**. It's operationalised by the structure of non-state actors interested in change / or maintenance of *status-quo* (composition, size; thematic diversity), by the strategies used in advocacy (lobbying, advise, grassroots activism, media campaign) and argumentation, as well as the internationalisation component (the mode and quality of international actors' engagement). **The policy change is defined as a dependent variable** and degree of policy change to meet the requirements of non-state actors is used as a measurement of the policy advocacy success. Thus, the following types/levels of policy change are determined and applied:

***Zero change*** – characterize the outcomes obtained through policy advocacy by non-state actors, where there is a complete failure of the advocacy group to succeed, there is no change in the *status-quo* and the advocacy group does not achieve the set goals and objectives at all.

***Moderate / incremental change*** - describes the results achieved on the basis of the policy advocacy process initiated and implemented by non-state actors, during which the advocacy group had only partial satisfaction with the required changes.

***Major change*** – refers to the result achieved on the basis of the policy advocacy process initiated and implemented by non-state actors, during which the coalition and its individual members achieved the vast majority or full package of the requested changes.

## Analysis

### **Policy Advocacy Processes Initiated by Non-state Actors During the Ruling of the United National Movement**

As mentioned above, when analyzing advocacy cases during the rule of the UNM, the article mainly relies on the survey conducted in 2015 by N. Macharashvili, E. Basilaia and N. Tangiashvili in which 8 specific cases of policy advocacy are discussed by non-state actors (For a brief description of the cases, find Appendix 1).

There are two distinguished phases of policy advocacy by the non-state actors during the rule of the UNM - (1) 2003-2007 and (2) 2007-2012, where the success of the advocacy process was defined by different characteristics. During the first period, public policy-making was rigid and the government was less open to alternative ideas; as for the second phase, as a result of the political crisis of 2007, the government, due to the threat of losing control, used to pay more attention to the opposite political discourse and the parties. According to the authors, the most important intermediate variable during both periods was the political context. It should be noted that by the case analysis covering the both periods, it was revealed that the process of advocacy in support of the *status-quo* is not more likely to succeed, as it is common in policy theory (Macharashvili et al, 2015).

The analysis of advocacy cases during the governance of UNM demonstrated, that well-arranged structure of advocacy and heterogeneity of groups were characteristics of successful advocacy processes. When advocacy was limited in the number of participating organizations or individuals and had a very narrow technical focus, the government was less responsive to pressure, than when the coalition brought together many local and international organizations and government officials. However, according to the authors, as a result of case analysis, desired outcome can be achieved regardless of the size of the policy advocacy group. In all eight cases discussed in the study of Macharashvili and co-authors, the parties involved in the advocacy process were heterogeneous. However, this factor was important in 5 cases, and only two of them had the significant policy changes (On granting LEPL status to religious organizations and LGTB-friendly Criminal Code of Georgia), whilst three of them resulted incremental changes ("Must Carry / Must Offer", Political Union of Citizens and amendments of the Electoral Code).



The study also explores if an advocacy strategy has the influence on the successful completion of the process. According to the authors, consolidated and better coordinated groups that use different advocacy strategies can achieve better results than non-consolidated groups that operate with different strategies (Macharashvili et al, 2015). The study of thematic cases has shown that strategy and argumentation have an additional effects on the success of policy advocacy. This has been confirmed by two cases where policy advocacy has failed (Philanthropy, Charity and Social Partnership Bill and Volunteers Bill and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages). Accordingly, the study concludes that *“It is difficult to demonstrate that strategy, let alone argumentation, is a decisive factor”* for reaching success (Macharashvili et al, 2015, p.160).

Most cases have confirmed that the quality of internationalization has a significant impact on the outcome of the policy advocacy. The international obligations and the international dimension were highlighted in the specific cases. The analysis of the research revealed that, *“if NGO share policy sides with powerful international actors, they are likely to be successful; If NGOs do not share policy sides with powerful international actors, they are less likely to be successful”* (Macharashvili et al, 2015, p. 162). However, it should be noted that the study presents several cases when the desired results were not achieved despite the high level of internationalization ("Must Carry / Must Offer", Political Union of Citizens and amendments of the Electoral Code, Philanthropy, charity, the processes of European Charter about the Public Partnership and the Regional or Minority Languages).

The study of advocacy processes conducted under the rule of the UNM, has revealed that in most cases gradual and incremental changes were resulted in the major policy changes. Out of 8 cases 5 were finally successfully completed, i.e.: 1) Juvenile Justice, 2) Granting LEPL status to religious organizations, 3) Must Carry / Must Offer, 4) Law on Political Union of Citizens 5) Amendments to the low on the Electoral Code. In two of the said cases (Juvenile justice, granting LEPL status to religious organizations) the major policy changes were achieved step by step - from zero changes to incremental changes, and then to major changes. In 3 cases ("Must Carry / Must Offer", Law on Political Union of Citizens, Amendments to the Electoral Code) zero policy change was transformed into incrementalism and still remained active on the political agenda.

In one case (an amendment to the low on Electoral Code) that represents the example of complex policy changes, the policy advocacy process exhibited double incrementalism. One

case (LGTB-friendly Criminal Code of Georgia) had a very short process of advocacy, resulting directly in a major change.

According to the authors, the changes were achieved in five cases applying so called “layering” type of the incremental change (Juvenile justice, granting the status of LEPL to religious organizations, "Must Carry / Must Offer", law on political unions of citizens, change of the Electoral Code of advocacy processes). In three cases, the theory of punctuated equilibrium was relevant. The case that ended directly with a major change (LGTB-friendly Criminal Code), as well as the remaining two cases ended with zero change (philanthropy, the processes of European Charter about the Public Partnership and the Regional or Minority Languages) were in compliance with the theory of punctuated equilibrium (Macharashvili and etc, 2015).

Accordingly, it is legitimate to use the theory of punctuated equilibrium to the policy-making process during the rule of the UNM.

### **Policy Advocacy Processes Initiated by Non-State Actors under the Rule of Georgian Dream**

Based on the analysis of eight (8) individual cases of advocacy studied by the authors of this article, it may be assumed that the process of policy advocacy has displayed heterogeneity during GD’s governance. At the same time, it is also noteworthy that many of the processes discussed here had been initiated during the rule of UNM.

Appendix 2 offers a short description of the particular advocacy cases (examined here) during GD’s time in power along with the factors that influenced their success or failure.

Analysis of the cases reveals that the following factors have significantly contributed to the success of policy advocacy by non-state actors under GD’s rule, i.e.: heterogeneity of an advocacy group, multiplicity of actors, their role/functions clarity, employed human, financial, and technical resources. With the exception of one case (advocacy for the conservation and rehabilitation of Gudiashvili Square), multiplicity of engaged stakeholders and heterogeneity characterized all advocacy groups. Two of these cases (advocacy process for hepatitis C virus (HCV) elimination and the domestic violence related legislative change) were completed with major outcomes and assessed as successful advocacy processes; two more cases (advocacy for approving legislative changes for humane drug policy and gender quotation system) led to incremental changes, however, the involved parties and stakeholders evaluated them as

unsuccessful; one case (Sakdrisi protection process) resulted in zero change, which may be solely attributed to the failure of the advocacy process.

It is also notable that in several cases, heterogeneity of advocacy groups proved to be an important challenge during the advocacy process. Multiplicity and heterogeneity of stakeholders, to some extent, hindered the establishment of common strategy as well as the development of solid and compelling arguments during the advocacy campaigns for drug policy decriminalization and Sakdrisi protection. In the two latter cases, coalitions were based on core values related to the immediate issue, and despite the fact that they had agreed on policy change, they failed to develop a common strategy and consistent argumentation for their advocacy campaigns. Besides, in two cases (advocacy processes for adopting the law on volunteering and state grant programs), multiplicity of participants could not be maintained. Namely, the one organization stood out as a prominent leader, while others in the group mainly limited themselves to supporting statements.

Analysis of the cases confirmed that the heterogeneity of an advocacy group, multiplicity of actors, their role/functions clarity, employed human, financial, and technical resources have been the important though not crucial factors in ensuring the success of policy advocacy initiated by Non-State actors during GD's ruling period.

The case studies demonstrated that the success of policy advocacy processes under GD's rule was largely caused by the efficient usage of various advocacy strategies. The analysis of these successful cases revealed that advocates used diverse strategies at various stages, i.e.: civic activism, member mobility, media mobilization, meetings with representatives of legislative and executive bodies/authorities to secure increasing support, preparation of various recommendations and particular, targeted policy papers.

It is also notable that at particular cases the flexible approaches were employed by the advocates. They used to alter the initially selected strategy, if it failed to produce desirable outcomes at a particular stage, in response to various phases/requirements of the advocacy process. For example, advocates of Gudiashvili Square conservation and rehabilitation changed the lobbying method that was chosen for the first stage of advocacy, when it did not bring specific desirable outcomes, and, instead, they actively engaged civil society and media outlets in the process. It is also notable that all advocacy campaigns placed special focus on media mobilization except for two cases of advocacy for the reform of state grant programs and approval of law on volunteering.

The latter two did not employ media campaign based on the argument that the issue would be of no interest to wider audience.

In four out of six studied cases, the advocacy processes with planned strategy and solid argumentation resulted in major changes (advocacy processes related to law on volunteering, Gudiashvili Square conservation and rehabilitation, HCV elimination, and legislative change related to domestic violence); it was evidenced, however, that a conscious strategy, particularly selection of a leading strategy and solid argumentation of an advocating group are important and influential, though not exclusive and sole factors contributing to the success of an advocacy process.

In the examined cases, except for the advocacy for conservation and rehabilitation of Gudiashvili Square, the international actors were actively engaged in the processes, and the advocates often used the best international practices. In three examples of successful cases (advocacy processes related to law on volunteering, HCV elimination, and legislative changes related to domestic violence), internalization proved to be influential, while in one of them (advocacy for supporting legislative changes related to domestic violence) the international obligations committed by the government assisted to open the so called ‘window of opportunity’ for advocates. Namely, during the introduction of the legislative changes necessary for the ratification of 2014 Istanbul Convention, the advocacy group members raised the issue of sexual harassment, which was not included in the initial package of changes. Similarly, the advocates of state grant program reform also found a ‘window of opportunity’ when Georgia began the elaboration of a new Action Plan (AP) for the platform of Open Governance Partnership (OGP). In parallel to this, international organizations voiced frequent criticisms of the government, underlining insignificant and non-ambitious nature of commitments implied by the AP, which helped to highlight and bring forth the reform issue to policy agenda.

Internationalization proved an important supporting factor in advocating the implementation of HCV elimination National Programme. Intense engagement of international actors as coalition members, partners, and experts who were involved in the monitoring activities, positively influenced the advocacy process. It is important that, in this case, internationalization proved positively influential not only on the successful finalization of the process in general but also on the development of a unified, sound, and coherent strategy as well as the attraction of respective required resources.

The four cases of unsuccessful advocacy (advocacy processes for state grant programs, Sakdrisi protection, legislative changes for humane drug policy and gender quotation) used the three mechanisms of internationalization, however, the desirable outcomes were never achieved. For example, internationalization factor actively operated at all three stages of advocacy for humane drug policy reform as evidenced by sharing best practices, responding to international obligations of protecting human rights, availability of resources (financial, expert / human, technical) mobilized from international foundations/donors. Notwithstanding the efforts, the first stage of advocacy (2004-2011) resulted in zero policy change, the second stage (2012-2014) was marked with incremental changes, while at the final stage (2015-2019), incremental but not major outcomes were achieved.

Accordingly, cases studied for GD's period demonstrate that internationalization may positively impact advocacy outcomes but cannot determine the overall success of the process.

Analysis of in-depth interviews with advocacy group members, conducted as part of the examination of the said eight cases, revealed that they characterized the GD government, especially, during their first term of governing cycle, as having greater degree of openness and acceptance than UNM. However, it is also remarkable that experts participating in the research described the increasingly negative trend in GD's communications with non-stateactors, which became particularly noticeable during their second term in power.

In the four successful cases (advocacy processes related to law on volunteering, conservation and rehabilitation of Gudiashvili Square, HCV elimination, and legislative change related to domestic violence), the opening of the so called 'window of opportunity' was a key driver of significant alterations. These particular cases were related to 2012 parliamentary elections and change of the government (UNM was replaced by GD as the ruling party) as a major factor to predict the opening of a 'window of opportunity'. It is also notable that all four cases of successful advocacy processes were initiated during the rule of UNM, and the advocates efficiently used opportunities emerging from government change to complete the advocacy processes with desired fundamental outcomes.

The absolute majority of experts and respondents participating in the research agree upon the great significance of the personal factors of engaged decision makers. Support provided by a governmental representative with strong will and relevant power to advocate for changes as well as the involvement of an active 'political entrepreneur' with good governmental connections are positively reflected on the overall success of the process. Experts also highlight

the challenges and difficulties, which advocates face due to the frequent changes in the concerned public entities' relevant personnel (staff).

To summarize, it can be argued that a conscious strategy, argumentation, heterogeneity of policy advocating groups as well as high level of process internationalization have been important in ensuring success of advocacy campaigns under the GD's rule. However, it should be noted that these factors may cause the mere incremental changes and fail to determine the overall success of the advocacy process. Based on the cases examined, major factors contributing to the efficient policy advocacy include the subjective component of the political context, the engagement of a powerful political entrepreneur, and the usage of 'window of opportunity'.

### **A Comparative Analysis of Advocacy Processes under the Georgian Dream and the United National Movement**

Periodization of successful advocacy opportunities and Political Factors: Based on the studied cases, the analysis of advocacy processes covers period of 2003-2012 for UNM and 2012-2019 for GD. The success of the advocacy process for most of the cases during the rule of both governments was caused by the existing political context. Macharashvili and co-authors conclude that the political context was the most important intermediate variable during the UNM. During the first cycle of the UNM rule (2003-2007), the public policy-making was rigid and can be characterized as closed/non-collaborative towards the non-state actors' participation in the policy processes. The UNM's second cycle (2007-2012) commenced with a political crisis where the government realized the danger of losing its control, and became more receptive to the advocacy processes offered by Non-State actors (Macharashvili, , et al. 2015). By studying the advocacy cases during the GD's period, unlike the UNM, showed that GD expressed greater readiness to cooperate with non-state actors in the first election cycle (2012-2016). Moreover, during the second cycle of its governance (2016-2020), while backed by high legitimacy from society/voters, the collaboration with civil society/non-state actors was decreased gradually. Also, the main difference between these two periods was the changes in the rhetoric of the authorities. Similar approach was typical within the UNM's rule as well. During the less acceptance period of the non-state actors' positions, the UNM representatives claimed that the civil activists were controlled by their political opponents. The same rhetoric was revealed during the Georgian Dream's second cycle of rule. At certain points, the high-

level governmental officials were discrediting the civil society representatives, making emphasis on specific thematic issues and initiating the active discussions on their political affiliation to opposition parties. Overall, in the context of policy advocacy campaigns, both governments actively accused the non-state actors as politically bias.

Composition and structure of the advocacy group: The analysis of the studied cases revealed that the heterogeneity of the advocacy group and the high number of members during the rule of both governments had certain significance in the successful implementation of the process. There have been cases where the advocacy process has been initiated by a particular homogeneous group. However, during the process they were transformed into heterogeneous groups, which contributed to the partially successful completion of the advocacy (“Must Carry / Must Offer”). It should also be noted that in several cases the heterogeneity of the advocacy group led to the absence of a unified coalition that was reflected in non-consolidated strategy, tactics and argumentation, which ultimately had a negative impact on the final result of advocacy process (Philanthropy, Charity, the Law on Public Partnership during the UNM and the process of protecting of Sakhdrisi during the GD).

By the experts, interviewed in the study, it is confirmed that the fragmentation of advocacy processes has a negative impact on the advocacy success. In addition, the consistency of the policy change by the non-state actors and limitation of resources as well as their high reliance on the donor organizations are significant challenges.

To summarize, the heterogeneity of the advocacy group, the variety of stakeholders, human, financial and technical resources are important but not crucial factors for the success of policy advocacy initiated by non-state actors during the rule of both governments.

Advocacy strategies: A comparative analysis of advocacy processes during the UNM and GD’s periods, revealed that grassroots activism was stronger and more frequent during the GD’s period, while lobbying was more effective during the UNM’s period. By experts’ view, during the UNM period, due to the rigid, repressive political context, the society as well as the other non-state actors had a fear of taking part in the street demonstrations, which showed that this advocacy strategy was less applicable. This attitude changed during the GD’s period and, consequently, advocacy coalitions began to use street demonstrations intensively. Particular emphasis was made on the activities targeting strategic communication with wider society.

It was important for advocacy groups to use different strategies for achieving the success during the rule of both parties, and often to change those strategies when needed. Based on the studied

cases, consolidated and even better coordinated advocacy groups that use different advocacy strategies could bring better results than groups that operated with a restricted strategy. However, it should also be noted, that during the rule of both governments, although the strategy and argumentation are important factors in terms of the success of policy advocacy and accompany the advocacy process, still, they can only have some influence on the policy advocacy but not entirely determine its final results.

**Internationalization:** Internationalization has been identified as an important factor in the success of policy advocacy during the UNM's period. At that time, the effect of internationalization outweighed the following factors such as the structure of the coalition, strategy, and argumentation (Macharashvili, et. al., 2015). Internationalization is also important for the GD's period, however, less significant than for the UNM's period. Moreover, the focus group revealed that the UNM's political team was more dependent on international stakeholders (including due to the financial interests), which led to a high-level influence of internationalization on advocacy outcomes. The policy changes stipulated by the international commitments were significant for both parties. However, in both cases, there was more superficial implementation of international agreements and just 'putting the ticks' in the action plans while being executed.

It is true that there were cases during the rule of both governments when the involvement of international organizations did not lead to the successful completion of the advocacy processes, but the studied cases also confirmed that a high level of internationalization was an important contributing factor for final success of the advocacy process.

**Personal factor:** During the rule of both governments the high importance of the personal factor was revealed for achieving success of the advocacy process. Mentioned refers to the engagement of the persons being in power in the advocacy process by the governmental bodies, who had the desire of change and at the same time would actively lobby or pursue the policy changes. It is also actual for the Non-State actors with different political affiliations.

**Influence of interest groups:** Experts participated to the Focus group discussions underlined, that during the UNM and as well as GD's periods, the existence of strong financial or political influential interest groups, e.g. businesses, and the alignment of their interests to the goals of advocacy processes have been identified as a hindering factor. Also, one of the disruptive factors during the governance of both parties was incompatibility between the interests of law enforcement agencies on the one hand and advocacy group on the other (e.g. changes in local



self-government in the Electoral Code). The fear of losing a power as well as the impact on the voters was also influential for changing the attitudes towards the advocacy process (e.g. decriminalization of drug policy, etc.).

The level of the policy change: The cases discussed in the article show that the majority of successful advocacy processes in the case of both governments are mostly characterized by incremental changes, which gradually are resulted into the major changes. It is obvious, that there are some cases when the advocacy process ended with a major change in a short period of time, but mostly, success is determined by the consistency of the process and the achievement of incremental change at all levels. Consequently, the explanation of the success of the advocacy process in both periods is in compliance with the theory of punctuated equilibrium.

In addition, the comprehensive analysis of discussed cases show that the main factor for the success of the policy advocacy process was the political context, the personal factor and the opening of the ‘window of opportunity’. The focus group also revealed that the lack of institutional memory was one of the major challenges, as the frequent rotation of the public servants and high-level decision makers in Georgia’s public entities often leads to the initiation of the advocacy processes from the scratch.

## **Conclusion**

The comparative analysis of advocacy cases under the United National Movement and the Georgian Dream’s governance revealed that internationalization was more important for the success of the advocacy process during the UNM’s period, but opening the ‘window of opportunity’ and using it successfully were more relevant during the rule of GD. Study revealed the importance of the personal factor, as well as the significance of the strong policy-makers’ engagement and their active, persistent, consistent and continuous participation in the advocacy processes are in compliance with the global trends.

As opposed to the ‘*Status-quo* Power’ concept in the public policy theory, the explored 16 cases showed that the advocacy processes in Georgia were mostly successful whilst advocating the *status-quo* change. Particularly, 10 cases out of 16 ended with some success. 5 out of 6 studied successful cases during the UNM’s period as well as 4 out of 4 studied successful cases during the GD’s periods were in favor of changing the *status-quo*. Accordingly, 90% of

reviewed successful cases (i.e. 9 out of 10) advocated for a change of the *status-quo*. In Georgia, as a post-Soviet country, political processes are often seen as transforming from the Soviet legacy to Western values, while maintaining the *status-quo* is perceived as a "bad" and/or "harmful" experience that hinders the country's development. According to the authors, the desire to terminate all ties with the past of the Soviet Union leads to the trust and support of society and political organizations for change. Disruption of old connections and old practices is associated with the progress of the country in the Georgian political context, thus, it increases the probability of successful completion of the *status-quo* change advocacy processes. As a result, it can be said that during both, the UNM and the GD' rule, advocacy processes initiated by non-state actors had a chance to be more successful when advocacy coalitions / groups supported *the status-quo* changes which represents a significant deviation from the mainstream.

Based on the findings outlined in the article, the authors can also assume that there are some links between the success of advocacy campaigns in favor of changing the *status-quo* and the post-Soviet experience. This assumption requires further research of advocacy processes in other post-Soviet countries.

For future research, the authors of the article recommend to conduct an in-depth study of the *status-quo* change cases and explore the linkages with the probability of success of advocacy processes in post-Soviet regions. It is also important to analyze in Georgia the issue of personal influence, so called policy entrepreneur on the successful advocacy process and additionally examine the possible connections between the success of advocacy and different thematic focuses.

To conclude, the Georgian way of policy advocacy is a process where the success of advocacy process is not often determined by the consistency of the actions, the strategy or the argumentation, the heterogeneity of the advocacy group or the high-level of internationalization. The mentioned factors are definitely important influential aspects in most cases, however, the key point for success is to know how to use the 'window of opportunity' that generally arises in the Georgian political reality during the governmental changes or the fear of losing the political power. In addition, the policy entrepreneur has its important role in the success of the processes and is a person who along with the willingness of the policy-change possess the relevant know-how, expertise, resources, connections, access to the potential alternatives for effective decision-making, as well as the levers for influence.

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## **Conflict of Interest**

None

## **Supplementary Files**

- Appendix 1 - *Brief description and characteristics of advocacy cases studied during the rule of the United National Movement*
- Appendix 2 - *Short description and characteristics of individual cases of advocacy under the rule of Georgian Dream*
- Published copy of the extended research report '*Policy Advocacy in Georgia: Opportunities for external actors to influence the formation of the public policy agenda and its implementation in the period of the Georgian Dream's governance*'. The joint research project was conducted in the period of 2019-2020 and the printed copy of report is kept in the GIPA's library/repository).

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