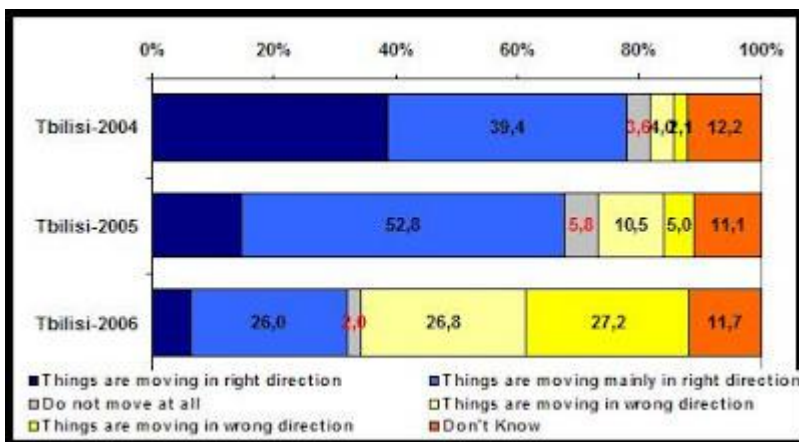


Sunday, November 11, 2007

[Political Events in Georgia | Source of Dissatisfaction?](#)

We normally leave political analysis to the many other qualified commentators. However, given current events, it is interesting to see that our Data Initiative shows that ever since 2004 there was a powerful trend of disenchantment in Georgia. Below, see the responses we received when asking "Do you think that things in our country are moving in the right direction?" Blue is positive, yellow negative. The data is for Tbilisi.

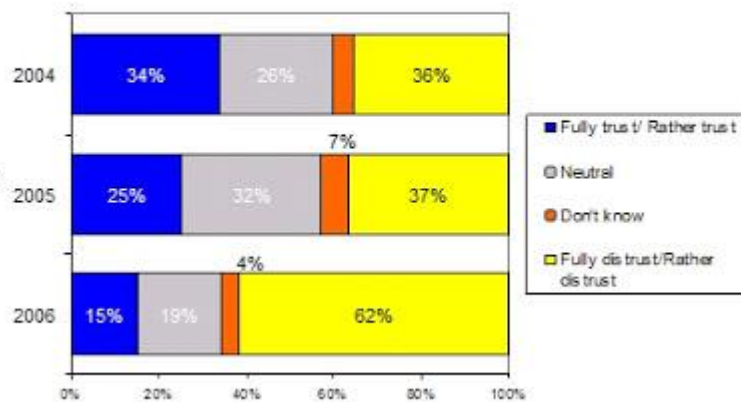


So what is wrong, in people's view? It is often reported that the protests are primarily based on economic disappointment following the revolution. There is some plausibility to that statement. In 2006, 40% of Georgian respondents told our interviewers that their economic situation basically had stayed the same. And 23% of respondents said that their situation actually had gotten worse.

However, Georgians overall do expect significant improvement: 34% were expecting that economic situation of their household will improve, while 17% believe things will get worse. That glass is half full: twice as many optimists is a significant proportion.

One friend suggested that the real reason for protest was not the social hardship. "Georgians", he said, "are used to living in difficult conditions, they can deal with that. What gets them really worked up is the sense of injustice and impunity." There is some corroboration for that view in CRRC's Tbilisi data.

Trust in Courts



Essentially this suggests that faith in the judiciary collapsed by 2006. Maybe this indeed is the more plausible explanation for the deep-rooted disenchantment. Perhaps people's expectations ultimately even were not so unrealistic: they expected to get a fair deal, not a great one. Who gets what when is less important than how this is decided. When the government failed to deliver on that rule-of-law expectation, and failed in some high-profile cases (notably the Girgviani killing), the patience began to wear thin.

There is a kernel of good news in this: the negative lesson of the recent events is that whatever you do in reform, the difficulty of reducing poverty will catch up with you. The analysis above suggests that an optimistic alternative interpretation is possible. As long as people believe that justice is being done, you probably can count on considerable patience. If the current Georgian government gets another lease of life, they may want to test that proposition.

2007 data will be released soon. Stay tuned.