International Feminist Journal of Politics

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

POPULIST POLITICAL MASCULINITIES, GENDER EQUALITY AND NORM CONTESTATION IN GEORGIA AND ARMENIA

Journal:	*International Feminist Journal of Politics*
Manuscript ID	RFJP-2022-0083.R3
Manuscript Type:	Research Article
Keywords:	gender equality, norm contestation, Georgia, Armenia, populist political masculinities
Abstract:	Over the past two decades, the literature on norm diffusion in the post-Soviet space has grown dramatically. Increasingly, norm diffusion scholars have stressed the role of geopolitical competition between powerful international actors, notably Russia and the EU, in achieving and/or resisting liberal-democratic reform in the region. This article contributes to this recent norm research by adding a corrective to the literature, exploring the agency of local rather than external actors in the contestation of global gender equality norms, utilizing the high-value case-studies of Georgia and Armenia. By uncovering taken-for-granted gendered power dimensions in local norm contestation – a subject barely addressed in norm diffusion literature – this article offers an explanation for the persistence of non-democratic trends in the post-Soviet space as a whole. Specifically, this article examines populist political masculinities contesting EU gender equality policies and related norms concerning violence against women and LGBT1 rights, arguing that in Georgia and Armenia, it is local populist actors, utilising patriarchal and heterosexual taken-for-granted discourses to 'reclaim' local masculinities and their political legitimacy, who represent a major challenge to gender equality norms.

SCHOLARONE™
Manuscripts

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

POPULIST POLITICAL MASCULINITIES, GENDER EQUALITY AND NORM CONTESTATION IN GEORGIA AND ARMENIA

ABSTRACT

Over the past two decades, the literature on norm diffusion in the post-Soviet space has grown dramatically. Increasingly, norm diffusion scholars have stressed the role of geopolitical competition between powerful international actors, notably Russia and the EU, in achieving and/or resisting liberal-democratic reform in the region. This article contributes to this recent norm research by adding a corrective to the literature, exploring the agency of local rather than external actors in the contestation of global gender equality norms, utilizing the high-value case-studies of Georgia and Armenia. By uncovering taken-for-granted gendered power dimensions in local norm contestation – a subject barely addressed in norm diffusion literature – this article offers an explanation for the persistence of non-democratic trends in the post-Soviet space as a whole. Specifically, this article examines populist political masculinities contesting EU gender equality policies and related norms concerning violence against women and LGBT[1] rights, arguing that in Georgia and Armenia, it is local populist actors, utilising patriarchal and heterosexual taken-for-granted discourses to 'reclaim' local masculinities and their political legitimacy, who represent a major challenge to gender equality norms.

For Peer Review Only

INTRODUCTION

The impact of political masculinities on norm adoption, rejection and contestation has hardly been addressed in the extensive literature on norm diffusion. Although the scholarship on norm diffusion in the post-Soviet space has grown dramatically in recent years (cf. Bettiza and Lewis 2020; Casier 2021; Delcour 2021; Roberts 2015) masculinities as the "unmarked" gender category (Löffler *et al.* 2020, 1) have remained largely hidden from critical enquiry. This is

unsurprising in the sense that the (almost) exclusive focus on the structural aspects of authoritarian influence in the post-Soviet space (e.g., the influence of the EU and Russia) has resulted in the under-elaboration of important agency considerations – a point noted by a growing number of scholars (Draude 2017; Roberts and Ziemer 2018; Wiener 2018). This indicates that more attention should be devoted to the subject of localization (Acharya 2004) and the way seemingly powerless actors have room to adopt, reject and transform ideas and practices rather than passively receive them. Therefore, in this article we explore populist political opposition as a particular type of political masculinity located within dynamic norm diffusion and contestation processes, to provide more answers to the persistence of non-democratic trends found in the post-Soviet space as a whole.

This article utilizes the high-value cases of Armenia and Georgia in the South Caucasus region. Both states make for an intriguing comparison in terms of their engagement with European Union (EU) gender equality legislation but also the wider norm diffusion dynamics at play, as part of the EU's Europeanization processes. Both states were former Soviet republics that now form part of the EU's Eastern neighbourhood (EaP) and both states continue to be influenced by the EU's conditionality policies as the principal instrument of Europeanization – of which gender equality issues, such as the legal protection of LGBT rights and ending gender-based violence, are key objectives.

Both states also have contrasting relations with Russia – another key regional actor. Armenia is a small landlocked state with high levels of dependence on Russia in both economic and security terms (Vieira and Vasilyan 2018, 1) giving Russia (potentially) both linkage and leverage to push its preferred 'authoritarian' or illiberal norms (Roberts and Ziemer 2018). In contrast, Georgia has poor relations with Russia, in particular following the Russo-Georgian "5-day War" of August 2008[2] and calls by the Georgian government for NATO membership. Georgia, unlike Armenia,

For Peer Review Only

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60

has less dependence on Russia and a more pronounced pro-Western foreign policy, presenting (potentially) a more fertile ground for Europeanization and those gender norms this article will analyse. Domestically, both countries face multiple challenges in their transition to democracy. In 2022, Freedom House classified both Armenia's and Georgia's political systems as "transitional or hybrid" regimes.

In addition, and of relevance for the subsequent discussion of populist political masculinities but also for case selection, both Armenia and Georgia have a distinct militarization that permeates politics, economics and society[3]. For Armenia, the Nagorny Karabakh conflict with Azerbaijan saw the state pulled into a complex conflict from 1988 onwards, with a more recent and serious escalation in September 2020 resulting in a 44-day war and the country's deepest political crisis since its independence in 1991 (Demytrie 2021). For Georgia, the post-Soviet period has been equally difficult, with civil war over the break-away republics of South Ossetia and Abkhazia (1991-1993) and the aforementioned conflict with Russia (2008) over the status of the former – resulting in Russia's invasion of Georgian territory. This 5-day war confirmed both break-away regions as independent of Georgia's control, sparking Georgia's own political crisis.

The article proceeds as follows: the first part provides a note on methodology followed by a discussion of the analytical framework used to understand gender equality and norm contestation. In addition, this section conceptualizes populist political masculinities as part of the norm contestation process. The second part of this article considers the contestation of gender equality norms, in particular those relating to the protection of women against violence, and their instrumentalization by political opposition in Armenia and Georgia to undermine European anti-discrimination legislation and the (perceived) pro-European governments in both case countries. The final section explores LGBT issues and the fight for LGBT rights and how

For Peer Review Only

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

populist opposition forces contest these norms to reassert and reclaim local masculinities and their political legitimacy to undermine the established political order.

In terms of main findings, this article argues for more nuance in current thinking on norm diffusion in the region. While geopolitical competition between powerful international actors, such as Russia and the EU, forms the background to domestic politics in Georgia and Armenia (as in most of the post-Soviet region), ultimately it is local political actors, utilising patriarchal and heterosexual taken-for-granted discourses to reclaim local masculinities and their political legitimacy who represent a major challenge to gender equality norms.

For Peer Review Only

A NOTE ON RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To unpack the role of populist political masculinities in local norm contestation, this article takes a situated approach to the cases in question, meaning that social relations and thus gender relations are understood as dynamic and unfolding, where norm interaction becomes a social process that is inseparable from the situation, occurring in constant dialogue with the past, the future and the present (Fejerskov *et al*. 2019, 20). In terms of methodology, this article utilises a comparative case study design to capture more vividly the dynamics of norm diffusion processes. A comparative approach is ideal for cross-cultural research to reveal significant similarities or differences using the same methods (Bryman 2008). Elite and expert interviews were utilized to complement primary and secondary sources, drawing on 46 semi-structured interviews with Armenian and Georgian politicians, Armenia and Georgia-based experts, journalists and representatives of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), conducted by the authors in 2018 and 2019 (see appendix for the list of interviews)[4]. As such, the time frame for this research covers the period May 2018-October 2020, including the period immediately following the election victory of Nikol Pashinyan as Armenian Prime Minister in May 2018 – the

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

direct outcome of the country's so-called Velvet Revolution – and including Georgia's October 2020 parliamentary election. This time frame allows an in-depth analysis of interview data on violence against women (VAW) and LGBT issues at a time of political uncertainty and heightened opposition activity.

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK: POPULIST POLITICAL MASCULINITIES AND NORM CONTESTATION PROCESSES

For Peer Review Only

In this article, we explore the politics of populist masculinities and corresponding masculinist strategies in the contestation of liberal gender equality norms as part of a dynamic, local power struggle. This local power struggle is seen as a masculinized rivalry (Enloe 2014) that often appears as a geopolitical power game in which the power hierarchy between the West (EU) and non-West (peripheries in the form of EU accession states) is constructed and reconstructed through the contestation of gender equality norms. Our subsequent empirical discussion shows how gender becomes a power resource in the politics of contestation.

Norm contestation is understood as an interactive social activity (Wiener 2014) involving a range of social practices, which discursively express disapproval of norms. The mode of contestation, or the way contestation is displayed in practice, depends on the respective environment where contestation takes place (i.e., courts, regimes, societal or academic) (Wiener 2014, 1). Hence, the process of norm contestation is better understood in terms of the relationship between the social situation in which norms are produced and those into which they are absorbed (Merry and Lewitt 2019, 145). Norms do not remain fixed in this process since they are embedded in social relationships, identities and subjectivities and are transformed by the social context into which they move (Merry and Lewitt 2019, 145). The contextual system of meanings shapes all

norms since they are always enacted in particular ways depending on their surrounding set of social relationships, ideologies and power structures (Merry and Lewitt 2019, 145).

There is a vast amount of literature analysing norm adoption in various contexts. Increasingly, scholars have examined these norm diffusion processes in terms of gender equality norms (Engberg-Pedersen et al. 2019) and how they are contested, translated or diffused (Draude 2017; Nuñez-Mietz 2019; Ün 2019). This literature has shown that it is important to take a situated approach to the analysis of gender equality norm diffusion (Engberg-Pedersen *et al*. 2019). It has also been highlighted that gender equality norms are elusive, often determined by specific actors according to their particular preference (Fejerskov *et al*. 2019, 13). For example, Bettiza and Lewis (2020, 11) use a power political perspective to conceptualize norm contestation at the ideational level and through symbolic instruments where traditional norms have been mobilized by authoritarian states, like Russia, to retain influence over countries like Armenia. They demonstrate that these struggles are occurring in the context of an international system marked by conflict, interests, cultural pluralism and hierarchical structures. Hence, masculinities are not just domestic cultural variables: both political events and masculine identities are the products of men's participation in international relations (Hooper 2001, 80).

Despite the rich constructivist IR literature on norm dynamics, to date, feminist research focusing on cross-cultural norm contestation and resistance remains sparse. Recent research has started to correct this oversight by examining the process of norm contestation relating to gender equality in global, regional and local contexts (Berthet 2022; Engberg-Pedersen *et. al*. 2019; O'Sullivan and Krulišová 2020). These studies highlight the creative agency of diverse actors, including the agency of non-Western actors in localizing, vernacularizing, translating and resisting global norms (Krook and True 2012; Levitt and Merry 2009; Zwingel 2012). Much of the literature on norm dynamics, norm localizers and norm translators include an analysis of civil

For Peer Review Only

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60

society organizations' "efforts" (Gradskova 2019), social movement activists (Keck and Sikkink 2014), local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and human rights groups (Merry and Levitt 2017; Ün 2019) rather than an analysis of potentially non-democratic/ fringe opposition groups and their impact on norm diffusion processes. This article contributes to the literature on norm contestation and resistance by exploring the normative agency of local political opposition in the Georgian and Armenian context, who contest and resist global gender norms to mobilize supporters, undermine the current government but also to reclaim local masculinities challenged by these norms and to reclaim their political legitimacy as actors hitherto excluded from official government structures.

Political masculinities comprise any kind of masculinity that is constructed around, ascribed to and/or claimed by 'political players' (Starck & Sauer 2014). Just like gender as a set of norms, masculinities implicate the production and reproduction of power as an embodied phenomenon (Foucault 1991). In this way, the concept of political masculinities holds particular use in 'instances in which power is explicitly either being (re)produced or challenged' (Starck and Luytt 2019: 435). In this article, we specifically examine populist political actors and their corresponding strategies operating not only to circumscribe and resist the diffusion of liberal gender equality norms, but also to reassert and reclaim their political legitimacy. Just like other masculinities, populist political masculinity is a process, not a character type and is actively constructed in relation to social definitions of men's place and the shifting contexts men find themselves in (Duncanson 2009: 64).

Previous research has demonstrated how the power of populist masculinities relies on performativity including paternalistic promises to save the 'common man' from corrupt elites, and displays of nativism combined with nationalism, xenophobia and muscular religiosity (cf. Graff and Korolczuk 2022). Thus, populist masculinities are imaginative constructions of heroic

For Peer Review Only

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

masculinities, able to protect the weak, vulnerable women and the nation (Rommelspacher 2011, 54 cited in Sauer 2020, 25). The rhetoric of populist political actors relies on patriarchal thinking and includes heterosexuality and homophobia as fundamental elements. Kimmel (1994) claims that masculinity should be understood as a homosocial enactment; a performance produced by and for other men. Kimmel also contends that fear operates as the overriding emotion associated with enactments of masculinity. For him, masculinity is a defensive posture against a seemingly ever-present series of perceived threats of humiliation by other men.

For Peer Review Only

In addition to the performance of populist masculinity, our empirical analysis shows that in some instances, oppositional political actors perform hypermasculinity as a type of right-wing populism in order to secure local masculinities by displaying strong domination and control combined with aggressiveness. Hypermasculinity has been defined as a tendency to engage in exaggerated gender stereotypical behaviour … embodying "dispositions toward toughness, daring, virility, and violence ..." (Mosher 1991, 200). Often, this type of masculinity is based on a type of militarist nationalist thinking where local masculinities are imagined as rooted in reproductive heterosexual patriarchal relations serving to protect the local family and saving the nation. Their militarist quest for political leadership to save the nation, embodies an authoritarian element (Mudde 2004) that resembles the rhetoric of right-wing populist leaders. In sum, political opposition utilise taken-for-granted patriarchal and militarist masculinity in public discourse as a normalised political masculinist practice, creating a new logic that bolsters masculinity in the local context.

POPULIST POLITICAL MASCULINITIES AND THE STRUGGLE TO PROTECT WOMEN FROM VIOLENCE

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Femicide and violence against women (VAW) are pressing issues in both Georgia and Armenia. This section explores how the issue of VAW and the consequent ratification of the Council of Europe's (CoE) Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention) symbolizes a larger geopolitical power struggle between state actors but also a norm contestation between local political actors. In terms of the latter, as a relatively recent issue entering public discourse, VAW provides fertile grounds for political opposition groups to contest gender equality norms and present them as "alien to Armenian or Georgian societies" by appealing to conservative segments of society via the performance of a patriarchal heterosexual masculinity. In Armenia, the Istanbul Convention has yet to be ratified by parliament (despite being signed by the previous government in 2018) and is still debated in public and opposed in some quarters of society, notably the Armenian Apostolic Church (Meljumyan 2019). Georgia, in comparison, signed the Istanbul Convention in 2014 and ratified it in 2017 (UN Women 2017).

In both country cases, VAW is a significant and worsening trend. In Georgia, a National Study on Violence Against Women in 2017 found that approximately 14 per cent of partnered women in the 15-64 age range had experienced physical, sexual and/or emotional violence at the hands of an intimate partner. In Armenia, comparable data from 2019 indicated that at least 8 per cent of women had experienced physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner (Asian Development Bank 2019, ix). In Georgia in 2020, to the Prosecutor's Office, a total of 178 women were the victims of gender-based violence – a marked increase of 58 from the previous year. In addition, there were 20 attempted murders of women in Georgia (Agenda.ge 2021). In Armenia during the first half of 2019, and according to official statistics, authorities investigated 331 criminal domestic violence cases, including 176 that were newly initiated. They brought charges in 209 cases and forwarded 45 cases to the courts (Human Rights Watch World Report 2021).

For Peer Review Only

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

These figures are striking in terms of the relatively small population sizes of Armenia (2.7 million – World Bank 2020) and Georgia (3.7 million – Word Bank 2020) but also in terms of the significant under-reporting of the VAW issue. In both countries, women are reluctant to report domestic violence, in particular as domestic violence is mostly considered a private family matter (UN Women 2018, Ziemer 2020), therefore the incidence rate is likely to be much higher. For Georgia, a World Bank Study (2016) found that 82 per cent of female respondents who experienced violence did not report this to the police, with 61 per cent worried that reporting would stigmatize them (Asian Development Bank 2018, 23). In Armenia, according to a public opinion survey conducted by the International Republican Institute (IRI) in September 2020, 31 per cent of those surveyed agreed that women should tolerate violence to maintain family unity. Close to 50 per cent of respondents also indicated that they would be unlikely to report a case of domestic violence if they see one, with 71 per cent of men and 76 per cent of women supporting the position that a family should "sort out its own problems". These attitudes indicate that in both societies discussing domestic violence and VAW publicly is a very difficult venture, often attracting criticism, as the issue continues to be viewed as a private rather than public matter (Armenian women's rights expert 2018).

Armenia – Opposition Leaders Resisting Gender Equality Norms by Securing the Local

In Armenia, the issue of VAW is often presented as a clash of values in public discourse, as conservative groups (some pro-Russian) seek to oppose the introduction of European regulations designed to protect women by framing them as 'alien' norms that threaten Armenian society. The Armenian Apostolic Church and conservative opposition groups, for example, emphasize the importance of the family and the way this important foundation of Armenian society would be undermined, if European laws targeting VAW were adopted, and

For Peer Review Only

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

children were separated from their parents owing to the criminalisation of domestic violence (Armenian Human Rights Activist 2018). Eduard Sharmazanov, the former Vice President of the National Assembly under the previous Republican Party government and one of the most vocal members of the Armenian opposition in 2018 also rejects the ratification of the Istanbul Convention as contrary to Armenian values, suggesting that "there must be no alternative to the traditional family model" (Grigoryan 2019). Interestingly, in 2014, as Vice President of the National Assembly and Republican Party member, he also denied the very existence of violence against women in part because "Armenians are a nation that honours its mothers" (Nikoghosyan 2017).

Eduard Sharmazonov's shifting discourse on the VAW issue is indicative of an attempt to reclaim his lost status of privilege linked to the previous authoritarian regime by appealing to the patriarchal traditional family model which privileges fathers as "breadwinners" and the sole protectors of the family. As a senior government figure, his status was once unquestioned, reflected in his discourse based on a patriarchal militarist understanding of masculinity as responsibility, ownership, and authority, appealing to men as the protectors of the Armenian nation via the idea of honour. Now, in political opposition, both Eduard Sharmazonov and his Republican Party, but also their political privilege are side-lined in terms of the dominant political discourse and therefore can no longer deny the existence of VAW (in particular as his Republican Party signed the Istanbul Convention in 2018). However, this new context presents an opportunity to strategize the friend/enemy discourse based on a gendered understanding of patriarchal masculinity. As an opposition figure, he articulates the nation as under threat from outside "enemies", proclaiming that European gendered norms present a danger to Armenian traditions which privilege men as the sole protectors of the nation.

URL: https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/rfjp E-mail: ifjp@cardiff.ac.uk

For Peer Review Only

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

This contestation of European gender equality norms in Armenia can be understood as an attempt by political opposition, linked to the previous regime, at challenging the global cultural hegemony of liberal values linked to the EU's priority to protect women from violence. However, it can also be understood in a more localized way as a discursive challenge to a seemingly more democratic and pro-European government, albeit within the context of a "European" influence over domestic politics. Hence, the contestation over policies protecting women against violence can be read as a domestic struggle over power where gender equality norms are an easy target to be distorted to undermine the efforts of the current government and reassert local masculinities based on militarist patriarchal thinking. As noted by one interview respondent, "*political opposition in Armenia lacks unity and the only thing they have in common is a dislike or hatred for Nikol Pashinyan's government*" [Armenian political expert 2019]. Therefore, opposition figures, like Eduard Sharmazanov, appear to be '*involuntarily*' '*mimicking the Russian model using a disingenuous political argument of traditional family values to manipulate public opinion in their favour*' [Armenian political expert]. The use of the term 'involuntarily' here indicates that this mobilization of traditional gender norms versus liberal gender norms is based on a unchallenged taken-for-granted patriarchal and militarist masculinity in public discourse, invisible to many and unquestioned because it is an accepted and normalized political masculinist practice – one embraced by well-known right-wing populist / authoritarian leaders, such as Vladimir Putin (Russia), Viktor Orban (Hungary) and Donald Trump (United States) (Lobban et al. 2020).

The family has been characterized as one of the most important cultural traits of the Armenian nation (Ziemer 2018). Therefore, emphasising the traditional family and the traditional role of a father as a core value to Armenian nationhood can be understood as a masculinized strategy to undermine the current, seemingly pro-European government and a way of reclaiming the local, subordinate, traditional masculinity challenged by the hegemonic world order. Hence, this

For Peer Review Only

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

domestic masculinized rivalry often appears as a geopolitical power game in which the power hierarchy between the West (EU) and non-West (peripheries in the form of EU accession states) is constructed and reconstructed through the public discourse on VAW where the local is produced as 'subordinate' to the West and opposition figures, like Eduard Sharmazanov, for example, try to reclaim the local rooted in cultural traditions.

Similarly, *Adekvad*, a vocal far-right group in Armenia opposing Nikol Pashinyan's government is well-known for its misogynist and sexist attitudes. Launched in June 2018 as a Facebook group, *Adekvad* members post texts and live stream videos that promote conspiracy theories and anti-Western rhetoric. For example, *Adekvad* has claimed that the involvement of Western-educated people in Armenia's state administration is the "second stage of the Armenian genocide" and that "[George] Soros is provoking civil war" in Armenia. In addition, and on many occasions, Artur Danielyan, the leader of *Adekvad,* made sexist remarks and jokes about feminist movements. In a Facebook post he claimed that women actually fantasize about rape and that, if anything, they receive pleasure from it (Grigoryan 2019).

For Peer Review Only

Artur Danielyan strategically "hyper-masculinizes" the local to secure it against the influence of the West. His masculinist strategy carries strong patriarchal elements such as domination and control combined with aggressiveness in order to secure what is considered domestic. Consequently, political actors from *Adekvad* visibly practice the well-known militarized patriarchal masculinity that may present an appeal to some parts of the conservative population in public discourse. As a political strategy, Artur Danielyan privileges hypermasculinity to undermine the EU's influence in the country and thus Nikol Pashinyan's willingness to engage with the EU, while simultaneously challenging the power hierarchy that places the EU above Armenia in the non-West/ West relationship.

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

In sum, these two illustrations of political opposition in Armenia represent empirical examples of how opposition forces challenge the power hierarchy by strategically utilising patriarchal hypermasculinity in the dynamic discourse on the acceptance of liberal gender equality norms. In a highly militarized society like Armenia's, the enactment of this type of masculinity in political discourse appears as a normalization of the militarization discourse at large while creating a new logic that bolsters masculinity in the local political context.

For Peer Review Only

Georgia – Opposition Leaders Subverting 'Established' Gender Equality Norms

In contrast to Armenia, Georgia has adopted several fundamental laws aimed at protecting women from violence, primarily as a result of the Georgia- EU Association Agreement signed in 2014, including the Anti-Discrimination Law (2014), the new Domestic Violence Law (2016), and the Sexual Harassment Law (2019). Hence, the issue of VAW has not figured as prominently in terms of norm resistance in the period of focus, 2018-2020. Instead, during these two years, those norms enshrined in the aforementioned laws were challenged by opposition groups as a form of unwelcome state-supported, top-down liberalism, with political nativist rhetoric identifying VAW legislation as a "liberal threat" to the "traditional values" of Georgian society.

Although Georgia appears more progressive than Armenia in terms of gender equality legislation, in many of the interviews conducted for this research it was communicated that these laws were adopted as a "tick-box" exercise, lacking in real impact because, as one interviewee noted, "*Georgian politics is occupied by men who don't want to lose power, it's easier for them to say they are pro-equality but then do nothing about it*" [Georgian political expert 2019]. One women's rights activist even claimed that there is some leverage for Georgia to appear pro-Western and construct a political image to this effect by, for example, emphasising Georgia's long history of women in power – notably, Queen Tamar, a Georgian

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

monarch who reigned in the 12th century – thus rooting current gender equality norms in a 'local' past. Hence, it is not the issue of VAW per se that is directly challenged but the elitism and top-down approach of the EU as an institution "pushing" these norms onto Georgian society. In short, political opposition engage with a form of nativism to discredit the EU's liberal reforms and, by logical extension, the pro-EU government, in what may be described as a domestic masculinized rivalry.

In contrast to Armenia, Georgia's right-wing opposition groups are eclectic and resist labelling, with some described as radical right, nativist and illiberal conservative, yet others have outwardly visible neo-Nazi paraphernalia. In addition, some groups are pro-Russian and Putin-Stalinist in orientation while others are ardently anti-Russian and nationalist-militarist (Democratic Research Institute [DRI] 2020). Although dozens of political factions identify themselves with ultra-conservative and traditionalist ideas, they never managed to create a homogenous movement. Yet, there are some notable figures who stand out in terms of their political influence and public strategy. According to our interview data, one of those local leaders is Levan Vasadze who embodies a charismatic traditional political masculinity aimed primarily at halting the rise of the perceived immoral values of so-called Western liberalists[6].

In Georgian political discourse, Vasadze has been identified as "a chief ideologue of nativism" (Civil.ge, 2021). Again, this opposition figure appears to echo the geopolitical discourse of one of Russia's more notable post-Soviet ideologists, Alexander Dugin, and his anti-western stance[7]. As a norm entrepreneur, Vasadze promotes a mixture of patriarchal and traditional norms, with some of his older writings dating back to 2009 offering a mix of nativist and Christian mystical and messianic messages (civil.ge 2021). He is undeniably articulate and charismatic in his rhetoric displaying the traditional Georgian masculinity of strength and honour, especially when he takes to the streets dressed in national costume, mostly accompanied by members of the

For Peer Review Only

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

clergy, which makes him appear an archetypal nationalist[8]. Ultimately, Vasadze and those like him, address deep-rooted issues of national identity with the aim of persuading the public they have the nation's interests at heart.

Although Vasadze is portrayed as pro-Russian, it should be qualified that he does not reject the West in the geopolitical terms of Russia, but rather western liberalism and thus any associated gender identities, as one Georgian women's rights activist (2019) explains:

> 'Because they [Vasadze and his followers] know that the majority of Georgian society supports the Western direction [foreign policy vector] … they are afraid of being labelled pro-Russian. That's why they say they are pro-Western, but want a Europe that doesn't oblige us to have gay marriage, that doesn't oblige us to have anti-abortion laws, etc.'.

In his political performances he often appeals to a frustrated population that feels threatened by the perceived top-down approach of the EU and Georgian government, and the perceived rise of women's and sexual minority rights. He has, for example, called upon his Western political conservative counterparts, like Donald Trump (who himself performs a populist masculinity and domineering style of leadership) to challenge the EU's liberalism, instrumentalizing the fear that male privilege and power in the domestic context were being lost. For example, in June 2019, at the height of Gay Pride clashes in Georgia's capital, Tbilisi, he called on Trump to "drain the swamp" outside the US Embassy' [where protesters had gathered] – an embassy Levan Vasadze believed at the time was controlled by so-called "Hillarists" (Hillary Clinton supporters) and "globalists" who came to Georgia to destroy its culture (Pushaw 2019).

Instead of directly challenging the issue of VAW, Levan Vasadze prefers to target feminist activists as agents that actively undermines Georgian culture – an agent that is uniquely Western and that attempts to intimidate Georgian society into change. His political rhetoric thrives on the fear that the egalitarian demands of women and sexual minorities may deprive heterosexual

URL: https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/rfjp E-mail: ifjp@cardiff.ac.uk

For Peer Review Only

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

men of their traditional, privileged rights based on, and derived from, a patriarchal, Christian society. It is, ultimately, a discourse of "protecting men" that challenges VAW norms. As one interviewee noted:

> '… we have a lot of rape cases and femicide is a big issue [in Georgia], but these serious problems would never trigger protests among the population. Why? Because it would involve a public criticism of Georgian men' (laughs) [Georgian women's rights activist 2019].

For Peer Review Only

By appealing to a patriarchal local masculinity, Levan Vasadze attempts to reclaim his privileged position, presenting himself as a leading figure in bridging Georgia's conservative activists with their Western counterparts in what may be termed a "selective westernisation approach" (Kincha 2018). However, if we understand this so-called selective Westernisation approach in terms of domestic masculinized rivalry, we can see that he presents a fusion of diverse masculinities in his political rhetoric to reclaim what he sees as a loss of male privilege and power while resisting social change. In his political performances he fuses a nostalgic Anglo-American ideal model of manhood heavily resisting social change, which Kimmel (2017) calls "angry white men", promising the return of the patriarchal and local Georgia, and a social and identity order that values masculine political authority.

To conclude the empirical discussion on VAW, in both Georgia and Armenia, oppositional leaders predominantly rely on populist masculinities based on patriarchal thinking in their political performances. As such, the contestation over policies protecting women against violence can be read as a domestic struggle over power where gender equality norms are an easy target to be distorted to reassert local masculinities. In Armenia, traditional gender norms are mobilised via the performance of a previously unchallenged taken-for-granted patriarchal and militarist masculinity to reclaim and protect the local, based on a masculine understanding of men as

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

saviours of the nation. In contrast, in Georgia it is the EU's perceived elitism and top-down approach that is challenged rather than the issue of VAW *per se*, as progress has already been made in introducing legislation and ratifying the Istanbul Convention. In our discussion, we showed that political opposition leaders, like Levan Vasadze, displaying a charismatic traditional masculinity, engaging in a form of nativism and a selective approach to Westernisation to discredit the EU's liberal reforms and in this way the pro-EU government, to reclaim power in the local.

For Peer Review Only

LOCAL MASCULINITIES AS POLITICAL HOMOPHOBIA: RESISTING EXTERNAL NORMS

As shown in the previous section, although contested, significant progress has been made in terms of introducing VAW regulatory norms (legal protection) in the country cases in question. In this section, we address the related LGBT rights issue. In both Armenia and Georgia, the protection of LGBT rights remains contentious on all sides of the political spectrum. Homosexuality was only decriminalized in Georgia in 2000 (Gvianishvili 2020, 209) and in Armenia in 2003 (Shiriniyan 2021, 957). In 2007, the first Georgian LGBT community-based NGO, "Inclusive Foundation", was established (Luciani 2021, 4) as too the first Armenian community-based organization, "Pink Armenia" (Chairperson at the Human Rights House Yerevan 2019). In Georgia, legal protection on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity has been gradually improved since the decriminalization of homosexuality (Gvianishvili 2020). In 2014, Georgia adopted a widely debated law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (Gvianshvili 2020, 209)[10]. At the time of writing, Armenia does not have comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation (Human Rights Watch 2022).

In 2019, the first ever Pride event was planned for Georgia's capital, Tbilisi. Although a historic event for LGBT activists, it was reduced to a 30-minute gathering in front of the Interior Ministry

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

building owing to the threat of violence from nationalist groups, headed by Levan Vasadze (Agenda.ge 2019). In addition, Georgia's highly influential Orthodox Church had publicly criticized this event calling it a "sin" that goes against the Christian faith, traditional religious teaching and moral values (Agenda.ge 2019). In Armenia[11], the possibility of a similar Pride event was never a realistic option, with public discourse remaining overwhelmingly silent on the issue of celebrating diversity[12]. Yet, this is part of a political trend in Armenia where politicians and powerholders often go to great lengths to avoid words like "LGBT" or "gay" in their public statements, preferring to remain silent on issues of discrimination and violence against the LGBT community. As one Armenian activist (2018) explains.

> These are issues [LGBT] that are easy to manipulate as we [Armenians] are an extremely traditional society. We're afraid of talking about gender, sex and LGBT matters … [Nikol] Pashinyan [Armenian Prime Minister from May 2018]… has attempted to respond to both sides [LGBT supporters and anti-LGBT activists], but he hasn't used the term LGBT itself.

As for Armenia, in Georgia too the LGBT issue polarizes society and raises suspicion among the public that incumbents are using it to divert attention from more pressing issues and that LGBT norms are an alien and even dangerous imposition into Georgian society that people do not understand. As one LGBT activist (2019) explains: *"the EU's position is very problematic … because in our society [Georgian] the abbreviation LGBT doesn't work. People don't believe it's real"*. Another respondent adds:

> For the ruling party, the Georgian Dream, LGBT issues are a kind of a mechanism to avoid talking about poverty, social inequality and economic problems … These [ultra-conservative opposition] groups think that they are in the right, that they have like-

For Peer Review Only

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60

> minded friends outside Europe in America, and that they are part of a bigger group fighting against this "illness" (Georgian human rights activist 2019)

As for VAW, gender equality norms relating to LGBT rights are easy to instrumentalize by opposition forces trying to undermine incumbents, which by extension involves the EU as the external agent seen to be promoting these norms. As a prominent political opposition figure, Levan Vasadze's rhetoric is a good example of this instrumentalism, displaying traditional, local masculinity anchored around the family and marriage as a long-standing Georgian tradition. His political rhetoric could be described as a kind of nationalist "political homophobia", understood as "the totality of strategies and tools, both in policy and mobilizations, through which holders of and contenders over state authority invoke sexual minorities as objects of opprobrium and targets of persecution" (Weiss and Bosia 2013, 3). Consequently, it relates to nationalism and identity, where homophobia becomes a "tool for building an authoritative notion of national collective identity, [and] for impeding oppositional or alternative collective identities" (Weiss and Bosia 2013, 3). This identity building inevitably involves portraying alternative identities as enemies of Georgia:

> They [conservative groups] say these [LGBT] groups are enemies of the Georgian people because they don't want to have families. For Georgians, the family and the Church are very important … so, the main topic is that these liberal groups want to destroy the Georgian nation and this fear of being destroyed is the most important thing to them (Georgian human rights activist 2019).

In the context of LGBT rights, the friend/enemy dichotomy promoted in public discourse can be understood as a dimension of right-wing populist authoritarianism which articulates the nation in opposition to "fifth columnists'' (enemies within the state). Hence, it is a polarizing form of politics intended to alienate the population from the current government. Yet, the nation itself

URL: https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/rfjp E-mail: ifjp@cardiff.ac.uk

For Peer Review Only

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

is not gender neutral but gendered (Nagel 1998). If the nation is gendered, then gender equality norms that affect traditional gender relations provide a perfect playground for the power struggle of diverse political actors/masculinities. This construction and framing of masculinity as heterosexual, and the symbolic enactment of what is "natural" by constructing same-sex relations as "unnatural" and consequently "queer" people as enemies of the nation, shows the embodied gender dimension of norm contestation.

As follows, in both Armenia and Georgia, political opposition groups use this homophobic rhetoric to discredit the ruling group by calling their masculine attributes into question. As the above quote indicated, blaming the current government for the "disturbance" to the "long-established" social order of traditional patriarchal gender relations is an attempt at instrumentalising homophobia as a political tool to undermine their leadership. For local opposition leaders, public acts by LGBT rights campaigners threaten their previously unquestioned power and seemingly undermine the privileged position of men in Georgia or Armenia in general. Portraying the current government in public discourse as supporting these campaigns is to effeminize its leadership and deprive heterosexual men of their traditional rights to control. For example, in relation to the pride event held in Georgia in 2019, Levan Vasadze aggressively counteracted by referring to the power of local men and masculinity: "We will organize ourselves into citizens' brigades … there are lots of people among us with military experience, famous athletes, rugby players, wrestlers … if the propagandists of perversion attempt to hold some sort of demonstration… " (InterpressNews 2019).

The final point to make as part of this discussion relates to aggression and violence surrounding LGBT rights. The relationship between the military and war (perceived as defending the nation) and masculinity is crucial in understanding the ways in which European norms are contested and the ways in which nationalism has been deployed to manipulate the LGBT rights discourse. In

URL: https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/rfjp E-mail: ifjp@cardiff.ac.uk

For Peer Review Only

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

public discourse, homosexuality and alternative sexualities can serve to undermine not only the male bonding necessary to forge and build a nation and defend it through war but also to undermine the nation itself through a (supposed) lack of physical reproduction of the nation that would "naturally" occur in heterosexual relationships. Reproductive heterosexuality promoted by local patriarchal masculinity is at the forefront of national survival based on a militarist understanding of the nation, where non-heterosexual individuals are conceived as "immoral" and "foreign" to an imagined national tradition and essence (Nagel 2003). Hence, this emphasis on traditions, family and marriage that are a big part of the discursive strategies of political opposition groups in Georgia and Armenia, emphasize patriarchy and masculinity in defending "our" nation from the enemies' nations.

As both Georgia and Armenia have ongoing conflicts over territory (Abkhazia and South Ossetia for Georgia, Nagorny Karabakh for Armenia), this nationalist rhetoric relying on male privilege as defenders of the nation and thus on a patriarchal social order, has not lost its momentum. Indeed, this militarized thinking in terms of threats to the nation has been normalized by the population in everyday life (Ziemer 2018), as one Armenian political expert (2019) explains:

> The militarization of society is directly linked to conservative and patriarchal values. It is very hard to overcome them because we still have this conflict, and our soldiers still die.

To conclude, in contradistinction to the public debates on VAW, in both Georgia and Armenia political opposition groups use this homophobic rhetoric to discredit the ruling group by calling their masculinity into question. The friend/enemy dichotomy promoted in public discourse can be understood as a dimension of right-wing authoritarianism which articulates the nation in opposition to 'fifth columnists'. As for VAW, gender equality norms relating to LGBT rights are easy to instrumentalize by opposition forces trying to

For Peer Review Only

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

undermine incumbents, which by extension involves the EU as the external agent seen to be promoting these norms. As a prominent political opposition figure, Levan Vasadze's rhetoric is a good example of this instrumentalism, displaying traditional, local masculinity anchored around the family and marriage as a long-standing Georgian tradition.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS – THE IMPACT OF POPULIST POLITICAL MASCULINITIES ON GENDER EQUALITY NORM DIFFUSION

To conclude, our comparative analysis has demonstrated that despite different external dynamics and relations with regional norm promoters, such as the EU and Russia, in both Georgia and Armenia we see similar dynamics in the contestation of global gender equality norms. This finding highlights the importance of analysing local agency to balance the recent emphasis on the structural aspects of norm diffusion in the post-Soviet which emphasises the role of geopolitical competition between powerful regional actors as a determining factor in norm diffusion, contestation and adoption. Our cross-cultural exploration of populist political actors has revealed that more attention needs to be given as to how and why different localizations of norms occur in the first place. Our research has shown that the local emphasis on patriarchal traditions can be understood as a masculinist strategy to undermine governments which are perceived to be pro-EU, and as a way to reclaim the local subordinate masculinity challenged by a hegemonic world order. Hence, such masculine domestic rivalry often appears as a geopolitical game in which the power hierarchy between the West (EU) and non-West (peripheries in the form of EU accession states) is constructed and reconstructed through public discourses on VAW and LGBT rights.

In the cases of Armenia and Georgia, 2018-2020, it is evident that populist political actors play a central role in shaping debates over the diffusion of global gender equality norms. We have highlighted how masculine identities feed into domestic political dynamics by exploring the

For Peer Review Only

interaction between political elites and various societal groups. Therefore, continued comparative research on the interaction between different actor groups and the agency of both international and domestic actors involved in local norm diffusion processes is important. In addition, beyond Armenia and Georgia, future research on norm contestation should focus on the regionalization of masculinist practices in gender equality norm contestation, to obtain a clearer picture of the persistence of non-democratic trends in the post-Soviet space as a whole. We have shown that this contestation of European gender equality norms can be understood as an attempt by political opposition groups to challenge the global cultural hegemony of liberal values linked to the EU, but at the same time it can also be understood in a more localized way as a discursive challenge to a seemingly more democratic and pro-European government, albeit within the context of a "European"' influence over domestic politics. Hence, the competition over policies aimed at protecting women against violence and enhancing LGBT rights can be read as a domestic struggle over power, where gender equality norms are an easy target to be distorted.

NOTES

1. The authors use the term "LGBT" as it is the primary initialism for sexuality and gender identity. Most importantly, this term was used by research participants during the interviews.
2. According to a 2021 survey conducted by the Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies, more than half of Georgia's population has a negative attitude towards the Russian state. This survey also indicated that for many respondents, EU and NATO membership are seen as ways to resolve Georgia's domestic and foreign policy problems (Khoshtaria et al. 2021).
3. According to the Global Militarisation Index (2020), Armenia's level of militarization is very high. Armenia is ranked as third most militarized country in the world, whereas Georgia is ranked 49th out of 154 countries.

For Peer Review Only

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

4. The authors also conducted prior research in the region. One author conducted interviews in Armenia in 2014 (cf…) while the other author travelled to the region in 2015, 2016 and 2017 as part of a larger ethnographic research project on women's rights and equality issues (cf. …).
5. The examples of political opposition in our subsequent empirical sections are derived from interview data. They are those actors interviewees mentioned most often.
6. Vasadze was mentioned in almost all interviews taken in Georgia.
7. Alexander Dugin is a well-known Russian ideologue who combines nationalism with a geopolitical world view (neo-Eurasianism) strongly critical of liberalism and US hegemony. His work has influenced a range of politicians in Russia since the mid-1990s.
8. His Russian links are well-known. He is as millionaire businessman who made most of his fortune in Russia (Interviewee).
9. As an advocate of Georgia's "selective westernization", he is also the founder of the conservative, Tbilisi-based Demographic Renaissance Foundation (Kincha 2018). In 2016, Vasadze hosted the 10th annual World Congress of Families (WCF) in Tbilisi, with guests including the then Moldovan President, Igor Dodon, Polish PiS senator Antoni Szymański, and Hungarian Ambassador Sándor Szabó (Kincha 2018). In this way, he appeals to conservative allies in the US and Europe by incorporating a traditional patriarchal Orthodox, Russian or Soviet-type masculinity, which in some contexts could be described as a "backlash masculinity".
10. In 2021, Georgian authorities gave the first-ever legal recognition for a transgender person, changing the gender marker from male to female, but only after she provided a medical certificate proving she had undergone surgery (Human Rights Watch 2022).
11. A 2017 Pew Research Center study on religious and national belonging in Central and Eastern Europe found that nearly all Armenians — 97 per cent — believed society should not accept homosexuality (Khandikian 2019).
12. This does not mean there have never been attempts to raise public awareness of diversity issues. In 2012, in Armenia's capital, Yerevan, activists attempted to organize a 'Diversity March' that was labelled by counter-protesters a "gay parade" (Shirinian 2021, 957).

For Peer Review Only

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

REFERENCES

"According to Levan Vasadze, the People's Detachments will Start Patrolling in Tbilisi." *Interpress News*. 16 June 2019. https://www.interpressnews.ge/ka/article/551749-levan-vasazis-gancxadebit-tbilisshi-patrulirebas-saxalxo-razmebi-daicqeben/.

Acharya, A., 2004. "How Ideas Spread: Whose Norms Matter? Norm Localization and Institutional Change in Asian Regionalism." *International Organization* 58 (2): 239-275.

Asian Development Bank. 2018. *Georgia: Country Gender Assessment*. https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/479186/georgia-country-gender-assessment.pdf.

Berthet, V. 2022. "Norm under Fire: Support for and Opposition to the European Union's Ratification of the Istanbul Convention in the European Parliament." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 24 (5): 675-698.

Bettiza, G. and D. Lewis. 2020. "Authoritarian Powers and Norm Contestation in the Liberal International Order: Theorizing the Power Politics of Ideas and Identity." *Journal of Global Security Studies* 5 (4): 559-577.

Bryman, A. 2008. *Social Research Methods.* 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press.

Casier, T. 2021. "Russia and the Diffusion of Political Norms: The Perfect Rival?." *Democratization* 29 (3): 1-18.

"4,633 Charged for Domestic Violence in 2020 throughout Georgia." *Agenda.de*, 12 January 2021. https://agenda.ge/en/news/2021/79.

For Peer Review Only

Democracy Research Institute. 2020. *Understanding and Combating Far-Right Extremism and Ultra-Nationalism in Georgia*. Tbilisi. http://www.democracyresearch.org/files/47dri%20report%20far%20right%20eng.pdf.

Delcour, L. 2021. “The Road to Equality? EU Diffusion of Anti-Discrimination Norms in Armenia.” *Democratization* 29 (3): 1-18.

Demytrie, R. 2021. “Armenia's War Defeat Prompts Bitter Vote on Rebuilding Country.” *BBC News*. June 19, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-57511357.

Draude, A. 2017. “The Agency of the Governed in Transfer and Diffusion Studies.” *Third World Thematics: A TWQ Journal* 2 (5): 577-587.

Duncanson, C. 2009. “Forces for Good? Narratives of Military Masculinity in Peacekeeping Operations.” *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 11 (1): 63-80.

Enloe, C., 2014. *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*. 2nd ed, Berkeley: University of California Press.

Engberg-Pedersen, L., A. Fejerskov and S.M. Cold-Ravnkilde, eds. 2019. *Rethinking Gender Equality in Global Governance: The Delusion of Norm Diffusion*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Fejerskov, A., L. Engberg-Pedersen and S.M. Cold-Ravnkilde. 2019. “Rethinking the Study of Global Gender Equality Norms: Towards a Situated Approach.” In *Rethinking Gender Equality in Global Governance: The Delusion of Norm Diffusion*, Engberg-Pedersen, L. et al., 1-40. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Freedom House. 2022. *Nations in Transit 2022 – Country Report Armenia*. https://freedomhouse.org/country/armenia.

For Peer Review Only

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Freedom House. 2022. *Nations in Transit 2022 – Country Report Georgia*. https://freedomhouse.org/country/georgia.

Global Militarisation Index. 2020. Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies (bicc). https://gmi.bicc.de/#rank@2020

Gradskova, Y. 2019. "Gender Equality as a Declaration: The Changing Environment of Nordic–Russian Cooperation." In *Rethinking Gender Equality in Global Governance: The Delusion of Norm Diffusion*, Engberg-Pedersen, L. et al., 169-190. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Graff, A. and Korolczuk, E. 2022. *Anti-Gender Politics in the Populist Moment*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Grigoryan, A. 2019. "'Armenia First': Behind the Rise of Armenia's Alt-Right Scene." *OpenDemocracy*. September 4, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/armenia-first-behind-the-rise-of-armenias-alt-right-scene/

Gvianishvili, N. 2020. "Invisible Battlefield: How the Politicization of LGBT Issues Affects the Visibility of LBT Women in Georgia" in *Women's Everyday Lives in War and Peace in The South Caucasus,* edited by U. Ziemer, 205-224. London: Palgrave.

Hooper, C. 2001. *Manly States: Masculinities, International Relations and Gender Politics*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Hooper, C. 1998. "Masculinist Practices and Gender Politics: Multiple Masculinities in Internal Relations." in *The Man Question in International Relations*, edited by M. Zalewski and J. Parpart, 28-53. Boulder, Colo: Westview.

Human Rights Watch. 2022. *World Report 2021 – Armenia*. https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/armenia.

For Peer Review Only

Human Rights Watch. 2022. *World Report 2021 – Georgia*. https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2021/country-chapters/georgia.

International Republican Institute. 2020. *Public Opinion Survey on Women's Issues: Residents of Armenia*. https://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/womens_political_participation_breavis_iri_results_presentation_final_07.01.2021.pdf

Keck, M.E. and K. Sikkink. 2014. *Activists Beyond Borders*. Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press.

Khandikian, K. 2019. "Rainbow Hysteria: How LGBT Issues Became a Mainstream Topic of Conversation." *EVN Report*. https://evnreport.com/raw-unfiltered/rainbow-hysteria-how-lgbt-issues-became-a-mainstream-topic-of-conversation/.

Khoshtaria, T., N. Zubashvili, N. Mzhavanadze, E. Metreveli, G. Bilanishvili, K. Emukhvari, A.V. Andreenkova, A.V. Fedotov and E.S. Pozdnyakova. 2021. "Attitudes and Perceptions Towards Russia in Georgia and Towards Georgia in Russia." *Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies*, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, https://gfsis.org.ge/publications/view/3088

Kimmel, M. 2017. *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era*. London: Hachette UK.

Kimmel, M. 1994. "Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity." In *Theorizing Masculinities*, edited by H. Brod and M. Kaufman, 119-141. London: Sage Publications.

Kincha, S. 2018. "Labelling Georgia's Far Right 'Pro-Russian' is Reductionist and Counterproductive." *OC-Media*. August 13. https://oc-media.org/opinions/opinion-labelling-georgias-far-right-pro-russian-is-redujtionist-and-jounterprodujtive/.

For Peer Review Only

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Krook, M.L. and True, J. 2012. "Rethinking the Life Cycles of International Norms: The United Nations and the Global Promotion of Gender Equality. *European Journal of International Relations*, 18 (1): 103-127..

"Levan Vasadze's Quest to Consolidate Georgia's Extreme Right." *Civil.ge*, 2 June 2021. https://civil.ge/archives/421791.

Levitt, P. and S. Merry. 2009. "Vernacularization on the Ground: Local Uses of Global Women's Rights in Peru, China, India and the United States." *Global Networks* 9 (4): 441-461.

Lobban, R., R. Luyt, S. Martin, A. Brooks, D. McDermott and M. Zawisza-Riley. 2020. "Right-Wing Populism and Safe Identities." *NORMA* 15 (1): 76-93.

Löffler, M., R. Luyt and K. Starck. 2020. "Political Masculinities and Populism." *NORMA* 15 (1): 1–9.

Luciani, L. 2021. "Where the Personal is (Geo) Political: Performing Queer Visibility in Georgia in the Context of EU Association." *Problems of Post-Communism*, 1-12.

Meljumyan, A. 2019. "Armenian Government Fighting for Ratification of Convention on Violence against Women. *EurasiaNet*. July 31, https://eurasianet.org/armenian-government-fighting-for-ratification-of-convention-on-violence-against-women.

Merry, S.E. and P. Levitt. 2017. "The Vernacularization of Women's Human Rights." In *Human Rights Futures*, edited by S. Hopgood, J.Snyder and L. Vinjamuri. 213-236, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mosher, D.L. 1991. "Macho Men, Machismo, and Sexuality. *Annual Review of Sex Research* 2 (1): 199-247.

For Peer Review Only

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Mosse, G.L. 1996. *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Mudde, C. 2004. "The Populist Zeitgeist." *Government and Opposition* 39 (4): 541-563.

Nagel, J. 1998. "Masculinity and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality in the Making of Nations." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21 (2): 242-269.

Nagel, J. 2003. *Race, Ethnicity, and Sexuality: Intimate Intersections, Forbidden Frontiers*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Nikoghosyan, A. 2017. The paradox of Armenia's domestic violence law, *OpenDemocracy*, 27 November, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/paradox-of-armenia-s-domestic-violence-law/.

Nuñez-Mietz, F.G. 2019. "Resisting Human Rights through Securitization: Russia and Hungary against LGBT Rights." *Journal of Human Rights* 18 (5): 543-563.

O'Sullivan, M. and Krulišová, K. 2020. "'This Agenda Will Never be Politically Popular'": Central Europe's Anti-Gender Mobilization and the Czech Women, Peace and Security." Agenda. *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 22 (4): 526-549.

Pushaw, C. 2019. "Don't Underestimate the Threat of Georgia's 'Knight in Shining Armour'". *New Europe.* https://www.neweurope.eu/article/dont-underestimate-the-threat-of-georgias-knight-in-shining-armour/.

Roberts, S.P. 2015. "Converging Party Systems in Russia and Central Asia: A Case of Authoritarian Norm Diffusion?." *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 48 (2-3): 147-157.

Roberts, S.P. and Ziemer, U. 2018. "Explaining the Pattern of Russian Authoritarian Diffusion in Armenia." *East European Politics* 34 (2): 152-172.

For Peer Review Only

Sauer, B. 2020. “Authoritarian Right-wing Populism as Masculinist Identity Politics. The Role of Affects.” In *Right-wing Populism and Gender: European Perspectives and Beyond,* edited by G. Dietze and J.Roth. 23-40, Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.

Shirinian, T. 2021. “The Illiberal East: The Gender and Sexuality of the Imagined Geography of Eurasia in Armenia.” *Gender, Place & Culture* 28 (7): 955-974.

Shyrokykh, K. 2022. “Human Rights Sanctions and the Role of Black Knights: Evidence from the EU’s post-Soviet Neighbours.” *Journal of European Integration* 44 (3): 429-449.

Starck, K. and Sauer, B. 2014. “Political Masculinities: Introduction.” In *A Man’s World? Political Masculinities in Literature and Culture*, edited by K. Starck and B. Sauer. 3-10, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholar Publishing.

Swimelar, S. 2019. “Nationalism and Europeanization in LGBT rights and politics: A comparative study of Croatia and Serbia.” *East European Politics and Societies* 33 (03): 603-630.

“Tbilisi Pride disrupted again, clerics, nationalist groups on alert on Tbilisi streets.” *Agenda.de*, 8 July 2019. https://agenda.ge/en/news/2019/1831.

Ün, M.B. 2019. “Contesting Global Gender Equality Norms: The Case of Turkey. *Review of International Studies* 45 (5): 828-847.

UN Women Global Database on Violence against Women. 2018. *Armenia*. http://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/en/countries/asia/armenia

UN Women. 2017. *Georgia Ratifies the Istanbul Convention*. https://eca.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2017/05/georgia-ratifies-the-istanbul-convention

For Peer Review Only

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

UN Women. 2018. *A National Study on Violence Against Women in Georgia 2017*. https://georgia.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/03/national-study-on-violence-against-women-in-georgia-2017

Vieira, A. and S. Vasilyan. 2018. "Armenia and Belarus: Caught between the EU's and Russia's Conditionalities?." *European Politics and Society* 19 (4): 471-489.

Wiener, A. 2018. *Contestation and Constitution of Norms in Global International Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Weiss, M.L. and M.J. Bosia. 2013. "Political Homophobia in Comparative Perspective. In *Global Homophobia: States, Movements and the Politics of Oppression*, edited by M.L. Weiss and M.J. Bosia, 1-29. Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Wiener, A. 2014. *A Theory of Contestation*. London: Springer.

Williams, R. 1977. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

World Bank. 2020. *Population total – Armenia*. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=AM

World Bank. 2020. *Population total – Georgia*. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=GE

Ziemer, U. 2020. "Women against Authoritarianism: Agency and Political Protest in Armenia." *In Women's Everyday Lives in War and Peace in the South Caucasus,* edited by U. Ziemer, 71-100, London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ziemer, U. 2018. "'The Waiting and Not Knowing Can be Agonising': Tracing the Power of Emotions in a Prolonged Conflict in the South Caucasus." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 20 (3): 331-349.

For Peer Review Only

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Zwingel, S. 2012. "How Do Norms Travel? Theorizing International Women's Rights in Transnational Perspective." *International Studies Quarterly* 56 (1): 115-129.

Appendix: List of Interviewee

No.	**Code**	**Interview Date**	**Professional and other background**
1.	1A19	29/06/2019	PR Officer at Women in Black in Armenia, and Feminist Library
2.	2A19	30/06/2019	Global Fund for Children, NGO Activist
3.	3A19	30/06/2019	Adviser to the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of the Republic of Armenia
4	4A19	01/07/219	Director of the Regional Studies Center (RSC)
5	5A19	01/07/2019	Board Member at the Coalition Coalition for the Fight against Discrimination and Equality for Equality, Chairperson at the Human Rights House Yerevan
6	6A19	01/07/2019	Women's Rights NGO
7	7A19	01/07/2019	Human Rights NGO
8	8A19	02/07/2019	Feminist environmentalist activist
9	9A19	02/07/2019	Women's Rights NGO volunteer
10	10A19	02/07/2019	Human Rights Activist
11	11A19	03/07/2019	Freelance, Former Academy Associate at Chatham House
12	12A19	03/07/2019	Executive Director of Political Dialogue
13	13A19	03/07/2019	Co-Founder of Political Dialogue
14	1G19	08/07/2019	Editor-in-Chief at civil.ge
15	2G19	08/07/2019	Researcher, Feminist Activist, Feminist Mother's Diaries
16	3G19	09/07/2019	Director of the Georgian Institute of Politics
17	4G19	11/07/2019	Eurasia Consultant at Equality Now
18	5G19	12/07/2019	Programme Officer at *Kvinna till Kvinna*
19	6G19	15/07/2019	Equality Movement Activist
20	7G19	15/07/2019	Protester, Human Rights Activist
21	8G19	16/07/2019	President of Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies
22	9G19	16/07/2019	Office of State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality, Head of Department for Policy Analysis and International Relations
23	10G19	17/07/2019	Georgian March PhD researcher, Human Rights Activist
24	11G19	17/07/2019	Deputy Country Representative, UN Women
25	12G19	17/07/2019	Heinrich-Boell-Stiftung e.V. Tbilisi South Caucasus Region Gender Program Coordinator
26	13G19	18/07/2019	Lawyer for the protection of refugees
27	14G19	18/07/2019	Leader of the women's movement in Georgia
28	15G19	18/07/2019	Project Coordinator/Expert at Human Rights Education and Monitoring Centre
29	1A18	13/07/2018	Vice President of the Free Liberal Party
30	2A18	13/07/2018	Women's Resource Centre Activist
31	3A18	19/07/2018	Female Journalist
32	4A18	17/07/2018	Chairwoman of the Water Committee, Armenian Government
33	5A18	18/07/2018	Advisor to the Minister of Justice
34	6A18	18/07/2018	Deputy Minister of Nature Protection
35	7A18	18/07/2018	Independent Journalist, Founder of Article 3
36	8A18	18/07/2018	Independent Journalist
37	9A18	20/07/2018	Women's Rights Activist & Protester
38	10A18	20/07/2018	Head of Civil Aviation Committee
39	11A18	20/07/2018	Deputy Minister of Education

For Peer Review Only

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

40	12A18	21/07/2018	Advisor to the Minister of Education
41	13A18	22/07/2018	Human Rights Activist & Protester
42	14A18	23/07/2018	Advisor to the Secretary of the Security Council at the Office to the Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia
43	15A18	23/07/2018	Activist and Protester
44	16A18	23/07/2018	Women's Resource Center Activist & Protester
45	17A18	24/07/2018	Feminist Library, Activist & Protester
46	19A18	27/07/2018	Deputy Minister of Sport and Youth Affairs

For Peer Review Only

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

For Peer Review Only

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

For Peer Review Only

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46

Reviewers' Comments	Authors' Response
Wordcount needs to be less than 9000 words.	**Complete:** The anonymized revision is now at 8973 words excluding the appendix with he list of interviews as agreed. The revised version with the author details is now at 8990 words. The abstract is according to guidelines 179 words.
Second paragraph – 'both states make for an intriguing comparison' – Comment 'You don't seem to do much comparison'.	**Complete:** Thank you for this suggestion. The comparative approach is now clearer in our concluding observation. Note: In the previous revision, we were already recommended to revise our empirical sections to make the comparison clearer. Therefore each main section, starts and ends with a comparison which we have kept for this revision as well. For example, the section on the issue of VAW compares the situation in both countries as in provides a background to the issue which is in both countries similar. We then conclude this whole section in the last paragraph comparing the two countries in regards to the issue of VAW: 'To conclude the empirical discussion on VAW... Similarly, the section on LGBT rights starts with providing the background to both countries and their development of LGBT rights. We conclude this section with a paragraph starting: 'to conclude, in contradistinction to the publica debates in VAW in both Georgia and Armenia …' All in all, there are various reference throughout that indicate a comparison. Hopefully, with now having foregrounded the comparison in the conclusion it will be clearer.
'Gender as norm'	**Complete:** As we were recommended to delete the section on defining gender, we have also deleted this part of outlining the structure of the article.

For Peer Review Only

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46

Methodology paragraph – make the comparative design more explicit.	**Complete:** Thank you for this suggestion. We have now included two sentences explaining the advantages of a comparative approach and why we are using a comparative approach design. Referencing Bryman (2008) as evidence.
Analytical framework section – first paragraph	**Complete:** We have completely deleted any reference to the concept of hegemonic masculinity. The reason we still kept some reference to hegemonic masculinity was simply because R2 (from the previous revision) requested to refer to more criticism of hegemonic masculinity by using work of Demetriou. Deleting it all also helped with the word count as this was one of the main requests for this revision.
Norm paragraph redundant	**Complete:** As recommended with have deleted the third paragraph in the analytical framework section.
Gender paragraph redundant	**Complete:** We have deleted the paragraph. But just to note in the two previous revision requestions, it was not considered redundant. In fact, R1 has criticised our submission twice for not having our own definition of gender included.
Paragraph defining masculinity	**Complete:** As requested we have deleted the two sentences about how power operates.
Reformulate the sentence 'in this article, we specifically examine populist political masculinities …'	**Complete:** We have changed to 'populist political actors' and moved this shorter part into the above paragraph defining political masculinities.

For Peer Review Only

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46

Questions on the last sentence before empirical section on the issue of VAW: 'In sum,….	**Complete:** We have deleted the word 'previously' and kept it 'taken-for-granted' to make the sentence clearer. Previously, was meant to refer to the past before Pashinyan came to power, as well as at other times but is not essential for this sentence. So we appreciate this revision suggestion.
For the section on the issue of VAW, the reviewer questioned why the numbers are so low and whether they are crime statistics and how they are related to the 14% earlier? Public health statistics? And wanted to explain the discrepancy.	**Complete:** Thank you for this interesting question but we checked and as it was already in the revised previous drafts submitted, the discrepancy is explained in the third paragraph, right after this paragraph that discusses data. In the third paragraph we explicitly discuss the reasons, e.g. underreporting and how difficult it is to get data on domestic violence against women because research has found women themselves feel very insecure to report as being affected by a bad reputation. **Complete:** We also have added that the data is from the Prosecutor's office in Georgia as the reviewer requested to state the origins of the data. Much appreciated to have this highlighted. Some more detail on the data obtained: UN Women and the National Statistical Office conducted a nationwide survey on VAW in 2017, targeting women and men ages 15–64. The survey found that approximately 14% of women ages 15–64 (one in seven women) reported they experienced physical, sexual, and/or emotional violence at the hands of an intimate partner. UN Women and National Statistical Office. 2017. National Study on Violence against Women: Summary Report. http://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20georgia/attachments/publications/2018/national%20study%20on%20violence%20against%20women%202017.pdf?la=ka&vs=1053
The last paragraph before the sub-section on VAW in Armenia; the reviewer wanted to know about who the respondents were? Sample of population?	**Complete:** Explainer - The data is obtained from a country report by a World Bank Study, we have referenced. We hope it is understandable that in the framework of this article, we cannot include all this detail in a footnote considering the

For Peer Review Only

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46

	wordcount limit, but just can provide a general overview of the problem with some telling data. *In terms of data, the report provides the following information:* This CGA follows the framework provided by World Development Report 2012: Gender and Development, and it builds on the key findings of the regional gender report, “Opportunities for Men and Women in Emerging Europe and Central Asia,” as well as a recent background study on the missing girls and women of the South Caucasus. The analysis relies on international databases (the Business Environment and Enterprise Performance Survey [BEEPS], Findex, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe’s Gender Statistics, and World Development Indicators). It also relies on national data and statistics—the data from Integrated Household Surveys; the statistics reported in “Women and Men in Georgia” series published by the National Statistics Office of Georgia (GeoStat); and Georgia’s Reproductive and Health Surveys—for quantitative data. In addition, for information on the institutional environment, the report depends on qualitative data gathered among focus groups organized through the World Bank’s multisectoral regional project, Gender, Mobility, and Jobs (collected in May–June 2013) and from the Caucasus Barometer and the Women, Business, and the Law database. The report also expands the analysis by exploiting a variety of secondary sources that provide useful detail for understanding gender disparities in Georgia. Among these are several World Bank technical papers, the United States Agency for International Development’s gender assessment, and reports of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) on population and sex ratios at birth.
Foucault (1991) discourse theory … - out of place	**Complete:** We have deleted the two sentences referring to Foucault.
The sentence on the ‘long history of women in power’	**Complete:** Regarding this sentence, with the help of an interview excerpt we are just noting a trend using history to support the ‘Westernness’ of a state. It is up to the reader to interpret this as ironic or not.

For Peer Review Only

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46

‘fifth columnist’ – reviewer asks whose term is this or to specify.	**Complete:** This is just an old English phrase. We have specified it in brackets ‘enemies within the state’.
The reviewer questions the usage of ‘norm’ in the same paragraph using the ‘fifth columnist’ phrase.	**Complete**: We have changed it to ‘gender equality norms’. Hopefully that makes it clearer now.
Reviewers asked to revise or delete the sentence on EU’s policy making progress.	**Complete:** We understand it reads odd and the interpretation that the reviewer provided was certainly not intended. So, we have deleted the sentence and revised the conclusion substantially, in particular to emphasise the value of a comparative analysis more which our article started off with anyway.

For Peer Review Only