

## **Supplemental Information**

Regional Autonomy in Rich Regions:

Evidence from Ajara, Georgia

# 1. Citizens' Reaction the GD Regime

An interesting extension is to determine if Ajaran's trust in government and their support for the Georgian Dream party increased or decreased once the 2012 election rhetoric wore off and Ajarans were exposed to policies demanding more autonomy that were not in line with their own preferences. We can examine preferences in Ajara and the rest of Georgia in two surveys, one in 2011 and one in 2013. These surveys are conveniently positioned around the 2012 parliamentary and Ajaran Supreme Council elections. I assert that, because of the short time period between the two surveys, the only major political change that would influence opinions in the surveys are the reaction to the GD winning the 2012 election.

Table 4: Vote Share for UNM

Locality <sup>a</sup>	# Voters <sup>b</sup>	2011 <sup>c</sup>	2012 Parliament <sup>d</sup>	2012 SC <sup>e</sup>	2013 <sup>f</sup>
Shuakhevi	8558	--	68.30	68.44	--
Keda	10195	--	51.70	51.51	--
Khulo	13228	--	62.76	62.85	--
Khelvacauri	25831	--	32.67	32.32	--
Kobuleti	32131	--	40.63	40.72	--
Batumi	74559	--	31.39	31.35	--
Ajara	169502	45.33	39.14	39.09	17.01
Georgia	2049293	39.54	42.33	--	27.87

---

<sup>a</sup>Precincts in Ajara listed by population from Georgian Election Data.  
<sup>b</sup>Georgian Election Data from 2012 Parliamentary Elections Party List. Excludes minor parties. There were not differences between the number of voters or the vote shares in Party List versus Majoritarian votes.  
<sup>c</sup>From the Caucasus Research Resource Center Media Survey 2011. Respondents were coded as being from Ajara if they watched Ajara TV daily. Percentage is that of respondents who named the UNM as the party they most preferred. Note that the GD coalition had not formed at this time, so no polling data is available.  
<sup>d</sup>Georgian Election Data for Parliamentary elections Party List.  
<sup>e</sup>Georgian Election Data for Ajaran Supreme Council elections Party List.  
<sup>f</sup>From the Caucasus Research Resource Center EU Survey in 2013. Respondents were coded as being from Ajara if they followed politics on Ajara TV daily. Percentage is that of respondents who stated they had a positive feeling to the UNM.

In Table 4, it is evident that support for the UNM decreased in both Georgia and Ajara from 2011 to 2013. Because of the minor importance of third parties, declining support

for the UNM indicates increasing support for GD. Several interesting trends emerge. First, Ajaran support for GD grew more rapidly than support in the rest of Georgia. Between 2011 and 2012, Georgia as a whole remained stable in their level of support for both parties. Ajaran support for GD increased during this period before increasing sharply after the 2012 election. This indicates that Ajarans were convinced by the GD rhetoric. This trend of voting for national GD politicians has continued in Ajara (and throughout Georgia). However, the apparent exploitation of Ajaran citizens by the Ajaran Supreme Council (decentralizing for personal gain) has resulted in Ajarans cycling through GD politicians. Thus, Ajarans attribute calls for decentralization and the ensuing scandals when politicians overuse their power as personal issues, not ones indicative of the entire GD party. Overall, then, GD succeeded in activating the Ajaran identity to win elections and seize economic benefits.

Note that all major GD rallies held in Ajara were in Batumi and other larger cities. We see from the vote breakdown in 2012 that districts with higher populations where GD would have campaigned most heavily were the districts that voted for the GD most strongly, further supporting the conclusion about the GD's ability to activate regional identity for economic gain.

As a final piece of evidence, we turn to survey data in Ajara and in the rest of Georgia between 2011 and 2013 (See Table 5). In general, levels of trust declined across Georgia between 2011 and 2013. For the Georgian Parliament, which switched from UNM to GD control in 2012, Ajarans were initially more trusting of UNM leadership in 2011. By 2013, trust had fallen for both groups, with a large increase in distrust among Ajarans and a loss of fully trusting citizens in all of Georgia. Even though citizens voted for the GD over the UNM and have continued to do so, their confidence in their representatives in

Parliament

Table 5: Governmental Trust in Ajara

	2011 <sup>a</sup>		2013 <sup>b</sup>	
	Ajara	Not Ajara	Ajara	Not Ajara
Parliament				
Fully Trust	20.24	18.50	5.44	5.13
Trust	28.57	21.95	35.37	42.13
Neutral	38.10	30.60	42.86	41.03
Distrust	3.57	10.63	14.29	9.35
Fully Distrust	9.52	18.32	2.04	2.36
Prime Minister and Ministers				
Fully Trust	19.51	19.65	10.89	10.28
Trust	29.27	22.53	37.62	46.12
Neutral	37.80	28.82	38.94	35.38
Distrust	3.66	10.92	10.89	6.16
Fully Distrust	9.76	18.08	1.65	2.06
President				
Fully Trust	44.71	37.13	3.95	10.27
Trust	22.35	22.84	18.42	27.80
Neutral	24.71	22.60	38.82	27.47
Distrust	0	4.84	20.39	17.54
Fully Distrust	8.24	12.59	18.42	16.92
Local Government				
Fully Trust	--	--	5.33	2.08
Trust	--	--	36.67	34.95
Neutral	--	--	46.67	46.98
Distrust	--	--	10.00	11.09
Fully Distrust	--	--	1.33	4.90
Political Parties				
Fully Trust	--	--	2.74	1.16
Trust	--	--	28.77	15.74
Neutral	--	--	56.85	65.97
Distrust	--	--	9.59	12.62
Fully Distrust	--	--	2.05	4.51

<sup>a</sup>Caucuses Research Regional Center 2011 Mass Media Survey. Ajaran respondents identified as before. Respondent showed card to indicate his or her level of trust for seventeen institutions; relevant governmental institutions listed here. Local government and political party trust was not questioned in 2011.

<sup>b</sup>Caucuses Research Regional Center 2013 EU Survey. Ajaran respondents identified as before. Respondent showed card to indicate his or her level of trust for seventeen institutions, some of which were different than those in 2011. As a robustness check on these results, especially to see if the Ajara TV categorization method was capturing Ajarans successfully, I compared the 2013 results with a 2013 public opinion study from Transparency International Georgia. Here respondents are identified by region (southeast, northwest) and type (rural and urban). Ajara is in the southwest, so I captured both rural and urban results for this region. Batumi is the only large city in all of southwest Georgia, so we can be reasonably sure respondents identified as urban southwesterners are from Batumi. Results are comparable to the 2013 EU study and show no major differences between southwest residents (urban and rural) and the rest of Georgia.

has decreased.

Trust in the Georgian President further emphasizes this point. Since there was no presidential election in 2012, Saakashvili of the UNM held power throughout this period. His trust levels precipitously dropped, especially in Ajara where, we can argue, the GD campaign against him was particularly strong.

The Prime Minister is an interesting exception to decreased trust in government. Though fewer people fully trust the new GD Prime Minister, probably due to the decline in trust in government, the Prime Minister is relatively more trustworthy than the Parliament and is trusted more than the UNM Prime Minister was in 2011. This indicates that voters trusted Bidzina Ivanishvili as the leader of the GD more than their local GD representatives.

Finally, while we lack 2011 data for Local Government or Political Parties, there are not differences in trust between Ajarans and Georgians regarding their local government. Ajarans generally trust political parties more, but the extremely high proportion of neutral citizens may indicate that Georgians really do not consider political parties to be particularly important institutions since they have not developed much of an opinion on them.

## 2. Ajaran Supreme Council Laws

To show some of the benefits Ajaran leaders created for themselves while in office, I translated and read all laws and regulations passed in Ajara in 2014 and 2015.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Legislation was not available for 2012 or 2013. Since the intent was to isolate the ways in which the GD party used the Ajaran legislative system for their own gain, legislation passed in 2011 or earlier was not included.

Table 6: Classification of Ajaran Laws (Translated from the Ajaran Supreme Council)

Type	# in 2015	# in 2014	% in 2015	% in 2014
Appointments and Modifications	26	10	76.47	55.56
Finance and Budget	7	5	20.59	27.78
Resolutions	1	1	2.94	5.56
Voting Rights	1	0	2.94	0
Property Rights	0	2	0	11.11
Subtotal	34	18	--	--
Translation Failure	2	6	5.56	25.00
Total	36	24	--	--

Despite the relatively high rate of translation failure in 2014, the rates at which each type of law was passed are comparable (See Table 6).<sup>2</sup> We see that the vast majority of recorded time spent in the Ajaran Supreme Council involves administrative matters. The types of laws in this category are either appointments or resignations from positions in the Ajaran government or substantively unimportant line item modifications to existing laws. Of the laws in the finance and budget category five in 2015 and all five in 2014 were reporting budgetary decisions. Excluding the resolutions, since they are statements on current events, this leaves five laws of substantive interest that were passed during this time period.

Two of these substantive laws lack any attempt at wrestling more autonomy from the Georgian central government. Law 108 concerns allocating money to study windbreaks in forests. Law 151 defines the voting rights of prisoners and active military. Law 116 concerns land reform. In Ajara, land reform had been promised since 2004. The poor were meant to receive deeds to small parcels of land that they were currently farming for free from the government because they had previously been farming on land without a

---

<sup>2</sup> Ajaran laws are available at <http://sca.ge> in Georgian only and in PDF format. I passed each piece of legislation through an optical character recognition system to extract the Georgian words from each PDF. I then translated the recognized text and interpreted it. OCR in English with high quality scans has a 1% character failure rate, meaning that 1 out of 100 characters scanned will be interpreted incorrectly. This rate is almost certainly higher for a complex language such as Georgian, explaining the high rate of failure. Some laws could not be OCRed because of the quality of the scans or their orientation on the page, while other laws were successfully OCRed, but translation rendered them indecipherable for whatever reason.

deed. Delaying land reform was a way for the Ajaran government to give away property to investors before it granted deeds to the poor, allowing for increased regional investment and tax collection. This law confirms the intent of land reform, but its continued delay was financially motivated.

Law 127 established local control in Ajara over additional aspects of the Ajaran budget, while law 138 developed local control over property that the Georgian government was attempting to privatize. Both laws appear to be reactions to the Georgian government's strategy of quickly privatizing land in Ajara in order to attract investment, while Ajara lacked budgetary control over these property sales or the taxes associated with them. After being blindsided by the rapid economic growth and interest in investing in Ajara, Ajaran leaders tried to assert their ability to control local taxes and property rights in order to locally redistribute this windfall.