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WHEN RISK DOES NOT TRIGGER POLICY CHANGE: THE CASE OF  
GEORGIA'S APPROACH TO THE PROTECTION OF CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

MA thesis

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## **ABSTRACT**

As the world becomes more dependent on technology and interconnected systems, the need for robust critical infrastructure protection measures has become increasingly important for countries worldwide. Protecting critical infrastructure, such as pipelines, railways, networks of telecommunication, and many more, is vital for safeguarding essential systems and services from different threats, such as cyber-attacks, physical threats, natural disasters, and so on, ensuring the continuity of daily life and national security. Against this background, this study seeks to explore the continuity of policy in Georgia regarding critical infrastructure protection, or in fact the absence of a policy for critical infrastructure protection, since in time period of interest for this study, no such policy has been developed. The fact that there is no legal framework that regulates this issue seems puzzling, given both the rising significance of this all over the world and the security threats faced by Georgia in the last two decades. In order to understand the reasons behind the continued absence of a legal framework for critical infrastructure protection, this thesis employs the theories of policy change and non-change to look for possible factors hindering policy change in Georgia. Utilizing elite and expert interviews together with legal documents of Georgia, this thesis came to the conclusion that the prime reason for the enduring absence of a policy framework regarding critical infrastructure protection, are historical legacies of Georgian policy-making, which contains in itself several themes and topics such as general neglect towards security issues and path-dependent nature of institutions. This means that the historical institutionalist account seems particularly well suited to account for the enduring absence of such a policy framework in Georgia.

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## Introduction

Critical infrastructure and its enterprises are crucial to our modern society. The term Critical infrastructure was coined in the 1990s in the United States (Ali & Babar, 2022). It was defined as the infrastructure that is the most valuable to the state and a failure of which could compromise the security and progress of the whole country (Ibid). According to another definition, a critical infrastructure comprises systems and assets, both physical and virtual, that are so vital to a nation that any disruption of their services could have a serious impact on national security, well-being, public health or safety, or any combination of these above mentioned (Alcaraz & Zeadally, 2014). In the modern age, services like power, telecommunication, and transportation have become an integral part of everyday life. Knowing the devastating results of critical infrastructure malfunction alongside cyber-attacks and states that are willing to use this form of threats, it has become vital for security planners to ensure the security of critical infrastructure (Maglaras, et al., 2019).

While the importance of this issue means that one would expect all states to prioritize ensuring the protection of critical infrastructure, this is not the case. Among those states that do not meet this expectation is Georgia. Georgia does not have any tangible legislative framework that would work to ensure the security of the critical infrastructure and directly targets critical infrastructure and critical infrastructure protection. There have been no changes in security policy regarding critical infrastructure for decades, and the legislative framework that would be concentrated on critical infrastructure protection, as mentioned above, is non-existent. Instead, there are several documents that touch upon some related issues but do not provide any holistic approach toward critical infrastructure. This creates a baffling puzzle because, as already mentioned above, considering the vitality of normal functioning of critical infrastructure assets, by not having a legal framework concentrated on their protection, there is a well-known risk of leaving critical infrastructure vulnerable that is not being addressed.

Georgia is a small country striving to join the European Union and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Because of this Western course, Georgia has experienced Russian aggression multiple times. Russian position has been clear, Georgia should say no to its Western course and European integration, return to the Russian sphere of influence, accept the new reality (recognize the occupied territories as independent states), and this will result in friendly neighbor relations. Georgia has been adamant about continuing its European

integration and the Western course, resulting in occupied territories and constant threats from Russia. Georgia has experienced multiple cyberattacks on its critical infrastructure. The history of cyberattacks against Georgia started in July 2008, when Russian cyberattacks targeted on Government structures, media outlets, and the banking sector seriously damaged the country's critical infrastructure. This was followed by the 2008 war in August. This was the first instance where cyber-attacks were carried out at the same time as armed conflict (Jgarkava, 2021, p. 1). Georgian governmental or private websites have become the objects of cyber-attacks many times in 2008-2014. These attacks were mostly coming from Russia and sometimes from occupied territories, mainly Sokhumi (Gotsiridze & Svanidze, 2015, p. 18). Since this, Georgia has experienced several cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure, for example in 2019, there was a wide-scale attack on more than 15 000 websites like Georgia's president's administration, the court system, and many more, and was planned and carried out by Russian Federation (Tabula, 2020). Another example of such a cyber-attack was On September 1, 2020, when a cyber-attack was carried out on the computer system of the Ministry of Internally displaced people from the occupied territories, Labor, Health and Social Protection of Georgia, the target of which was the central apparatus of the Ministry and its structural units, including the National Agency for Disease Control and Public Health. The result was the unlawful acquisition and use of medical documentation and essential information related to pandemic management stored in the databases of the Public Health Research Center (Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2020). These instances show that there is a need for critical infrastructure protection. It is important to mention that these are examples of cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure, but critical infrastructure does not only entail cyber and informational sectors in itself. Georgia is vulnerable in terms of foreign investment, towards attacks on important pipelines, cyber-attacks on different databases, compromising of telecommunications networks, and in general, not having a strategic plan makes the country more susceptible to bigger damage in case of a crisis or war.

The problem of a non-existent policy that would create a legislative framework regarding critical infrastructure is known, and many experts have warned that critical infrastructure needs to be addressed (Goguadze, 2018) (Jgarkava, 2021) (UNDP, 2021). There is an ongoing project funded by the Estonian Ministry of Defence to help Georgia elaborate modern criteria and a legal framework for critical infrastructure (Economic Policy Research Center, 2021). As already mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the puzzling problem that this thesis will be interested in is the absence of a tangible legislative framework for the protection of critical

infrastructure in Georgia. Even though there is a known vulnerability, the state is not addressing it. Against this background, this study aims to determine why this is the case. For this purpose, it seeks to answer the research question: What explains the absence of a tangible legislative framework regarding critical infrastructure in Georgia, considering that there is a known vulnerability?

In order to answer the research question, the study relies on literature to explain policy change (or continuity), theories of Advocacy Coalition Framework and Historical Institutionalism, and concepts of path dependence, policy learning, and policy diffusion. What these strands of literature have in common and what makes them suitable for the purpose of this study is that they explain why policy change occurs or why there might be continuity. The reason behind choosing these theories and concepts is that they provide alternative explanations and highlight different factors. This way, we can examine several possibilities of change being hindered by problems coming from civil society, institutions, problem of knowledge, and more. The adoption of a tentative legislative framework, or the failure to do so, can be conceptualized as policy change or continuity (non-change). Following the above-mentioned literature, such continuity can be explained by a lack of active advocacy, high costs of reversal, historical legacies, lack of knowledge and awareness, or lack of alliances or partnerships with countries that have good practices in this area. While either of these factors could play a role, it is the purpose of the empirical part of the study to find out which one explains continuity regarding the absence of a legal framework for the protection of critical infrastructure in the case of Georgia.

As a research design, I decided to proceed with a single case study. A single case study will allow me to provide a comprehensive assessment of a more extended time period in which policy change could have happened yet did not happen. To explain the case selection, besides the initial interest in the case of Georgia, Georgia is a particularly insightful case to explore the dynamics of policy regarding critical infrastructure protection because we can see that in an environment where the protection of critical infrastructure has become very important, there is a country that in the last two decades has not developed any legal framework concerning critical infrastructure nor has it updated security policy in this regard. This is a case where we would expect the change in this matter to occur because Georgia has relatively recent experience with cyber-attacks and physical ones as well on critical infrastructure. As already explained in the previous paragraphs, there are apparent threats and risks, and therefore, Georgia would be



expected to implement a change according to which there would be more emphasis on securing critical infrastructure, for example, legal framework, yet there is no such change. It can be seen as an extreme case of continuity of policy.

As for the methods, this thesis will employ qualitative analysis and directly use the data gathered from the interviews. The data will be gathered from in-depth elite and expert interviews conducted with policy-makers, people directly involved in security issues in Georgia, and experts in security, all familiar with debates and processes surrounding policy change concerning the protection of critical infrastructure in the last two decades. Another source of data will be legal documents of Georgia connected to issues around critical infrastructure. These documents will be accessed on the Legislative Herald of Georgia website, where all the legal documents of Georgia are accessible. To determine the dependent variable of this study – policy continuity, the data from legal documents and interviews will be examined. Moving on to the explanatory factors, the data gathered from the interview results will be used.

Following the introduction, the thesis will consist of three main chapters: The first chapter will build a theoretical framework for studying policy change/continuity and provide a framework with a set of potential explanations behind continuity. The second chapter will describe the methodological framework, including methods used for uncovering the reasons behind continuity. The third chapter consists of an analysis of the dynamics of policy change or policy continuity concerning the protection of critical infrastructure in Georgia in the time period of the last two decades, 2003-2023. Each chapter will consist of sub-chapters focused on specific topics. In the end, final conclusions will be presented.

# **Chapter 1: Critical infrastructure protection and theories of policy change**

As described in the introduction, this thesis revolves around critical infrastructure protection and policy change. In today's world, securing critical infrastructure has become increasingly important. This chapter will be divided into two parts. In the first part of this chapter, essential concepts like critical infrastructure, critical infrastructure protection, policy, and policy change will be conceptualized and thoroughly explained. This chapter will also introduce the theoretical framework, drawing on the literature on different theories of policy change. This framework will present possible explanations of the phenomenon in question. The second part of this chapter will present a theoretical framework. The following discussed theories and concepts will be examined: Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF), Historical Institutionalism, path dependence, policy learning, and policy diffusion.

## **1.1 Conceptualization: protection of critical infrastructure and policy change**

First of all, since this study is centrally concerned with the phenomenon of critical infrastructure protection, it is important to define what securing critical infrastructure, or critical infrastructure protection means. To do so, it is essential to have the definition of critical infrastructure itself. The term critical infrastructure was coined in the 1990s in the United States (Ali & Babar, 2022, p. 2). The very first definition was given in Presidential Decision Directive 63, which dates back to 1998 in the United States (Gallais & Filiol, 2017, p. 64). It was defined as the infrastructure that is the most valuable to the state and a failure of which could compromise the security and progress of the whole country (Ali & Babar, 2022, p. 1). During that time, critical infrastructure included those physical and virtual systems that were vital to the minimum operation of the economy and the government (Gallais & Filiol, 2017, p. 64). Since this initial definition appeared, several others have followed. According to another definition, critical infrastructure comprises of systems and assets, both physical and virtual, that are so vital to a nation that any disruption of their services could have a serious impact on national security, well-being, public health or safety, or any combination of these above mentioned (Alcaraz & Zeadally, 2014, p. 53).

There are many more definitions of critical infrastructure and despite the vast number and variety of definitions, no single definition provides a complete and accurate description. Most of the definitions of critical infrastructure come from the states. When they adopt a legal

framework for critical infrastructure, they define what they mean by that. The list of the components of critical infrastructure is where the definitions from state to state differ the most. The most cited sectors in the lists of components of critical infrastructure sectors are transport, energy, communication technology, information technology, finance, water, food, health, defence, banking, emergency services, government. Here I will provide different definitions of critical infrastructure that we encounter around the world. First, it is important to look at definitions that international organisations and countries give, because this shows us how the term of critical infrastructure is used on a practical level. If we begin on a broader level, we can look at the European Union. The Council Directive 2008/114/CE gives the definition of critical infrastructure as

An asset, system or part thereof located in Member States which is essential for the maintenance of vital societal functions, health, safety, security, economic or societal well-being of people, and the disruption or destruction of which would have a significant impact in a Member State as a result of the failure to maintain those functions. (The Council of the European Union, 2008)

In 2007 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) held a session about critical infrastructure protection, where the Parliamentary Assembly came to a conclusion that there is no one universally agreed definition of critical infrastructure. They concluded that “critical infrastructure is generally understood as those facilities and services that are vital to the basic operations of a given society, or those without which the functioning of a given society would be greatly impaired” (Jopling, 2007, p. 2). If we stay on a supranational level, we can look at the Asia-Pacific Telecommunity and the 2012 April South Asian Telecommunication Regulator’s Council (SATRC) report on Critical information infrastructure protection and cyber security and we will see that they use the definition of critical infrastructure as per International Telecommunication Union and according to it critical infrastructure is

The computers, computer systems and/or networks, whether physical or virtual, and/or the computer programs, computer data, content data, content data and/or traffic data so vital to a country that the incapacity or destruction of or interference with such systems and assets would have a debilitating impact on security, national or economic security, national public health and safety, or any combination of those matters (Regulations, 2012, p. 3).

If we move on from the international level to the national one and look at some states, we can see that, for example, in Germany, critical infrastructure is defined in the National Strategy for Critical Infrastructure, and it describes this concept as

The organisational and physical structures and facilities of such vital importance to a nation's society and economy that their failure or degradation would result in sustained supply shortages, significant disruption of public safety and security, or other dramatic consequences (Federal Ministry of the Interior, 2009).

In United Kingdom, the government defines the critical national infrastructure as

Those critical elements of infrastructure (namely assets, facilities, systems, networks or processes and the essential workers that operate and facilitate them), the loss or compromise of which could result in:

- a) Major detrimental impact on the availability, integrity or delivery of essential services - including those services whose integrity, if compromised, could result in significant loss of life or casualties - taking into account significant economic or social impacts; and/or
- b) Significant impact on national security, national defence, or the functioning of the state (National Protective Security Authority, 2023)

Australian government published the Critical Infrastructure Resilience Strategy in February 2023. According to this document critical infrastructure is defined as

Those physical facilities, systems, assets, supply chains, information technologies and communication networks which, if destroyed, degraded, compromised or rendered unavailable for an extended period, would significantly impact the social or economic wellbeing of Australia as a nation or its states or territories, or affect Australia's ability to conduct national defence and ensure national security (Cyber and Infrastructure Security Centre, 2023).

We can see that these different definitions of critical infrastructure might seem more or less the same, but they differ in a number of aspects. The list of critical infrastructure sectors grows

over the years, technology develops, and definitions change. As we have seen above, states focus on their definitions and similarly, supranational alliances like European Union focus on their Member States. Colleen Newbill suggested in his article that it would be helpful and beneficial to establish a globally accepted definition for critical infrastructure that would balance international norms and individual state sovereignty, and this global definition would focus on protecting the critical infrastructures that are “necessary and vital to the survival of civilians rather than that of a nation-state” (Newbill, 2019, p. 777). The single and global definition of critical infrastructure has not been developed yet, but Gallais and Filiol (Gallais & Filiol, 2017) took twenty definitions of critical infrastructure from different European, American, African, Asian, and Pacific states, and organisations, compared them to each other, identified missing components, discussed their implications, and came up with one broader and more suitable definition. Since the individual definitions of critical infrastructure are mainly dictated by the vision of the defender, for example the state, they usually appear somewhat local, static, and restrictive as well. Against this trend, the authors proposed a definition that takes into account most extensive number of elements possible:

Critical infrastructure can be a company, an institution, an organisation, facilities, services, and equipment, whether regional, national, or international, which, if disrupted, damaged, or destroyed, would have a serious impact on the health, safety, security, or economic well-being of citizens or the effective functioning of governments and other infrastructures depending on it (Gallais & Filiol, 2017, p. 74).

In this thesis, I will use this definition of critical infrastructure since, as already mentioned above, it takes into account the most elements and gives a clear description of the concept. This means that when thinking about Georgia, critical infrastructure assets would be any company, institution, organisation, or any above-mentioned services which, if damaged, or disrupted, would compromise not only security but in some cases, health, safety, or economic well-being of people and functioning of government and its structures. As such, it could involve not only governmental assets, or public infrastructure, but also private and business sector as well. In order to understand what critical infrastructure means, it can be helpful to ask ourselves a question what would happen if it shut down? For example, if we take an entertainment park if it shut down, it would disappoint a lot of children, but it would not have a serious impact on either the health, safety, security, or economic well-being of citizens, nor on the functioning of governments; therefore, an entertainment park cannot be seen as a critical infrastructure. We

can bring other infrastructures as examples: recreational facilities, like parks, and playgrounds, commercial buildings like shopping centres, and office buildings that are not connected to essential services like hospitals, fire stations, and more similar infrastructure that are essential to the functioning of society.

### **1.1.1 Protection of critical infrastructure as a core task of government**

In the modern age, services like power, telecommunication, transportation have become an integral part of everyday life, so naturally, modern societies have become highly dependent on the uninterrupted functioning of critical infrastructure. As already mentioned above, the failure of critical infrastructure could have serious repercussions, hence why their protection has become one of the core tasks of governments and corporations (Brem, 2015, p. 191). Ensuring the protection of critical infrastructure is a core task of the government, and in order to perform this task, the government needs to formulate a policy regarding this sector. To put it in other words, the protection of critical infrastructure is done through policy, for example, creating a legal framework that concerns critical infrastructure. Securing critical infrastructure, or critical infrastructure protection, is not a very new concept. If we look at the United States and trace the development of critical infrastructure protection over decades, we will see that it evolved from mere awareness of the problem to the core part of national strategy combating terrorism and not only.

In this section, the historical development of the discipline of critical infrastructure protection will be presented. This is to demonstrate that protecting critical infrastructure has a long history, and it gradually has become central to states. This shows that the centrality of the issue can be expected from states, in our case, from Georgia. It can be said that critical infrastructure and the field of critical infrastructure protection emerged in the late 1990s as key elements of homeland security because, as we can observe, the national strategy for homeland security at that time included the protection of critical infrastructure sectors, such as telecommunications, power, water, health and medical services, transportation systems, etc. The aforementioned Presidential Decision Directive (PDD-63) issued by Bill Clinton in 1998 was concerned with this issue. It clearly states that the intent is “the United States will take all necessary measures to swiftly eliminate any significant vulnerability to both physical and cyber-attacks on our critical infrastructures including especially our cyber systems” (The White House, 1998). Even though this is where the emergence of the field and definition and recognition of it is visible,

we can say that it really began when the National Communications System was created in 1963 (Lewis, 2006, p. 30). This was a result of problems that followed the telecommunication troubles during the Cuban Missile Crisis, when Kennedy and Khrushchev had difficulties due to inadequate telecommunication technology, and this created a threat to negotiations.

In Europe, an equivalent to the 1998 Presidential Decision Directive (PDD-63) of the United States that set up the national program of Critical Infrastructure is the European Program for Critical Infrastructure Protection (EPCIP) (Commission of the European Communities, 2006). It is important to note that in the beginning, a myriad of the basic elements from the United States' approach towards critical infrastructure protection was transferred to Europe through NATO (Pursiainen, 2009, p. 2). The main goal of EPCIP was to ameliorate the protection of critical infrastructure in the European Union by creating an EU framework specifically concerned with the protection of critical infrastructure. It shows that in order to manage to have a proper system of protection for critical infrastructure, it is vital to create a framework, a policy regarding the critical infrastructure.

The relevant literature shows that different definitions are offered when talking about the subject of critical infrastructure. We look at these definitions to determine not only what critical infrastructure means but also what is meant by critical infrastructure protection. It is essential to look at different definitions and find one suitable for this study. According to the Council Directive on EPCIP, the definition of protection in this context is "all activities aimed at ensuring the functionality, continuity and integrity of critical infrastructures in order to deter, mitigate and neutralize a threat, risk or vulnerability" (European Council, 2008). The concept of resilience is also used instead of protection in a definition provided by the United Nations' International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR). According to this definition, resilience is "The ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate to and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions" (United Nations, 2009). Since the EPCIP definition of protection includes the word "deter" there is a component that shows not only response after the damage has done but also deterring it before. In the UN definition we can see the word "resist" which puts more emphasis on resilience. In this study, the word protection is going to be used, but there is a resilience factor in there as well, as we can see in the EPCIP definition. There is currently a debate about extending the concept of Critical Infrastructure Protection to Critical Infrastructure Resilience.

This new concept would encompass in itself Critical Infrastructure Protection as well (Pursiainen, 2009, p. 3). However, since the focus of this paper is more protection of the critical infrastructure than resilience, which is the next step, the term used throughout this document will be protection because the case of discussion needs to take the first steps and therefore, there is no discussion of resilience yet. This means that when this thesis refers to the protection of critical infrastructure and a policy that aims to achieve the protection of critical infrastructure in the following, the meaning behind this is that there should be a policy that would provide a legal framework for activities that are aimed at ensuring “functionality, continuity, and integrity of critical infrastructures” (European Council, 2008).

### **1.1.2. Policy change**

Having defined both critical infrastructure and the protection of critical infrastructure as a core task of the government, the following section turns to policy change as what needs to occur in order to create a new policy for the protection of critical infrastructure in the face of the current context and challenges. Here we get to one of the most critical questions: What is the policy change? How do we conceptualize the policy change? In order to be able to discuss policy change, it is essential to define what is meant by policy. In a widely spread definition of policy Dye describes public policy as “anything a government chooses to do or not to do” (Dye, 2017, p. 1). Rudolf Klein and Theodore Marmor define public policy as “what governments do and neglect to do” (Klein & Marmor, 2006, p. 892). We can thus see that policy is about choice. It is not something that happens by itself, but there are a lot of different choices involved, such as the choice of reasons for action or inaction, the choice of how to react to outcomes of the policy, and the choice of instruments of policy. To connect this to the case under discussion, policy would be a choice of a government to create a legal framework for critical infrastructure. However, as is the case in this research focusing on the creation of a policy, policy change can also mean new and innovative policies instead of a change of an already existing policy in itself. Meaning that change can take different forms, depending on whether initially there was already a policy in place, in this case, change would mean a change in the policy or change of the policy itself. But if there was no policy in place, change means the creation of a policy, and if there is no change, this means that there is continuity of the absence of a policy. In this concrete case under discussion, the adoption of a tentative legislative framework, or failure to do so, can be conceptualized as policy change, or continuity (non-change). When talking about policy change, it is important to look at what it is not. The opposite of policy change is non-



change in policy, which can be described as policy continuity. If we connect this to the case under discussion, the policy that is continuous is essentially the absence of a policy. This means that the absence of a policy can be termed as a policy, and in this case this policy is continuous. When the new policy is adopted, this can be termed as policy innovation (Shipan & Volden, 2008, p. 841). To connect this to the study case, if a new policy regarding critical infrastructure protection would arise when there was none before, this would be policy innovation. As mentioned above, the adoption of a legislative framework can be termed as policy change. In a reality of the absence of a legislative framework, creating one would be a change of policy.

Before I go any further into the theories themselves, it is important to distinguish between policy change and policy reform. As Lucie Cerna mentions in her paper, these terms are often used interchangeably in literature but it is important to clarify what we mean by each (Cerna, 2013, p. 4). Policy change is something that is a significant shift in existing structures or new and innovative policies (Bennett & Howlett, 1992, p. 275). On the other hand, policy reform would be something that is a change in a policy, but as Fullan notes, reform may not be able to generate change (Fullan, 2000, p. 6). It is important to point out what non-change in policy means as well. When I mention non-change in policy, absence of policy change, policy continuity, or inertia in policy, I refer to the tendency of policies to remain unchanged, to persist over time, even if they face changing circumstances. Policy change, in this case refers to overcoming inertia in policy. To connect this to the case of this study, inertia in policy, or policy continuity, means that old policies have persisted and there is no policy regarding critical infrastructure, and policy change would be the creation of a legal framework concerning critical infrastructure. Policy continuity refers to the perpetuation of an existing policy irrespective of its content or type. As already mentioned above absence of policy can be termed a policy as well. Here we have an absence of a legal framework for critical infrastructure, and this is a policy. Policy change would be the creation of such a legal framework and, therefore, until this change happens, there is policy continuity. The policy change would put an end to policy continuity; therefore, they are opposites. Having introduced the main concepts, the following section is going to introduce explanations of under what conditions such policy change occurs and, therefore, when one can expect states to change their policy regarding the protection of critical infrastructure or under what condition such policy change might get delayed or remain altogether absent.

## **1.2 Explanations of policy change and continuity – theoretical framework**

In order to observe policy change or absence thereof – policy continuity, the following section explains the theoretical framework for a set of possible explanations for the case at hand. Whereas this study is interested in the policy continuity under conditions when policy change could be expected to occur, it draws on accounts of the policy change and the factors they have identified as triggering policy change in order to point to the factors that may explain policy continuity. This will be done by introducing some of the most prominent theories concerning policy change and, therefore, several reasons behind it and, on this basis, also what explains policy continuity. This thesis will discuss the theories of Advocacy Coalition Framework and Historical Institutionalism and concepts of path dependence, policy learning, and policy diffusion. The reasoning behind choosing these theories is connected with the case under discussion. When we look within these theories, we see the reasons behind continuity in the policy that resonate with the case chosen for discussion. Advocacy Coalition Framework and Historical Institutionalism provide two different views on policy change and where it comes from: if Historical Institutionalism talks about the importance of institutions, Advocacy Coalition Framework connects the change with the civil sector and society. Policy learning refers to a process of gaining more knowledge and awareness about policies. Policy diffusion refers to a more external process of spreading policies from one country to another. The following section will list the theories that explain why policy change might not occur, therefore, show the reasons behind policy continuity. Relevant literature will be reviewed, and explanations given by each theory will be listed. After this, the analysis chapter will reveal which of the potential explanations will be more accurate for the case under discussion.

### **1.2.1 Advocacy Coalition Framework**

The first theory that will be discussed and which can provide an account of the occurrence of policy change or policy continuity is the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF). The initial version of this theory was developed by Paul A. Sabatier (Sabatier P. A., 1988). In the mid-80s, he created a collaboration with Hank C. Jenkins-Smith, who had developed a somehow similar conceptions in public policy studies independently. Since then, they and other scholars as well continued to revise and refine the Advocacy Coalition Framework according to their views and application to different policy domains (Sabatier P. A., 1998, p. 98). The main goal of the Advocacy Coalition Framework is to provide a better understanding of puzzling issues

in public policy and to provide an alternative to the already existing understanding of the policy process.

In Advocacy Coalition Framework, actors are of the highest importance because they bring forward the essential ideas for policy formation. As this framework has a big focus on shared beliefs and actors who share them, we can see that the actors influencing the policy formation process can translate these ideas and beliefs into policies (Cairney, 2012 a, p. 14). The state, as a major actor, plays a significant role in policy formation and implementation. There can be different departments and agencies that take part in policy formulation process (Jann & Wegrich, 2007, p. 49). However, it is important not to forget that civil society actors play a big role in policy formulation by pressuring the government through different ways, such as advocating, lobbying, or citizen mobilisation. Some of these civil society organisations gain enough power to leave no choice to the government but to comply with their requests and adopt certain policies (Cairney, 2012 a). Civil society actors can be regular citizens who are organised through non-governmental organisations, advocacy groups, different movements etc. According to Advocacy Coalition Framework, this collection interaction between state and non-state actors, government and private and civil actors is very important in order to define the problems that are real and pressing, helping to shape the policies accordingly. The Advocacy Coalition Framework depicts public policy as a struggle between actors attempting to turn their beliefs into policy. For example, it is particularly useful for investigating cases where competing goals and technical or scientific information influence policy processes – cases that frequently attract the attention of scholars and public participation (Weible, Sabatier, & McQueen, Themes and Variations: Taking Stock of the Advocacy Coalition Framework, 2009, p. 121).

Before we go deeper into this theory, it is important to define advocacy coalitions. These coalitions can be defined as groups of political actors who share certain ideas and work together to suggest specific issues to the government and influence the decision-making process (Weible, 2017). It is important for actors in the coalitions to share the same beliefs. Furthermore, some scholars believe that other factors, such as shared interests, trust, and resources, as well as shared beliefs, are essential in coalition formation (Ibid).

The Advocacy Coalition Framework shows several pathways that lead to policy change. One of them is connected to the external shocks that can be coming from some external source and

can include events that are out of the control of subsystem actors, they happen outside of a policy subsystem, and they can be events like shifts in socio-economic conditions, impacts coming from other subsystems, regime changes, extreme events such as disasters, crises, etc. (Jenkins-Smith, Nohrstedt, Weible, & Ingold, 2018, p. 148). These external events do create an increased likelihood for a policy change to happen, but they necessitate other causal mechanisms such as increased public and/or political attention, change in agenda, coalition resources redistribution, etc. (Sabatier & Weible, 2007, p. 199). External shocks might lead to the change of dominant advocacy coalition's core policy beliefs and therefore lead to a significant policy change as well (Weible & Sabatier, 2007, p. 130). Thinking of conditions for policy change or continuity when it comes to critical infrastructure, this means that external shocks, for example, a crisis that would damage critical infrastructure and show devastating effects, could bring about the change in the policy if it would point out the need to do so. Sabatier wrote that shock coming outside of subsystems is necessary for policy change to happen in the core of government programs, but they are not sufficient for this to happen (Sabatier P. A., 1998, p. 106).

A second pathway to policy change is based on belief change that happens through the policy learning process by gathering and accumulating information, like research, analysis, and spreading more information about a subject (Sabatier P. A., 1988, p. 151). Sabatier says that policy analysis and research very rarely have any influence on specific decisions that governments make, but they can serve as an "enlightenment function" and gradually change the concepts and assumptions of subsystem participants (Ibid p. 158). Hence, if we take this into account, even though learning is not a sufficient condition for a change to happen, over a more extended period of time, gaining more knowledge about the topic of critical infrastructure can change the way people see the need to create the legal framework regarding this and make the change more possible.

Another pathway that can be discussed concerns internal events that are more affected by actors in the subsystem (Sabatier & Weible, 2007, pp. 204-205). Internal events like different types of crises, scandals, policy failures, etc., can drive more attention to governmental programs and, therefore, there will be more people who will advocate for the change to happen. They can cause distrust in the beliefs of dominant coalition, since it will raise questions about their abilities and effectiveness of their policies, and at the same time, these internal events can prove some of the minority coalitions and their core policy beliefs right (Ibid p. 205). There is still a

question of whether or not these internal events/internal shocks will lead to any policy change, and as was the case with external shocks, there are some mechanisms that can mediate the effects, and their fruitfulness can be dependent on these causal mechanisms or enabling factors, considering the amount of attention to the issue coming from the public or the ruling elites, and so on (Jenkins-Smith, Nohrstedt, Weible, & Ingold, 2018, p. 150). This means that internal events can also draw attention to problematic issues. If there is a dominant coalition that does not pay attention to critical infrastructure protection, their failure could result in the occurrence of a new dominant coalition that will make a change.

Looking at these above-mentioned arguments, we can generalise one thing – whether we talk about external or internal shocks, we can see that civil society, and advocacy coalitions play an important role. If we infer that the change in the policy happens because of the activity of advocacy coalitions, policy continuity can be explained by the lack of such coalitions and active advocacy. If we look at the policy cycle and how the policies are adopted, we can see that first, there is a stage of policy agenda setting where problems are defined and identified. This is a stage where civil actors have an important role because they can pressure the state actors to pay attention to a policy matter that has been disregarded. So, to be concise, advocacy coalitions can help the policy process in various ways, and if we connect this with the case under discussion, we can see that the lack of coalitions and active advocacy towards the topic of critical infrastructure protection can be a reason for continuity in this particular policy sector.

### **1.2.2 Historical institutionalism and path dependence**

Historical institutionalism is one form of institutionalism. Lowndes lists nine approaches that are: normative, rational choice, historical, empirical, international, sociological, network, constructivist and feminist institutionalism (Lowndes, 2018, p. 60). Hence, institutionalism seems more like an umbrella term; the common ground is Institutions are the “central component of political life” and the best way to explain political decisions (Peters, 2019, p. 246).

Looking at historical institutionalism, we can see that scholars who study it share a special perspective on historical development. Historical institutionalism rejects the thought that the same forces would create the same results everywhere. According to historical institutionalism, the effects of actions are affected greatly by the context and contextual features of the given

situation (Hall & Taylor, 1996, p. 941). According to Hall, these features are inherited from the past and have institutional nature. So according to this, institutions are persistent, they are the persistent features of history, and they push the historical development towards one or the other paths, so here comes in the path dependence. According to historical institutionalism, the common perception of government is that it is bureaucratic and it does not have an effective reaction to the changes in the environment, thus sometimes, when there is a need for change in the policy because of the changes in the world, policies still remain unchanged because of the path-dependent character of governments and institutions (Peters, 2016, p. 61). If we connect this to the topic of this study, even though the changes in the world point to the need for change and adopting new comprehensive policies about critical infrastructure protection, the path-dependent character of governments and institutions ensures continuity.

Here we come across an important concept in historical institutionalism - path dependence. According to Adrian Kay, the concept of path dependence is neither a framework nor a theory or model: it does not provide a general list of variables that can be used to organise “diagnostic and prescriptive inquiry,” nor does it provide hypotheses about specific links between variables or specific parameters of those links (Kay, 2005, p. 554). According to the concept of path dependence, it is generally difficult to change policies because institutions are sticky, and actors are trying to protect the existing model, even if it is not completely optimal (Pierson, 2000). According to Levi, path dependence means that “once a country or region has started down a track, the costs of reversal are very high” (Levi, 1997). Pierson mentions that public policies and formal institutions are designed to be difficult to change, so this encourages policy continuity (Greener, 2002, p. 164). When talking about path dependence, a lot of actors mention that in order for the policy-makers to introduce a major change, they have to wait for a critical juncture (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007, p. 341) or something that will create a window of an exceptional opportunity which is called conjuncture (Wilsford, 1994, p. 251). Hence, path dependence explains why policy continuity is more likely than policy change. Once a state embarks on a certain policy course, it is challenging to veer off course because the institutionalisation of players and policies demands a lot of time and money from the change-seeking actors (Cerna, 2013, p. 4). One of the weaknesses of this theory can be the fact that it is difficult to depict the important junctures and conjunctures methodologically.

We can say that path dependence concerns the institutional conditions that get in the way of changes in the status quo. The central idea of path dependence is that once they are established,

some institutions become increasingly difficult to change over time, so small decisions made early on can have significant long-term consequences (Sorensen, 2015, p. 21). It is important to note that just because a certain policy or process has stayed the same for an extended period of time does not necessarily mean in itself that this process is path dependent, as this might be the only reasonable or even viable choice hence when there is a claim that one process or another is path dependent, we must be able to show that there are alternatives and we must be able to explain the reasoning behind the continuity (Sorensen, 2015, p. 22). When we talk about path dependence in political and policy processes, the way of showing reasons behind continuity could be connected with finding and identifying people who benefit from the continuity of the status quo and who might be at a disadvantage if certain changes were to take place (Ibid). As it was already mentioned, according to path dependence, once a commitment to a policy or an institution has been created, the resources are devoted to it as well, therefore increasing returns are created, and it becomes very costly to change the status quo, and for these reasons, these institutions and practices that they establish and encourage are inclined to remain unchanged for a long period of time (Pierson, 2000, p. 261).

When talking about public policy, it is important to bear in mind that without understanding the institutions involved in the policymaking process, studying public policy would be futile. Historical Institutionalism, as an institutionalist approach, departs from the assumption that institutions are of the highest importance for policy dynamics. Institutions are not buildings where policies are made, but they represent the rules of behaviour. Here we can distinguish between formal rules, which are different models of governing, written rules, and systems, and informal ones, where the focus is on regular patterns of behaviour, relationships formed by policy participants, and shared understandings of how to behave (Cairney, 2012 b, p. 74). If we look at the policy-making process from an institutionalist perspective, we will see that this theory does not look at individuals separately. Rather, individuals are seen as embedded in different institutions; hence their political behaviour gets importance from these institutional connections. Institutions provide rules and guides for behaviour (Peters, 2016, p. 58). Peters argues that institutions (public sector institutions) are defined by the policies that they make. He states that institutions and policy are not just elements that are connected to each other, but in his words, “to say public sector institutions make or influence public policy is to some extent the same as saying institutions are” (Ibid, p. 58). This means that making or influencing public policy is the core task of public sector institutions, and this is what defines them.

The central argument in the literature regarding path dependence and historical institutionalism that explains why path dependence occurs and therefore policy change becomes less likely, is the one of “increasing returns” (Pierson, 2000). As already mentioned, once the institution has committed to one path and has gone down it for a long period of time, devoted resources to the status quo, it creates these “increasing returns” and it becomes very costly to choose a different path and change a policy (Ibid p. 252). Costs of reversal are an important factor to take into account, especially for a small and developing country like Georgia. Costs of reversal are the costs of change in the status quo. If we connect this to the case under discussion, one possible explanation for a lack of change in the policy regarding critical infrastructure protection, can be the argument of increasing returns, which means that it would be very costly to change the policy and implement a new one that would create a legal framework regarding critical infrastructure protection. Here costly does not only refer to financial costs but different forms of costs as well, such as political or personal.

As mentioned over and over again, the path dependence argument entails in itself the importance of history. “History matters” is a phrase that we encounter in the literature a lot (Thelen, 2014, p. 212). We saw above the argument from rational choice theory, if we turn to sociological institutionalism, we will see that there is an important emphasis on the policy solutions that are deemed appropriate. Hay and Wincott talk about this matter, and they say that actors act based on perceptions. “Their perceptions about what is feasible, legitimate, possible and desirable are shaped both by the institutional environment in which they find themselves and existing policy paradigms and worldviews” (Hay & Wincott, 1998, p. 956). This would mean that if there are certain ways of doing things, including a general mood, for example, if society has become nihilistic and has developed a certain cynical attitude towards efforts put into trying to change something, this would suggest that also in this context, considerations of worldviews and existing environment could give rise to path dependencies and therefore continuity in policy. This argument can also be connected with Advocacy Coalition Framework, and the argument brought up while discussing it. What this means in the context of this study is that, historical legacy has brought Georgia nihilism and lack of trust in changes, this can also be connected to the lack of involvement of civil society in the policy processes and therefore lack of advocacy coalitions in certain areas of policies. There can be different ways in which past influences policy making process and specific factors will be identified as indicators after conducting the analysis of data gathered.



### **1.2.3 Policy learning and policy diffusion**

This chapter will introduce two concepts that can be behind policy continuity. One concept that concerns the change in policy is the concept of policy learning. It refers to “relatively enduring alterations of thought or behavioural intentions which result from experience and which are concerned with the attainment (or revision) of policy objectives” (Heclo, 1974, p. 306). Hall defines the concept of learning as “a deliberate attempt to adjust the goals or techniques of policy in response to past experience and new information” (Hall, 1993, p. 278). According to policy learning, changes in the main aspects of a certain policy can result from shifts in external factors, such as a new coalition (Sabatier P. A., 1988, p. 134). In the literature regarding the theories of change, policy learning has an important part as a concept. We can find different types of learning, such as political learning, social learning, policy-oriented learning, instrumental learning, lesson drawing and more (Cerna, 2013, p. 7). Heclo saw policy change as the result of both large-scale social, economic, and political changes and also the strategic interaction of people within a policy community involving both power competition and efforts to develop more knowledgeable means of addressing the policy problem (Heclo, 1974, pp. 306-307). Hence, to connect this to the subject of study, if there is more information, more awareness of the problem, and more research is done about the subject, it is more likely that the policy that needs to be changed will be changed.

Policy learning is an important concept in the literature, as it highlights how countries, regions, and systems can change policies by learning from others and thus shifting their beliefs (Cerna, 2013, p. 7). There are different levels on which the policy learning process is analysed. First, there are micro-level studies that focus on processes among individual policy actors. Then there is a mid-level studies that look at the increase of knowledge and information in organisations as this affects their ability to advocate for their policy positions more effectively. The macro level is connected to institutional systems, where policy decisions can happen after similar ones have been made in other institutional systems (Moyson, Scholten, & Weible, 2017, p. 162). Here the elements of the Advocacy coalition Framework are visible, where policy learning is an important concept, and we see the importance of actors. Hence, if we follow the logic of the policy learning concept, actors play an important role in learning because if we look at the individual level, there are people who increase the information by researching, writing more or advocating on an individual level and if they get more information through learning process, this helps their abilities to do so. New or ameliorated knowledge can come from outside, or even from inside, due to increased research and more information about the topic. We can say

that the involvement of the experts, civil society and the private sector can play an important role in the process of policy learning. As it was already mentioned in the section about Advocacy Coalition Framework, civil society plays a big role in policy change. Here we can see the effect of policy learning that if policy learning happens at mid-level, in organisations, and advocacy coalitions, it will help them advocate better for their cause and therefore, it is more likely for a change to occur. In contrast, when policy learning does not happen in advocacy coalitions, their abilities to advocate are weaker, and there is less possibility for a change to occur.

When we talk about adopting new policies, we can call this process policy innovation. The push towards policy innovation can come from inside the polity, for example, when certain interest groups push towards the adoption of a certain policy or when institutions inside the country affect the change. But such a push can come from outside as well, for example, innovations in a certain field can spread from one state to another, and this is a process that is called policy diffusion (Shipan & Volden, 2008, p. 841). In the preceding sections of this thesis, we have been talking about the processes taking place inside of the country that can lead to policy change, but if we want to look for factors coming from outside of the country that can lead to policy change, we can look at the concept of policy diffusion. If we look at the macro level of policy learning, learning occurs on a system level and policy decisions made in a government might be affected by similar decisions taken in other government (Moyson, Scholten, & Weible, 2017, pp. 163-164). There are several mechanisms that can be involved in the process of spreading one policy from one government to another. Here I will discuss the mechanisms of learning and economic benefit.

As we already saw above, learning can occur inside the country, but the first mechanism of policy diffusion is learning as well, where the knowledge comes from outside of the state. Here learning can be seen as a process of policymakers learning from the experiences of other states and therefore adopting new policies themselves (Shipan & Volden, 2008, p. 841). If a certain policy has been adopted by a lot of states and has been proven successful, meaning the success and effects are already visible, there is more chance that another state will adopt this policy as well (Ibid). Therefore, learning in the context of policy diffusion increases the chances of adopting certain policies, whereas if such a process does not occur, the chances will be diminished. The second mechanism of policy diffusion, economic competition, is connected to the positive economic spillovers that can be a reason for adopting one or the other policy (Ibid,

p. 842). For example, if uniformity in critical infrastructure protection policy between several states would be beneficial economically, this would make it more likely that the government would adopt such a policy. Here we come across the argument of costs of change. We saw above that if the costs of change internally outweigh the potential benefits, then it is unlikely for a change to happen. Here we can see that costs can be outweighed not only by potential benefits of change internally but also externally.

Gathering from all the information given above, policy diffusion is a process of spreading policies from one government to another (Shipan & Volden, 2008, p. 841). There can be different reasons behind this process, but when certain countries are in an alliance, this can be a contributing factor, and it makes it more likely for them to adopt similar policies. Sometimes this happens because the membership is dependent on compliance with certain rules and, sometimes, it happens because they benefit from such a change without any obligation (Blatter, Portmann, & Rausis, 2022, p. 818). From this information, we can draw a conclusion that being a part of an alliance, or a union that contains developed countries and holds high standards, can be a reason for a policy change in certain areas. For policy concerning critical infrastructure protection, this means that being in an alliance with states who update and renew such policy or being surrounded by such states makes it more likely that policy diffusion might occur, and this could be taken as an example and change of such policy could occur in the country as well. In contrast, when no such alliances are in place, and surrounding countries do not update their policies, then the change in the country itself becomes less likely. To sum up this argument, according to policy diffusion, it is more likely for a change to happen when a country is in an alliance with countries that already made this policy change and when there is no such alliance, it becomes less likely for a country to implement the change. Therefore, when we think of the case of Georgia and critical infrastructure protection policy, it becomes important to consider Georgia's alliances, partnerships, and the states surrounding Georgia and their policies regarding critical infrastructure protection.

### **1.3 Summary**

To bring this chapter to a conclusion, we can sum up the findings from different theories and frameworks. According to the findings from reviewing literature around discussed theories and concepts, there can be several reasons behind a policy change and therefore, similarly several possible explanations for continuity in a policy. After discussing Advocacy Coalition

Framework, the conclusion was that the presence of advocacy coalitions could help the policy process in various ways; therefore, the explanation for continuity can be the absence of advocacy coalitions and active advocacy. After this, the chapter introduced historical institutionalism and path dependence. Here one possible explanation for a lack of change in the policy regarding critical infrastructure protection was the second argument of increasing returns, which means that it would be very costly to change the policy and implement a new one that would create a legal framework regarding critical infrastructure protection. Continuity can thus be explained by the high costs of reversal. The third argument was the one connected to historical legacies, distrust in changes and nihilistic attitude in society and therefore, policy continuity is caused by distrust in changes and general nihilistic attitude in society along with other factors coming from past practices. After this, the concepts of policy learning and policy diffusion were presented as explanations of policy change. From the concept of policy learning, we saw that it is less likely for policy change to occur in the sector of critical infrastructure protection because there is not enough effort put into the process of learning. Discussing the concept of policy diffusion demonstrated the argument that it becomes less likely for a country to adopt a change when it is not a part of an alliance or does not have a partnership with countries that have already adopted similar changes. These theories and concepts offer competing and potentially complementary explanations of policy change and policy continuity, that it can stem from different parts of society (institutions, civil society) or different parts of the world (inside the country, outside the country). These different stands of thinking help to see which one explains best the observed dynamics of policy continuity in relation to critical infrastructure protection in Georgia.

Moving forward, the following chapters will discuss the methodology for discussing this empirical case of Georgia and then the analysis chapter will reveal if the findings match the expectations stated in the theory chapter and which of the factors identified above which could play a role in preventing policy-change was decisive in bringing about continuity in Georgia's policy regarding critical infrastructure protection.

## **Chapter 2: Methodology**

The following chapter will present the methodological framework for this study. To answer the main research question and to resolve the research puzzle stated in the introduction, this thesis will use qualitative methods of research and analysis to find the reasons behind the continuity in the policy. The research design is going to be a single case study, and the Republic of Georgia will be the case under observation. The thesis will use primary and secondary sources of official documents of Georgia as well as studies conducted about this matter and will mainly derive the analysis from in-depth elite and expert interviews conducted with high-level government officials and experts.

### **1.1 Research design and Case Selection**

In order to conduct this study, I decided to choose a single case research design and focus on the case of Georgia in a time period 2003-2023. A single case study was the most optimal decision because the research question was a very specific case-oriented one that aimed at finding out the reasons behind processes in Georgia. In his book, Yin mentions that case studies are relevant when the questions asked require an extensive and in-depth description of some social phenomenon, especially if we are looking for answers to questions like “how” or “why” (Yin, 2018, p. 32), and this is why a single case study was enough and the most appropriate research design for this study. Single case studies allow the researcher to go into more detail and analyse the case in greater depth than it would be possible in the case of several cases. It can also be helpful when we observe a longer period of time, as in this case, twenty years. If we look at the research question “What explains the absence of a tangible legislative framework regarding critical infrastructure in Georgia, considering that there is a known vulnerability?”, we can see that the best suitable research design to answer this question is a single case study which will allow the research to be deep and focused on the single case of the country of Georgia. Instead of looking at different cases and searching for the same variables, a single case study looks at one case and examines different pieces of evidence and variables within one case, one country, for example (Toshkov, 2016, p. 285). Amongst different definitions and explanations of a single case study we can see one that refers to it as an “in-depth study of a single unit” (Gerring, 2004, p. 341). Case studies are a good research design for answering the “Why” questions (Rowley, 2002, p. 16). Why something did not happen, why a change has not occurred. In this research, I will look at the past two decades of Georgia to measure the absence of legal framework regarding critical infrastructure, therefore, continuity of policy.

Georgia is a particularly good case to study the effects of factors potentially inhibiting policy change in this context because, considering the challenges it faces if one assumes that states pursue policy change in the face of a challenge, one would expect Georgia to change its policy, end continuity and create a legal framework for critical infrastructure protection. In other words, from the perspective of “change occurs in the face of a problem”, Georgia is a case where we would expect change to happen. To the extent that change does not happen, there is a continuity of dysfunctional policy. For said reasons, Georgia is a likely case for policy change to occur in this area; therefore in case policy change does not occur, this allows us to observe and identify the factors that explain this continuity.

As it will be demonstrated in the first sub-chapter of the analysis part, Georgia has not developed any legislative framework for critical infrastructure, and this can be a problem in many regards. All of the facts show us that there is a threat in Georgia, and we can see the lack of focus on critical infrastructure. There is no legislative framework, no official definition of critical infrastructure, and no list of critical infrastructure subjects and sectors. Therefore, Georgia is a good case to study policy change regarding the legal framework for critical infrastructure and see why it has not occurred when there is an obvious need for it. Objective pressures together with the absence of policy change, and therefore the enduring absence of a policy for the protection of critical infrastructure, makes Georgia an excellent case to observe the factors potentially inhibiting policy change.

## **1.2 Operationalisation of variables**

The dependent variable for this study is policy continuity because policy that is continuous is non-existence of legal framework for critical infrastructure. Meaning that the outcome is either the presence or absence of policy continuity, therefore presence or absence of change or non-change. As already mentioned before, policy continuity refers to the perpetuation of existing policy irrespective of its content or type. In the case under consideration, policy continuity refers to the continued absence of a policy. There will be two values for this variable, either policy continuity or policy change. A variable is dichotomous, either policy continuity is present or it is absent. The factor that would indicate the absence of policy continuity is policy change. As already mentioned in the theoretical framework chapter above, policy change is something that is a big shift in existing structures or new and innovative policies (Bennett &

Howlett, *The lessons of learning: reconciling theories of policy learning and policy change*, 1992, p. 275). Change can take different forms, depending on whether initially a policy is already in place or no policy is in place. In case of no policy, change means creation of a policy, and when no change happens, there is continuity of the absence of a policy. When policy change is mentioned here in the context of the case of Georgia, it concerns the creation of the legislative framework regarding critical infrastructure protection. So, the measure will be either a change in policy or policy continuity. We would see the change if we find that a legal framework for critical infrastructure has been adopted. If there is no such framework, then we have policy continuity. In the next section, I will explain the sources dedicated to measuring the variables.

This thesis points to several independent variables which are proposed to be possible explanations for the dependent variable, which is the presence or absence of policy continuity. The first independent variable that can be pointed out is the presence or absence of active advocacy. To operationalise this variable, I will observe civil society to see whether advocacy coalitions are present or absent regarding the issue of critical infrastructure protection and if they advocate actively for a change in this sphere. Whether active advocacy is present or absent can be seen from I will look at the elite and expert interviews and see if there has been any activity in this area. There are several topics that can serve as indicators, and these are: General lack of activity from the civil sector regarding security topics, lack of knowledge of the topic, together with lack of knowledge of the situation (connected to non-transparency of the processes); lack of civil-governmental communication and cooperation; problem of getting grants on this topic. This variable has a dichotomous classification and will be classified as “Active advocacy”, which is either present, or absent.

The second independent variable that can serve as a possible explanation for the continuity of policy in the area of critical infrastructure is the high or low cost of reversal. The high cost of reversal is connected to increasing returns. There is a case of increasing returns if a state has continued down one path for so long that it becomes less and less likely to change it, and therefore, it would be very costly to change the policy and, in this case, create a legal framework for critical infrastructure. This variable will be measured by the potential costs of implementing the change regarding critical infrastructure. If the interview respondents mention the high cost of change as a reason behind policy continuity, then it will be confirmed as a high cost of reversal. Costs can be either financial or political. If costs of change were considered higher

than benefits, this would indicate a high cost of reversal. If none of the respondents regards the change in policy to be costly for the people who change it, or if it imposes only minor costs, then the finding will be the low cost of reversal. In other words, the high cost of reversal is a dichotomous variable which is either present, or absent with values of high or low costs of reversal. There are several topics that serve as indicators in the analysis of this variable. These are: the issue of no political or personal gain, fear of Russia, and business interests.

The third independent variable that could be an explanation behind continuity or change is historical legacies. In this case, what is meant by historical legacies is path-dependent political processes that result from past practices, distrust in changes, and nihilistic attitude. In order to measure this variable, I will look at the interview results and see if respondents mention anything connected to past legacies, distrust in changes or nihilism in society. The measure of this variable will be either a high influence of historical legacies or a low influence of historical legacies. In order to find the influence, I will look at the interviews and identify how many people connect the continuity of policy with past practices, distrust in changes or nihilistic attitudes. There will be several themes and topics that will serve as indicators for finding this variable. These indicators are: Experience of Soviet occupation – nihilism and distrust towards changes in the society; General neglect towards security sphere; Nihilism towards procedures, instructions, planning, acting according to strategic documents (not understanding the importance of the documents); Tendency of just-in-time management – not seeing the problem until they face it directly; Problem of formally doing something; Prevalent tendency of following the flow; Dysfunctional inter-agency cooperation Post-soviet inertia of using security system as governing levers for the people in power. This variable of historical legacies is either present or absent.

The fourth variable is concerned with policy learning. Here the argument was that Georgia might have problems with policy change in this area because not enough effort is put into policy learning, not enough research is made etc. In order to measure this variable, I will observe the research done in this area to see if people were writing about the need for policy change in this sector. This also concerns the awareness of the problem. If we see that there is no awareness of the problem, this could make the change in the policy less probable. The values of this variable are the presence or absence of policy learning. If policy learning is present, it makes it more likely for a policy change to occur, and on the contrary, if it is absent, it is more likely



for policy continuity to be there. The indicators for this variable are a lack of knowledge on the policy-making level and a lack of awareness of the problem.

The fifth independent variable is connected to policy diffusion, which means spreading innovations in a certain field can spread from one state to another, and it concerns Georgia's strategic partnerships, alliances and active foreign policy in general. The values of this variable will be the presence or absence of policy diffusion. In this case, I will measure this variable by looking at the availability of external models, aspirations to join international organisations, and active foreign policy. I will observe the results of the interviews and see if decision-makers and experts mention the European Union or NATO in this context, meaning if they will say that had Georgia been a member of the big international alliance, it would have had more chances of changing this policy, or if strategic partnerships help in the process of modernising the policies. This also concerns the awareness of different models, and knowledge of other experiences. So, being in an alliance where members have well-developed policies for critical infrastructure protection, would make it more likely for Georgia to adopt the same policy as well.

In order to determine which factor is more decisive for the outcome of interest, the focus will be on observing which factor the respondents will name as the main reason behind the outcome.

### **1.3 Data collection and analysis**

For this thesis, I use qualitative research methods, which include in-depth elite and expert interviews and document analysis of official documents of Georgia. The main goal of this research is to find the reasons behind continuity in the policy regarding critical infrastructure. Therefore, elite interviews will be held with people directly involved in political processes and who have access to decision-making power in the country, including active and former members of the Defence and Security Committee of the Parliament of Georgia, members of the National Security Council of Georgia etc. Alongside these interviews, I will carry out expert interviews with people working in the field of security, cyber-security, researchers, people with deep background knowledge regarding this issue, who have written about this matter, or people who have pointed out the need for change in this policy. Here I distinguish between elite interviews and expert interviews based on the fact whether or not the person has the position in which he/she can affect the policy. According to Lilleker, elites can be defined as “those

with close proximity to power” (Lilleker, 2003, p. 207). If they do not have access to the decision-making process, but they are still influential people in their areas of expertise, I consider the interviews with these people as expert interviews. Meuser and Nagel write that an individual can be defined as an expert when the researcher assumes that they possess knowledge which is not accessible to anybody in the field under study (Meuser & Nagel, 2009, p. 18).

Conducting interviews is considered to be the research method that receives little attention (Mosley, 2013, p. 2). Even though, over time, it has become easier to have access to the archives and to conduct different types of experiments, this does not eliminate the need for conducting interviews. This topic of research is a clear example of some questions that cannot be answered without conducting interviews. Since this thesis aims to discuss the reasons behind something that never happened, it is challenging to find the information. There is no literature on this topic, experts have not written about the reasons behind the continuity of policy regarding critical infrastructure. Interviews are considered to be an appropriate method when one needs to acquire information about what people think, how they interpret the events, what they have done at one point in time or what they are planning to do (Aberbach & Rockman, 2002, p. 673). Taking all of these reasons into consideration, conducting interviews is the most suitable method that can be applied to this research.

The interview guide was prepared in accordance with the factors of interest. There are three main groups of questions: the first group is about broader subjects, such as the background of the respondent and their connection to the topic under discussion; the second group of questions concerns dependent variable – policy continuity and the data taken from the answers to these questions will provide the measurement of the outcome. The last group of questions is directed at independent variables, and data derived from the answers to these questions provide the measurement of the explanatory factors. The interview guide can be found in Annex 1 of the thesis. The interviews were conducted in Georgian, and the quotes provided in the analysis chapter are translated into English.

I conducted 16 in-depth interviews, 15 of them online, with policy-makers and experts in the field of security. The duration of the interviews varied from 30 to 80 minutes. The respondents represented two main groups: policy-makers/people directly involved in the process and experts. There were multiple instances where there was an overlap, due to former policy-

makers moving to the civil society non-governmental sector and now working as experts. All of them have, in some way, been involved in processes and discussions about critical infrastructure protection in Georgia. Out of the 16 respondents, only two experts have not been in public sector positions but still have significant background knowledge of the subject of interest. In order to explain sampling in the process of the interviews, it is important to look at the topic under discussion. There are three groups of respondents: one is people directly involved in the political processes right now, the second group consists of people who have held high positions in the security sphere previously but now are not in those positions anymore, and in the third group, there are experts of security, intelligence, cyber-security, people who have previously written about this matter and have significant background knowledge. To explain the sample in more detail, the respondents of the interviews have held positions such as several heads of the National Security Council, chair or deputy chair of the Committee of Defence and Security of Parliament of Georgia, heads of divisions of different ministries such as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Internal Affairs, head of Government Administration, and other high positions of the public sector. As already mentioned above, only two of the experts interviewed have not held any government or public position throughout the last two decades, the period of interest for this study. This is a representative sample considering the respondents are the people who have the most information about the processes regarding critical infrastructure protection in Georgia. The list of respondents can be seen in Annex 2 of this thesis. Considering the sensitivity of the topic, I will not be mentioning the names of the respondents; I will only mention their experiences and currently or formerly held positions without mentioning the years they held the position.

In order to point out the deficiencies of the current legislative framework, I employ the document analysis of legal documents of Georgia. According to Bowen, document analysis refers to “a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents – both printed and electronic” (Bowen, 2009, p. 27). Document analysis, as a research method, is especially applicable to qualitative case studies and is often used in combination with other qualitative research methods (Ibid). The advantage of analysing public documents is that they are produced in a manner where the researcher has not affected the collected material (Karppinen & Moe, 2012, p. 181). The outcome of interest, which is policy continuity, will be observed not only based on the interview results but, at the same time, 14 legal documents of Georgia. While no framework for critical infrastructure protection exists. Other related areas are covered by these laws, decrees, and orders from the Parliament of Georgia, Georgian Government, and

different Ministries of Georgia. The documents have been retrieved from the website of the Legislative Herald of Georgia. The documents will help me see what aspects of critical infrastructure are touched upon in the legislative system. If these touched-upon aspects are not enough to form a tangible legislative framework for critical infrastructure protection, policy continuity will be confirmed. From the interviews, I will gather information about the possible attempts to change the status quo and implement a legal framework for critical infrastructure.

The data analysed for this thesis is mainly interview results and official documents of the existing laws regarding informational security or other sectors possibly connected to critical infrastructure one way or another. The data presented in the analysis chapter will be divided according to the variables.

#### **1.4 Limitations of the study**

Since all of the sources for data collection are in the Georgian language and there is a need for translation, I recognise the possible limitation problems connected to the translation of specific terminology, and I will provide thorough explanations if necessary. Alongside this, I recognize the possible sampling bias, and for this reason, sampling is done in the manner described in the previous section to ensure that the respondents are not all from one tranche of society and that the ideas and answers that they provide are not biased because they are all from one political party, for example.

Alongside limitations and possible biases mentioned in the previous section, while talking about data collection methods, there are others that need to be mentioned. First of all, it is important for me to be aware of the biases that might come up from both sides, from the researcher and from respondents as well. In some cases, the gender and age of the interviewer might cause a problem while conducting an interview with males in a high position of power (Mosley, 2013, p. 13). Another bias coming from respondents might come from the wish to present their political party or their position in a certain way. Since the questions are mainly directed to inaction towards something, there might be attempts to downplay the importance of the change or to present the official government position. This issue is going to be resolved by interviewing several different groups of people, which will mitigate this bias. Another limitation that can be considered is a sample size. Even though the sample was sufficient and could provide desirable results, possibly more information could be derived from a larger

sample. Considering that the topic refers to the absence of something, it was challenging to study it, but this problem was mediated by bringing in the concept of continuity instead of non-change. Even though there were these above-mentioned challenges, this study was able to achieve its goals and gather result.

### **Chapter 3: Analysis and findings – Explaining continuity in Georgia’s policy for the protection of critical infrastructure in time period 2003-2023**

In this chapter, I will study the policy continuity in the context of Georgia’s approach to the protection of critical infrastructure, more specifically, the enduring absence of a policy regarding the legal framework for critical infrastructure protection, and explore what factors explain this outcome. For this purpose, I analyse the interviews I have conducted and present the results of the research.

Examining the factors identified in the previous chapters as possible explanatory variables behind policy continuity, the overall results of the analysis showed the reasons behind policy continuity regarding critical infrastructure protection in Georgia. In the following sub-chapters, I will first present an analysis of the approach for the protection of critical infrastructure in Georgia in the time period of twenty years from 2003 until 2023 with the aim to identify whether there has been change or continuity, what measures related to the protection of critical infrastructure were proposed or adopted over time, and whether this eventually has resulted in the adoption of a policy in the sense of a tangible legislative framework for critical infrastructure protection. In the second step, the analysis turns to the explanations of the outcome of interest. In order to determine the reasons behind the outcome, I will assess each possible reason for the observed outcome and provide an analysis of the results I received from the interviews alongside direct quotes from my respondents. In order to formulate the analysis as succinctly as possible, I will first list the respondents that have mentioned the topic and then go through some of the most important quotes and ideas. The main goal of these sub-chapters will be to introduce the measurements for each of the explanatory factors and, for this purpose, to constructively present all the data gathered from the interviews and legal documents and identify the reason(s) behind policy continuity in Georgia regarding critical infrastructure protection.

### **3.1 Continuity and change in Georgia's Policy framework for critical infrastructure protection in time period 2003-2023**

To begin with, it is important to mention that there are major problems in Georgia regarding critical infrastructure protection; the legal framework that would be connected to critical infrastructure protection is absent, and there are several issues connected to this topic that will be described in more detail in the following. Georgia does not have any formally defined list of critical infrastructure assets; there is no legislation that regulates this issue and no identification, division of responsibilities or protection of critical infrastructure (Modebadze, 2022). Existing legislation does not provide a unified security standard for critical infrastructure protection. This means that there is an absence of such a framework. However, since the absence of any policy framework explicitly dedicated to the protection of infrastructure does not mean that the same functions are not performed in some other way, for example, by some other policies or frameworks, it is important to also consider what is there, what other laws and documents touch upon this topic.

The first necessary criterion for a well-functioning policy for critical infrastructure protection is the presence of a legal framework that will regulate this issue. Such a framework is not present in Georgia, but it is possible to observe the laws and decrees that come close or are remotely connected to the issue of critical infrastructure. This shows that critical infrastructure is not explicitly addressed or even mentioned anywhere. Georgia adopted a law about informational security in 2012, which can be seen as a step forward in this regard (Parliament of Georgia, 2012). The structures inside the Defence and Internal Affairs Ministries have been created specifically for cyber security matters. The law about informational security also defines the concept of a critical informational system subject (Parliament of Georgia, 2012). However, here we can make an observation that critical infrastructure is not mentioned anywhere. This means that the term itself is not codified anywhere, and these subjects are not regarded as critical infrastructure assets. Moreover, critical infrastructure includes physical infrastructure as well, and it is not just about the informational infrastructure, but in the above-mentioned law, only informational system subjects are discussed. It is important that critical infrastructure is defined along with its sectors. In liberal countries, most of the critical services are concentrated in business and, therefore, if we look at the best international practices, we can see that critical infrastructure is mainly accumulated in the private sector. Spheres like this are energy, water supply sphere, banking and finance sector, medical sector and many more.

The same is the case in Georgia, but according to the Georgian legislature, the critical informational system subjects' list up until 2021 contained only the governmental sector and did not consider any part of the private sector that is critically important to the state (Government of Georgia, 2014). Furthermore, this is problematic since as mentioned, most critical infrastructure assets are usually in the private sector. There are other examples of neglect of this issue. For example, today's law of Georgia on public procurement does not take into account critical infrastructure or even cyber threats, for that matter (Parliament of Georgia, 2005). This enables computer equipment, or software services for critical infrastructure or government institutions to be purchased directly from Russian organisations, or even from Russian offices of other companies. This same legislation enables Russian companies to buy businesses that can be considered critical infrastructure, like telecommunications companies. Also, this makes it possible for Russian business organisations to carry out wide-scale projects connected to informational technologies, governmental mobile communication services and more (Jgarkava, 2021, p. 13). To sum up, critical infrastructure is neither mentioned or explicitly addressed anywhere in Georgian law, nor is it acknowledged in important laws such as the law on public procurement.

Throughout the Georgian legislature, there is no central definition of critical infrastructure, nor is there a list of critical infrastructure assets. Even though critical infrastructure is not defined in any document, we can come across several related terms that do not fully capture the essence of critical infrastructure but are connected to it in one way or another. Over the years, Georgian legislation has defined the list of objects with special importance under several different circumstances. There is a law on state-owned property which postulates that the government of Georgia is a body that approves the list of objects of special importance (Parliament of Georgia, 2010). In this law, objects of special importance are state-owned objects that cannot be privatised. Critical infrastructure cannot be limited to only state-owned properties; therefore this law, even though it mentions objects of special importance, does not cover the topic of critical infrastructure. There is a concept of objects of strategic and special importance which was defined by the law of Georgia on engineering-geodesic control and security of objects of special importance and strategic purpose. This law lists the buildings that are important for cultural purposes, economics, environment, security, defence, and spatial whereabouts (Parliament of Georgia, 2003). This is not a list of critical infrastructure assets since this concerns the buildings, and as explained in the first chapter, critical infrastructure goes beyond physical buildings. There is another law that provides the list of special objects approved by



the Government of Georgia: the Law on Privatisation of State Property, Privatisation of Property of Local Self-Government Unit and Transfer of Right to Use (Parliament of Georgia, 1997). After that, in 2003, the Minister of Urbanisation and Construction defined the list of objects of special importance and strategic purpose with a Decree №58 on “The List of objects of strategic purpose and special importance” (Minister of Urbanization and Construction of Georgia, 2003). In 2008, a governmental decree №93 decreased the list of properties of special importance (Government of Georgia, 2008). Here we can see that the term that was used was changed to property of special importance. There were only airport lines, harbours and water areas on this list. In 2014, the prime minister gave the government the assignment to start working on updating the list of objects of strategic importance, as this did not exist anymore, but no changes have been initiated to this day (Modebadze, 2022). This information shows that there are several concepts that concern objects that have special importance, however none of the definitions fits critical infrastructure, proving that critical infrastructure is neither defined nor is there a list of its assets.

In the last decades, there have been several other legal documents that can be connected to the issues of critical infrastructure protection one way or another. There is a Law of Georgia on Promotion and Guarantees of Investment Activity (Parliament of Georgia, 1996), which defines investment policy with security issues in sight. There is Law a of Georgia on State Owned property (State Property which is not subject to privatisation) (Parliament of Georgia, 2010), that includes forest funds, earth, minerals, water resources and so on that are not subjects to privatisation. Order of the Minister of Economic Development of Georgia on the List of Property of Special Importance in the Civil Aviation Sector of Georgia (Minister of Economic Development of Georgia, 2010), only includes eight subjects connected to aviation. Law of Georgia on Information Security (Parliament of Georgia, 2012), defines rights and responsibilities of public and private sectors in this field. Order of the Government of Georgia on the Approval of the List of Persons and Items under Protection of Special State Protection Service (Government of Georgia, 2013), lists the administrative buildings of the government, Georgian Patriarchate, and residence apartments of prime minister, president and chairpersons of Constitutional and Supreme Courts of Georgia. Decree №312 of the Government of Georgia on Approval of the List of Critical Information System Subjects (Government of Georgia, 2014), lists several subjects that need protection against cyber-attacks. Decree №567 of the Government of Georgia on Approval of the List of Critical Information System Subjects in the Defence Field (Government of Georgia, 2014), includes five subjects, Ministry of Defence and

four of its sub-entities. Decree №584 of the Government of Georgia on the List of Subjects with High Risk for State Security (Government of Georgia, 2015), which includes ministries and legal entities. This list of laws and decrees is presented to show that even though there are several documents that refer to things that could be covered under the term critical infrastructure, none of them apart or altogether provide a unified approach that would ensure the protection of critical infrastructure.

Grigol Modebadze, a member of the National Security Council of Georgia wrote that in order for critical infrastructure to be able to operate in a secure and resilient manner, it is important to have “a unified approach, clarity of the goal, mutual sharing of roles and responsibilities by the public and private sector, rational distribution of limited resources, accountability, and effective coordination” (Modebadze, 2022). The documents that are present nowadays do not ensure this in Georgia. The current legislation on national security does not cover any legal bases for critical infrastructure protection, and the existing Georgian legislation does not provide unified regulations on the status of critical infrastructure (Ibid). To conclude, on the basis of the analysis of legal documents, it can be said that in the time period of two decades, no specifically dedicated legal framework for the critical infrastructure was in place, and there has been no significant change in this time period. As a result, the policy, in fact, the absence of a policy, can be considered to be marked by “continuity” rather than change insofar as there is no definition of the concept of critical infrastructure, no list of critical infrastructure assets and no unified approach towards critical infrastructure that would ensure its protection.

These findings have been further corroborated by insights from the interviews. One of the respondents (Interview 5) mentioned that nowadays, two strategic documents are connected to this topic. One is the national security concept, which talks about the security of different areas and entails in itself critical infrastructure through the security of energy, economic security and other sectors, without mentioning critical infrastructure. Another is a threat assessment document which is entirely secretive and not open to the public. Both of these documents are relatively old. The national security concept was written in 2011. This means that while there are documents connected to this topic, they do not specifically mention critical infrastructure, and they are outdated.

*“After 2011, a lot has changed, not just in the area of critical infrastructure, but the security environment itself has changed radically, and therefore these documents can no longer respond to challenges”. (Interview 5)*

According to interview respondents 1, 2, 6, 11, 14 and 15, the only real step taken towards changing the status quo regarding critical infrastructure was the law about informational security. As a respondent of interview 14 mentioned, this is only one piece of the puzzle (Interview 14). Even this law in itself has many flaws; as one of the respondents mentioned, there is no list of spheres or sectors in Georgia indicated in the law about informational system security; there is a list of certain specific assets and companies (Interview 6).

*“The difference between ours and the Western approach is that the West primarily defines critical sectors, for example, energy, banking, and so on, but there is no such sectoral approach in Georgia. There is just a list of companies, so one bank could be on the list and not the other. In the West, there is first a list of sectors and then criteria according to which we can determine which members of this sector belong to critical infrastructure, for example, banks with capital of at least a certain amount of dollars.” (Interview 6)*

This means that the problem is that there are no criteria for an asset to become a critical information system subject. There is just a list of companies without any explanation. The respondent of interview 14 mentioned the same problem and said that there are no instruments for categorising these informational systems, no criteria that would show which companies or assets belong to the list and which do not, and what are the reasons behind this (Interview 14). Concerning the outcome of interest, this means that even the steps taken are deficient, and no change has occurred.

All respondents confirmed that there is no legislative framework regarding critical infrastructure protection, and there has never been such a framework in the history of Georgia. According to several respondents, several attempts have been made to create a legal framework that would regulate critical infrastructure protection, but none of the attempts have succeeded. This means that the policy (even if, in fact, the absence of a policy) is marked by continuity. Two respondents that have been involved in these attempts themselves told me about the dynamics of these processes (Interview 12, Interview 15). I will discuss two attempts at creating a legal framework in Georgia. There were other instances mentioned as well when

people proposed creating such a framework. However, I am discussing attempts where several steps were taken towards writing and drafting a law. There might have been other serious attempts with several steps as well, but they have not been mentioned either publicly or by the respondents of my interviews.

After the 2014 Crimea annexation, Eastern Europe, Baltic states, and Nordic states started reanimating “so-called comprehensive defence” or, as they call it in Georgia – total defence (Interview 15). Everybody was aware that when the opponent’s actions are under the threshold, non-kinetic, in the informational sphere. All of this serves the purpose of the war, and it is crucial to strengthen the cooperation between different sectors, such as finance, defence, economics and other sectors, to create documents that will indicate that there are domains that should be protected. In Georgia, a group of people in the National Security and Crisis Management Council started thinking about critical infrastructure issues, and they asked people from the Ministry of Defence to work on this issue together. This group worked on several strategies, and there were working groups on each topic. This was the beginning of 2017, and the Minister of Defence said there was a need for total defence. Respondent noted that total defence was mentioned in the national security concept written in 2011, but the country had not done anything in this regard. As already mentioned, there were several working groups concentrated on different topics, and one of the topics was creating a defence strategy document. While working on the chapter about civil defence, the group concluded that some services are essential to be retained during a crisis or war, and this was not written anywhere. A group working on defence strategy decided that it was important to coordinate with a group working on developing a policy on critical infrastructure.

*“We were working on the strategy of defence, the legal framework for critical infrastructure and when we were expecting that council of security and crisis management would be strengthened suddenly, they cancelled it, completely abolished the whole council. This was very surprising and showed us how the whole political establishment, the people who were in charge of leading the country, were facing completely the other way and did not look at the processes and topic we were working on. When the whole world was going the other way and strengthening their defence capabilities, creating this holistic method of security, they abolished the organ which was a primary council of inter-agency cooperation.” (Interview 15)*

This means that even in the face of challenges, the changes did not happen; the attempts to create a legal framework for critical infrastructure were unsuccessful and therefore, the processes were marked with continuity. Since the council that was abolished was intersectoral and working on several strategies, the outcome was that whichever ministry had a thematically closer connection to the topic would take the document that the council was working on and continue working on it (Interview 15). The critical infrastructure required inherently inter-agency effort; therefore, it was difficult to decide; in the end, the Ministry of Internal Affairs overtook the project. The Ministry of Defence took the defence strategy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs took the foreign policy strategy, and so on. The documents that were taken from this council and were later approved were the strategy of foreign policy and strategy of counter-terrorism because they were taken by the agencies and institutions that were primarily concerned with these issues. But both defence strategy and strategy about critical infrastructure were stuck. There were several versions offered and written, but nothing ever got approved (Interview 15). This information points to the fact that even when there was a possibility of change, it did not occur, and we can observe policy continuity regarding critical infrastructure protection.

Another attempt to adopt a legal framework for critical infrastructure protection concerns more recent processes when in 2020, there was a special commission created in order to develop a legal framework for critical infrastructure protection (Interview 12). I had an opportunity to talk with the person who was appointed the head of this commission in 2020. He mentioned several events that led the government and the newly created national security council to realise that there was a need to do something about critical infrastructure.

*“When this idea came forward that there is a need to do something about critical infrastructure and we looked at the problems, we sat that there was not just problems and challenges, but there was absolutely nothing to work with, nothing was there” (Interview 12)*

For example, when there were possible threats discovered in terms of foreign investment, it became clear that if it was not for a special request from the prime minister for analytical investment screening, there was no obligation to do a thorough check of possible investors (Interview 12). This led to the realisation of problems, and the security council got the instructions to start preparations for a legal framework for critical infrastructure as fast as possible. There was a group that was working on this issue, and a draft version of the legal

framework was ready in 4-6 months, but the challenging part was the creation of the list of critical infrastructure (Interview 12). It was the main stalling issue. There were two things needed, one was political will, which for that concrete moment was there, and then there was a need for capacity and knowledge about these issues that would help with the process of finishing the legal framework. As my respondent pointed out, they reached out to donors and partner states and asked for help with the issue of knowledge. Some employees were sent to different countries, and studied cases saw the process of preparing a legislative framework for critical infrastructure on site (Interview 12). Then my respondent left his position, and as he informed me, until today, the narrative is that they are still working on it, but nothing has been adopted. According to how much work was already done, it should have been fully finished by the end of 2021, but this has not happened.

*“I know that there is substantive work done, so if there would be the will, it is possible to adopt this within a year, at least when I was there, that was the plan, but now we see that this has not happened. It should have been done by the end of 2021, but this did not happen.” (Interview 12)*

This points to the fact that even though it was possible to adopt a legal framework for critical infrastructure, the change has not happened, and we encounter continuity of policy which is the absence of a legislative framework targeting critical infrastructure protection. To bring this sub-chapter to a conclusion, drawing on official documents of Georgia and conducted interviews, it is visible that in Georgia, in the time period of 20 years from 2003 until 2023, a policy framework for critical infrastructure was absent, and in spite of several attempts to develop something, and scattered elements in other policies, no such framework was developed in the observed time period. This means that ultimately, we can observe “continuity” in the policy, which in the case of Georgia means continuity in the absence of a policy for critical infrastructure protection. According to the measure indicated in the methodology chapter, in order to find the outcome of the study, which is policy continuity, there should have been a coherent continuation of policy, in our case absence of a legal framework for critical infrastructure protection, and this should have been demonstrated both in the legal documents and interviews. Looking at the measure, we see that change did not occur in the policy, and never has there been a legal framework implemented; therefore, we see that the value found is policy continuity.

### 3.2 Advocacy for policy change in context of critical infrastructure protection

As it was evident from the literature regarding the Advocacy Coalition Framework, the existence of groups, organisations, or even individuals who advocate for a particular cause can lead to policy change. In the interviews, I tried to find if this could be a reason behind policy continuity, in the sense of continuity in the absence of a legal framework for critical infrastructure. In some of the interviews, this was named right away as one of the reasons, but in some, only after I asked a question about this. This can be connected to the relative importance of a factor; as described in the methodology chapter, the importance of the factor is measured according to whether or not the respondents see it as a decisive factor behind policy continuity regarding the absence of a legal framework for critical infrastructure protection. I will go through all the prevalent ideas gathered from these interviews about the role and amount of advocacy in this area. There were several themes throughout this topic that were prevalent. One was the general lack of activity from the civil sector regarding security topics. Second was a lack of knowledge of the topic, together with a lack of knowledge of the situation, connected to the non-transparency of the processes. Third was the lack of civil-governmental communication and cooperation. Fourth was the problem of getting grants on this topic together with government-organised non-governmental organisations. Together, interview insights show a lack of active advocacy regarding critical infrastructure protection in Georgia. I present evidence on each of the mentioned categories below.

This sub-chapter will be organised according to the themes mentioned in the paragraph above. To start with the lack of activity of the non-governmental sector, almost all respondents, except for interviews 2, 6 and 8, stated the problem of low involvement of the non-governmental sector in security. It has been pointed out that it is a fact that advocacy about critical infrastructure is very low, and on a more general level, security issues are not actively discussed by civil society,

*“There is only scarce involvement of the non-governmental sector.” (Interview 4)*

In the following paragraphs, there will be a discussion about different reasons connected with the lack of active advocacy in this area mentioned by the respondents. These reasons are relevant as they explain the relative absence of active advocacy regarding the issue under consideration.

If we move on to the topic of knowledge as the reason for the lack of advocacy from the civil sector, the respondents of interviews 1, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 mentioned the problem of knowledge about the topic of critical infrastructure in the civil sector. They mentioned a problem of transparency regarding security issues, which makes it even more difficult for non-governmental organisations to gain knowledge about this topic, making it harder for them to advocate. The respondents mentioned above expressed the thought that the lack of advocacy can be connected to the issue of a general lack of knowledge about the topic of critical infrastructure and the processes surrounding it.

*“Critical infrastructure is not something that people are knowledgeable about. There is a problem of knowledge even on a civil society level.” (Interview 1)*

One aspect hindering the knowledge that was mentioned several times is the non-transparent nature of processes in the security field in Georgia.

*“The issue with transparency is that the more information they give out, the more problems and mistakes will be seen. If what should not be a secret will not be made secret, there will be more accessibility to the information and, therefore, more possibilities for public debate and criticism. This is exactly why they do not want to change this.” (Interview 9)*

Regarding either defence systems or the security sector, it is essential how public the information is to society and to the specialised organisations that work on these issues. More information would make the problem more visible, and the non-governmental sector would have more arguments to help with their advocacy.

Another important theme that was pointed out was the reception of ideas from the government's side and the general lack of communication and cooperation between the civil sector and the government. This issue was touched upon by respondents of the interviews 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 14, and 16. They underlined the problem of poor cooperation between the civil sector and the government. The argument was that the government is not receptive to the ideas coming from the civil sector, which could be one reason for the lack of advocacy. The poor communication and bad relationship between the government and the civil sector was mentioned several times. Many respondents mentioned the processes of the beginning of March



2023, when the government adopted (and then after massive protests discontinued) a law regarding foreign agents. As respondent of interview 3 mentioned, this was an explicit declaration of the non-governmental sector as enemies.

*“Involvement of the non-governmental sector is and has always been very low. We can say that now it is lower than ever. Government and non-governmental sector have never had such a catastrophic relationship, and we saw this earlier this month (Foreign agent law).” (Interview 3)*

Another thing that this bad relationship shows and has been pointed out in the interviews is that even when there is advocacy, there is no reception of this from the government side, making it more difficult for people who work on these issues to advocate. The argument made here was that there are not many, but some non-governmental organisations working on security issues, even specifically on critical infrastructure. However, they do not influence processes.

*“There are non-governmental organisations that work on national security issues, but when there is no political will, sadly, the influence of civil society and the non-governmental sector is meagre because the government does not collaborate or cooperate with civil society, or if it does formally, it does not take their ideas into account and the current events [foreign agent law] can show us that government openly declared this part of society as enemies and it is very difficult to see how they can influence processes in this direction.” (Interview 5)*

This shows that even when there is advocacy, it does not influence processes. The respondent of interview 2 mentioned that he and his organisation were working on critical infrastructure issues (Interview 2). This shows the vital fact that there is activity, not exceedingly abundantly, but there are organisations that work on these issues. However, it is so scarce and unnoticed that even people in this field do not have information about this, as shown in the other interviews mentioned above, where the respondents said they have not heard about anyone working on this.

Another theme mentioned in the interviews was the donor agenda-driven nature of the activities of the civil sector and non-governmental organisations. In interviews 7, 9, 15, and 16, respondents said there are not enough grants in this area. One crucial issue mentioned here was the topic of Government-Organised Non-Governmental Organisations (GONGOs). According

to the respondent of interview 9, most of the grants for projects regarding security issues require the receptor organisation to cooperate with the government. Here we can connect the issue to the previously mentioned theme of poor cooperation. The government has to be willing to cooperate with the organisations in order for them to get funding. This precondition helps GONGOs to get the funding, and this helps the government to formally show that they are cooperating with the non-governmental sector (Interview 9).

*“Unfortunately, there is no systematic work in the non-governmental sector, and there are several reasons behind this; one is that in the informal ruling states, it is prevalent for Government Organised Non-Governmental Organisations to start operating that are trying to shift the discourse as the government tells them to do.” (Interview 16)*

Here we can see that these issues are difficult to influence because the government has a lot of control over security matters, and GONGOs compromise the civil sector. The precondition of the donor grants that require government involvement in the project makes it difficult for the non-governmental sector to advocate.

*“The critical aspect of public advocacy is that when the government does not want to do something, the non-governmental sector should be able to put these topics forward in the public sphere with their expertise, their efforts, their research and public advocacy to make them change something and take a step towards this and make them cooperate. It should not be a precondition that you do not give out grants without prior cooperation, especially in the countries going towards autocracy like ours.” (Interview 9)*

This shows that civil society has the most crucial role, as indicated in the theoretical part regarding Advocacy Coalition Framework, because, through public advocacy, they can put forward the issues that governments and the public sector neglect. Other issues regarding advocacy were mentioned in the interviews and are worth noting. One was the issue of public servants. Here we can observe the issue of advocacy outside the civil sector. The respondent of the interview 15 mentioned that public servants usually have a better understanding of the processes and can point out the flaws, but in the political environment of Georgia, there is not much that public servants can do without losing their place of employment; they cannot criticise the government and keep working in the public sector. Since the justice system is not

independent, there are no guarantees that you can speak up, advocate for something and avoid unlawful termination.

Another topic worth mentioning was an element of individual advocating, concerns coming from the public, and people expressing their discontent with the situation. As it was mentioned by one of the respondents, issues narrowly connected to national security politics do not spark interest in people until it affects them directly. If they do not see the direct effect of the absence of a policy, this does not cause discussion or interest (Interview 15).

The conclusion drawn from all the information and answers gathered on the topic of advocacy is that when it comes to critical infrastructure protection and creating a legal framework for it, in the time period for this study, there was no active advocacy in Georgia. Therefore, the value found is the lack of active advocacy. In other words, active advocacy was absent. It is visible that lack of active advocacy plays a role in policy continuity, but even though they mentioned this problem, the respondents did not name this issue as the main reason behind continuity.

### **3.3 Increasing returns – costs of reversal in context of critical infrastructure protection**

As previously mentioned, when we talk about increasing returns, there is a situation where changing the status quo would be more costly than continuity. In other words, the cost of reversal would be too high. When talking about costs, I am not looking merely at financial costs but costs in general, political, reputational and others that might come up. After conducting interviews, there are several outcomes that change could have brought had it ever been implemented. It is essential to look at the possible outcomes, what would follow the change and whether this would be seen as beneficial by the decision-makers.

There have been three main themes throughout the interviews connected to the costs issue. These are the issue of no political or personal gain, fear of Russia, and business interests. If we start with the first topic, the respondents of interviews 1, 2, 5, 8, 14, 15, and 16 have mentioned that adopting a legal framework for critical infrastructure is seen as something that will not bring any political gain. It has become clear that there is a larger problem in the security area, general neglect towards renewing security concept and a threat assessment document, which could all be the base for creating a legislative framework for critical infrastructure protection.

This indicates that this would be an extensive process requiring drafting several documents. As the respondent of interview 2 mentioned, in government initiating such an extensive process is considered a headache that will not have political dividends (Interview 2). A respondent of interview 8 stated that in today's government, when there is an "informal ruler", any kind of written rules about this type of issue would impair the will and power of this "informal ruler" (Interview 8). If the people in the higher positions stay in these positions according to the informal ruler's will, this kind of decision could cost them their position.

*"When the main foreign policy priorities or national security priorities are not derived from national interests but from the views of certain group of people, and there is no strategy, no concept, nothing solidified by legislative or institutional process, just views of certain people, the issue that is more relevant is the security of the regime and not the security of the nation."* (Interview 16)

The respondent, a security expert, mentioned a politicisation problem. The focus is always on elections, and the ministers are changing so fast that they only think about retaining power. This relates to costs in a way that when retaining power is the main focus, putting resources into changes that will not affect the elections and only bring significant responsibilities is considered a loss. When somebody starts a process, they might get replaced in three months, and the new one does not continue what the last one started, so people do not see the point of starting something; when they know that they have a little time, they focus more on narrow party interests or their own interests (Interview 14). In this case, retaining the status quo brings more gain. Instead of initiating changes, they use their position for their personal benefit.

If we move on to the second indicator, the respondents of interviews 1, 3, 12, and 15 have stated that one of the reasons why documents connected to national security do not get adopted is the fear of Russia because any document that assesses threats would require mentioning Russia as the main threat. It has been mentioned during the interviews several times that a new concept of national security document has been written and re-written many times, and the same for a threat assessment document, but they are not adopted and published. One reason behind this is that political leadership is scared to mention Russia. However, the respondent of interview 12 stated, "Obviously, the whole document is about Russia as a main threat" (Interview 12). Considering this, we can see that any document about security and threats in

Georgia would require mentioning Russia as a primary threat, which is not desirable for the government.

*“They think that growing defence capabilities might be annoying for Russia.” (Interview 15)*

As the respondents mentioned above have stated, the government thinks that such a decision would be very costly for the current government because it would require them to mention Russia as a threat. Another respondent also said that government thinks that growing defence capabilities might be annoying for Russia. According to this, the government might think such a change could trigger an attack from Russia or cause them to lose the possible benefits they might be getting from there. In either case, this could be seen as a costly decision.

Another argument could be connected to the costs of reversal of the status quo. The Respondents of interviews 15 and 16 mentioned that one thing that makes everything more complicated could be some business and economic interests where securitisation is in nobody's interests. For example, if the government creates obligations for the investors to put extra resources into adding extra security measures, this could result in fewer investors (Interview 15). In an environment where any investment is significant, the government might think this will create investment problems (Interview 16). One respondent brought up the example of Germany to show that when you neglect the security aspect of business and look at it as just business, you might find yourself dependent on Russian gas (Interview 15).

*“Total defence and critical infrastructure require certain redundancies connected to storages, resources, etc., and this costs money, and this money can only come from the state; businesses will not do this, well the state can have some regulations and force the businesses to put money in this. Total defence is not profitable; you put extra resources in this for the risks that might never happen.” (Interview 15)*

To bring this chapter to a conclusion, even though creating a legislative framework for critical infrastructure protection does not require extensive financial resources, as identified above, there can be costs connected to this change. To connect this with the theoretical argument about increasing returns, reversal costs can be seen as higher than possible gains for the government implementing the change. As it has been pointed out, there is a need for security updates on a larger scale. There seems to be this nihilistic attitude towards security and defence politics from

the government's side. One of the reasons behind this could be that it is very well realised that this will go against their economic or personal interests. According to the information from the interviews, in the light of the indicators for measuring costs of reversal, the costs of adopting a policy are considered "high". As such, we can say that costs of reversal, as one of the reasons behind policy continuity, is present, but none of the respondents has named it the main reason.

### **3.4 Historical legacies as a reason behind continuity regarding policy for critical infrastructure protection**

As literature about historical institutionalism presented, path dependence and, therefore, continuity in policy can be rooted in the past, past practices and experiences. During the interviews, there were questions aimed at finding out if such path dependence is present in Georgia. When talking with the respondents to try and find the reasons behind the continuity of policy regarding critical infrastructure protection, most were starting to describe one or the other tendency prevalent in Georgian politics. As already mentioned in the methodology chapter, there were several themes and topics that serve as indicators for historical legacies and path dependence rooted in past practices.

To start with, the first indicator connected to the experience of Soviet occupation and residual nihilism and distrust towards changes. The respondents of interviews 2, 3, 5, 9, 12, 13, 14, and 15 have mentioned "nihilism" in society, the prevalent feeling that nothing is going to change and nothing matters, distrust towards changes, and pessimistic attitude as something that hinders policy change, in general, but also in relation to policy for the protection of critical infrastructure. As respondent of interview 2 mentioned, in post-totalitarian societies, such as Georgia, that have experienced the Soviet occupation, the society has this traumatic experience that is caused by being under the totalitarian system's rule (Interview 2). This experience has its effects on society, and this is a direct effect of it that there is nihilism and distrust towards changes, and this causes the lack of involvement in the processes. Most of the population does not feel obliged to be actively involved in initiating such changes. A big part of society does not see the need to be actively involved in policy formation, and part is just sceptical, does not have any hope for a change, and because of this, does not put enough effort into trying to have some impact on politics. This shows us that historical legacies impact the whole society and how they see the processes, and, in this case, we can connect this to the first sub-chapter about advocacy. This shows that the historical impact that the Soviet Union and its occupation had

on Georgia made people nihilistic. They did not hold any power, and this continues to be a pattern in society and limits involvement in the processes.

If we move on to the second indicator of general neglect towards the security sphere, all the respondents, except for interview 6, stated that there is a general neglect of security issues. The respondent of interview 1 told me that it is very difficult to explain this process because there is nothing logical about it. It is very difficult to explain to someone that the country will not run according to strategic documents, that the prime minister himself said that there would not be anything planned out and everything will happen behind curtains (Interview 1).

*“How can we say that we do not have a renewed national strategy in the security sphere for years, that there is no assessment of threat, that the security council does not hold meetings regularly, that there is no political will to change any of this? It does not sound serious; it is impossible to explain how can a country with occupied territories not have all of these.”*  
(Interview 1)

This shows a general neglect towards the security sphere. One respondent (interview 7) summed up this issue as an issue of consistency. Not just in the area of critical infrastructure but overall, in the security sector, there is a lack of security policy consistency, culture, and vision of the course (Ibid). Respondent of interview 15 told me that in Georgia, not having a thought-out policy is a policy. He said that when we look at the period of so many different prime ministers, even for the last two years, and the documents never get approved, this is already a policy (Interview 15). Path dependence that we see is not connected to only one ruling party or certain people in charge.

Moving on to the third indicator, the respondents of interviews 1, 3, 4, 8, 9, 14, 15, and 16 touched upon the issue of a “nihilistic” attitude towards procedures, instructions, planning, acting according to strategic documents, and in general, not understanding the importance of documents. Respondent of interview 3 mentioned that acting according to strategic documents and following instructions and plans has never been in Georgian politics. When I asked him his opinion about the reason behind continuity, he seemed certain that the main reason was the traditional political framework.

*“I would say path dependency, which has always been there in Georgia, but whatever was there non-European in us now has been revealed better. During the last government as well, there was certain nihilism towards practising politics according to European standards, that procedures are necessary, instructions and planning are necessary. We do not have this in culture.” (Interview 3)*

There is one episode from the recent past that several respondents mentioned to show the gravity of the situation. One of my respondents (Interview 1) asked a question to the prime minister about a new security concept, and the prime minister answered that security is not achieved with documents. Here we can see that the prime minister does not see the importance of the document, which is essentially supposed to be the main security document and also a base for possible documents about critical infrastructure protection. One respondent, a former director of the analytical department of the security council, told me that the main problem in Georgia is that political leadership does not understand the importance of strategies, concept documents, written documents in general, and guidelines. They do not see the importance of certain instructions and no need for certain policies to exist. The argument of not seeing the need for documents became more solid when the respondent of interview 4 mentioned that rough legislation could be counter-productive. He was sceptical about legislative regulation because, in his words, this usually happens only formally to say that it has been done. He mentioned that government should be able to take care of such issues.

*“We have a government so that they can assess the risks and act accordingly. Risks change over time, and this should not require legislative changes (to take care of these risks).” (Interview 4)*

If we move on to the next theme, the respondents in interviews 3, 7, 12, 14, and 15 mentioned that there is a tendency to do things at the last minute and not do anything about a threat until they face it. Respondent of interview 3 told me a story about one British general who was curating the first steps towards security sector reforms in Georgia in the 1990s. This British general planned an event, and he was expecting that Georgians would be there and everything would be ready, and when he arrived, nobody was there. Just a minute before starting, everyone arrived, and they managed to start and carry out the event. The respondent remembered the phrase that the general told him, “I love Georgians; they have this just-in-time management”. He said that this phrase really summed up the Georgian political culture. According to him,



there is a tendency to hastily put things together. Planned working is not in the culture. In his opinion, the reason behind this is arrogance, lack of experience and this cultural pattern that they cannot escape. The local tendency is that everything should be resolved last minute, in an unwritten manner, based on somebody's will. In interview 12, the respondent pointed out the tendency of not seeing an issue unless there is a certain trigger, a direct threat that makes them take steps.

Moving on to the next indicator, all of the respondents except for interviews 7, 10, and 12 touched upon the subject of formally doing something. One respondent mentioned that there are a lot of commissions created to show formally that they are working on something, and in reality, they do not do anything, and even if something is done, all the facts are very non-transparent. Respondents to interviews 5 and 8 said that the main problem is that everything in the country is done just to show that something is being done.

*“One thing is to put something on the paper, and another is to actually do something about it”. (Interview 8)*

This is connected to the issue under discussion because sometimes when it comes to critical infrastructure, there are talks of creating commissions, but this is also an old method coming from communist times, creating a commission that is formally there as if they discuss something, work on something but nothing real is happening (Interview 5).

When it comes to the next indicator, the respondents of interviews 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 14, 15, and 16 said that there is a tendency to follow the flow. One of the responders said that the main problem is that there has not been a policy change, and it is continuing with inertia after the dissolution of the Soviet Union (Interview 2). There are “these post-soviet approaches” that existed in security politics, and the same approaches are there today. As a respondent of interview 8 mentioned, there is path dependence in the Georgian policy process, something is done in the past, and it is simply continuing because the bureaucracy does not have the resources to change it.

To move onto the last two indicators, it has been pointed out by respondents of the interviews 5, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 16 that it is very important for issues such as critical infrastructure to be resolved by inter-agency cooperation. They all pointed out the problem of inter-agency

cooperation in Georgia, which has been very dysfunctional for a long time. As one respondent mentioned, “Whenever it comes to inter-agency cooperation where different agencies need to put their resources into defence issues, nothing is done.” (Interview 15). Respondents the interviews 3, 9, 12, 14, 15, and 16 mentioned that there is a post-soviet inertia of processes and ever since our independence, until today, agencies of security systems are considered as governing levers for the people who are in power.

*“Their main function is to help them retain leadership and power and not to ensure security. Therefore, they are not there to ensure national security. On the paper, yes, but otherwise, they are just guarantors of the government to stay in power.” (Interview 9)*

This means that there is a broader problem connected to security, and this problem affects decisions regarding creating a legal framework for critical infrastructure as well. To bring this section to a conclusion, we identified the indicators that were connected to historical legacies, such as nihilism, distrust towards changes, path dependence and following the flow of past decisions, problematic inter-agency cooperation and so on, as conditions which contribute to the continuity and make change less likely. Therefore, they account for policy continuity regarding critical infrastructure protection in Georgia in the time period of two decades from 2003 until 2023. This shows us that the variable, strong influence of historical legacies, is present. During the interviews, this has been identified as the main reason behind policy continuity. This suggests that change in policy regarding critical infrastructure has been hindered because of historical legacies and past practices that are rooted in the policy-making process. Ultimately, we can observe historical legacies that are present in Georgia, and this has been identified as the primary reason behind continuity in policy regarding critical infrastructure protection.

### **3.5 Policy learning – is there enough knowledge and awareness regarding critical infrastructure protection?**

After discussing the concept of policy learning in the theoretical part, it was established that one of the possible reasons behind policy continuity could be the lack of knowledge and awareness about this topic. The knowledge can be lacking on multiple levels. In the sub-chapter about advocacy, we already came across the problem of knowledge on the civil sector and

general society level. Here this chapter will discuss two main indicators, one is the knowledge on the government level, and the second one is the awareness of the problem.

To start with the first topic, the respondents of interviews 1, 3, 4, 7, 11, 12, 14, and 15 mentioned the problem of knowledge on the governmental level. Here we can see the problem conceptual knowledge of what critical infrastructure means exactly and what it would mean to protect it.

*“Maybe there is general knowledge, but concrete, specific knowledge when it comes to actually implementing the policy and doing something, not so much.” (Interview 4)*

According to the respondent of interview 14, unfortunately, people in decision-making positions do not have this knowledge, and this leads to the fact that priorities are not set straight. Hence, the problem here is the non-existence of knowledge, and when there is no knowledge about topics such as critical infrastructure, the knowledge that would help them determine priorities, we see that they do not see the real problems as a result of this.

This brings us to the second topic of awareness. All of the respondents, except for interviews 7, 8, 9, and 10, stated that there is a serious problem of awareness on the governmental level. The lack of knowledge on these topics leads to low awareness of the issue. The respondent of interview 2 mentioned that we could see that there is no awareness of the importance of the problem; otherwise, there would be more steps taken towards resolving the problem. Political decision-makers cannot identify this issue as an important problem, and this is a reason why Georgia does not have progress in this direction (Interview 2). There was an argument that the political leadership does not understand the importance of strategies, written documents, and guidelines, which was already mentioned in the previous sub-chapter, but it is important that we mention it here as well to connect these two concepts and see that maybe the awareness is also an important problem deep-rooted in the history and the way processes are driven. There was another expert that mentioned this problem and connected this to a lack of learning from other experiences.

*“Awareness is an important problem. The reason why change has not happened is the problem of level. First, it is important that we understand the approach that, for example, the West has, and I think that this was not properly studied and understood.” (Interview 6)*

The problems of knowledge and awareness of the importance of the problem are intertwined. In order for critical infrastructure to be on the agenda, it should be in the priorities of the government. In order for the government to make the correct assessment and set priorities, there should be sufficient knowledge about these matters. While talking with a person directly involved in the processes when there was a discussion about making a change in this direction, he mentioned that even when there seemed to be political will for the change, there was no capacity, meaning the knowledge about these issues, “it basically did not exist”. After the internal reorganisation, he thinks that now there is no awareness and vision about why the critical infrastructure and its protection are important.

One expert said that there is a lack of competency. Not the complete absence of it, but a serious lack. He mentioned the importance of research and cooperation between experts and the government (Interview 14), which brings this back to the topic of advocacy.

“It is unfortunate that we don’t really have a lot of research done in this area, for example, the research that would say what needs to be changed and what legal framework needs to be created regarding critical infrastructure. When I mentioned that there is a lack of knowledge on the government’s side, it is not absolutely necessary that all the people who can work on critical infrastructure work in governmental sectors. There can be someone who does the research and makes suggestions, but we still are not there yet to see the cooperation.” (Interview 14)

Here we can see that this expert thinks that if somebody would do more concrete research about the exact steps that government should take, this might help, but only in case there will be a reception and the will to cooperate on the government side. This expert also paid attention to the lack of knowledge of how to act during crises. There is no coordination about this between the government and the private sector.

Here we can make one additional observation that this could work both ways – the non-existence of the policy about critical infrastructure and the means of its protection can be the reason for the lack of knowledge on the civil society level since it would create a plan of action during a crisis and raise awareness. But as already mentioned in the sub-chapter above, this process in a country like Georgia is mainly dependent on political leadership. As one respondent who still works in the public sector mentioned, if we look at the political class and

their backgrounds, nobody is sensitised around these topics; they do not understand these issues. He also mentioned that the expertise is very low. Sometimes even people who work on security issues do not have sufficient knowledge because it is a common practice to just study international relations and think that you can be a security expert. It is interesting to mention here that I got answers from several people who rejected the interview requests, and they told me, “Even though I worked on this, I do not know much about these issues”. The same conclusion could be derived from the fact that only one member of Parliament’s Committee of Security and Defence answered my emails and was the only one on the committee with an education and a background in security.

To bring this section to a conclusion, based on the interview results, it is evident that indicators of lack of knowledge and lack of awareness are present, and therefore policy learning is absent. The absence of policy learning has been identified in the methodology chapter as one of the possible reasons behind policy continuity regarding critical infrastructure protection. Even though the absence of policy learning as a reason behind policy continuity is there, this has not been identified as the main reason behind it.

### **3.6 Policy diffusion – keeping up with the world**

The last variable identified was policy diffusion. In interviews, I was looking for the answers from the respondents that would connect the continuity of policy with poor coordination with other states or the other way around; if better cooperation, closer integration would be helpful for changing the policy and ending continuity. The main themes were integration in the alliances and close cooperation with the partners, and these were mentioned by all the respondents except for interviews 3, 4, 7, and 13. There were several opinions expressed on this matter, and all of them were in accordance with the idea that closer integration with the countries that have the best practices of critical infrastructure protection would make it more probable for Georgia to develop a legislative framework on this matter as well. One important fact to take into account is that Georgia has written in the constitution in article 78 that everything in its power should be done for Georgia to integrate into European Union and NATO. This means that Georgia has responsibilities, the fulfilment of which is necessary in order to get closer to the standards of the European Union and NATO.

According to several respondents, integration facilitates developments such as creating a more comprehensive security policy, including developing a legislative framework for critical infrastructure protection. This also goes the other way around; the country should make such issues a priority; solving security issues is a must during the integration process, and starting such processes could create possibilities to get help from organisations such as the European Union and NATO. If Georgia had a well-functioning system of critical infrastructure protection, this would be an important advantage in the integration process; this would help to strengthen the argument that Georgia has progressed in the direction of strengthening its defence capabilities. There is a process of harmonising the Georgian legislature with the one of the European Union, and the closer Georgia gets to the integration process, the more there is a chance that there will be a necessity to change policies in this area.

*“Regarding this issue, integration in NATO and EU would naturally be good, and we could take the best practices from these countries, how this issue is regulated. This is very important for these post-soviet, post-socialist countries such as Georgia. We went through a period when private property did not exist; everything was in the hands of the government, then there was this abrupt privatisation and fast changes, and it would be interesting to see how the countries with the same background went through a similar process.” (Interview 8)*

The respondent of interview 2 mentioned that it should not be difficult to take care of this critical infrastructure problem in a legislative or conceptual way because there are practices of other similar states, how they managed to go from post-soviet systems and approaches to the European Union or NATO standards, and we can see this very good practice, for example in Baltic states; hence we see that integration helps in this process and practices can be observed and learned from (Interview 2). Another respondent mentioned that if anything happened in Eastern Europe towards democratic processes, this was always with a tandem of the democracy-oriented civil sector and help from the West (Interview 9). This is how Eastern European and Baltic states became more and more democratic and integrated. According to this idea, establishing the right partnerships helps a country towards better policies. In this case, it would help Georgia to work better on its security issues, among them critical infrastructure protection. All the above-mentioned entail that maintaining a good relationship with one's partners is important and helpful for achieving such goals. As one of the respondents mentioned, the fact that the Georgian government today is actively criticising main strategic partners means that this damaged strategic partnerships so much that there is no more will from

their side to help (Interview 12). He mentioned that this is not something visible on the surface, but there are these talks behind the curtains. Compromising partnerships and the integration process means compromising a better chance of having a comprehensive security program and, therefore, a legislative framework for critical infrastructure.

*“To talk in a practical way, if you criticise the EU and the US and talk badly about them, at the very least, they do not have the incentive anymore to finance you and do capacity building for you.” (Interview 12)*

Partnerships have a lot of influence over small countries like Georgia. As one of the respondents told me, nowadays, in Georgia, there is a need for “more of a sticks and carrots approach” from our partners because the country has strayed away from its course (Interview 9). In his opinion, it would be better for such processes if the Western partners would push more. According to the respondent who has worked in decision-making positions for 17 years, if a country has an active foreign policy, and in the case of small countries, the only chance for a state to have a fast process of modernisation is this active foreign policy, which will be directed at attracting investments and not only, and to get the alliances that are based on values or different types of partnerships, this kind of diverse partnerships helps the country to go forward in different spheres (Interview 16). Alliances help you to understand problems more systematically. In alliances, there are responsibilities as well that you have to take on, and the process of integrating alliances and synchronising and harmonising legislature draws more attention to the issues, and this is visible in politics as well.

To bring this chapter to a conclusion, we can see that for a small country like Georgia, partnerships, alliances and integration could play an important role in developing its policies and in this case, this would make it more likely for Georgia to create a legislative framework for critical infrastructure protection. As described in the methodology chapter, if a variable of policy diffusion is absent can be determined through acknowledgement of foreign practices regarding critical infrastructure protection and aspirations to join organisations. The data gathered from the interviews presented the importance of active foreign policy and alliances. It is visible that this policy diffusion is absent in Georgia because foreign practices have not been taken into account. But this section demonstrated that the presence of policy diffusion would play a big role in a possible change in the policy. Gathering from the information from the interviews, the absence of policy diffusion contributes to the policy continuity regarding

the absence of a legal framework for critical infrastructure protection, but it is not a decisive factor.

### **3.7 Summary of findings: assessing explanations for continuity in Georgia's policy regarding critical infrastructure protection**

This final sub-chapter of the analysis chapter serves the purpose of summing up the findings and essentially answering the main research question. On the basis of the empirical findings, the study has found that there is policy continuity in Georgia regarding critical infrastructure protection. To be more precise, the policy, which is the absence of a legislative framework for critical infrastructure protection, has been continuous for the time period of this study – 2003-2023. After establishing the outcome of interest, the chapter moved on to the explanatory factors. When it comes to explanations, the study found that all of the factors anticipated were present, but the factor that was identified as the main reason behind policy continuity was historical legacies. To go through all the factors and start with advocacy, we saw that there is no active advocacy in Georgia, and several respondents identified this as one of the most important issues in this area but not as the main reason behind continuity. While the interviews display the absence of active advocacy as a factor that contributed to the policy continuity, the findings further suggest that even if such advocacy had been present, this might not have affected the processes importantly because, in the government, there is no reception of initiatives coming from advocacy coalitions. This means that while advocacy is part of the explanation, it is not ultimately considered decisive for continuity.

When it comes to costs of reversal, it was pointed out that disrupting continuity by creating a legislative framework does not bring any political gain, which in a way, is a loss as well; at the same time, security issues are being neglected out of fear of Russia's reaction, there can be possible economic losses connected to the change. Therefore, costs of reversal for the government that is going to reverse the continuous policy, personal and financial, are present; in a sense, the factor of costs of reversal contributes to the outcome of continuity. According to the respondents, this factor plays a role, but it is not a decisive one.

If we move on to the next factor, which is historical legacies, we can observe that it is present, and we see this through all the indicators pointed out in the methodology part and in the section about historical legacies as well. These indicators point to the influence of historical legacies.



To the question of why there is no legislative framework for critical infrastructure protection in Georgia, the prevalent answer throughout the interviews was that there is no political will. When I asked to elaborate, many of them mentioned that in order to understand the processes, you have to understand political tendencies in Georgia. After this, as already discussed in the sub-chapter about historical legacies, several tendencies of past practices have been pointed out. To list them here, we can start with the experience of the Soviet occupation that left nihilism and distrust towards changes in society. Then there was general neglect towards the security sphere, nihilism towards procedures, instructions, planning, acting according to strategic documents, and not understanding the importance of having documents. At the same time, the study found the problem of formally doing something, the tendency of just-in-time management, not seeing the problem until facing it directly. The tendency to follow the flow, path-dependent processes, when something is done in a certain way, not wanting to take the responsibility of changing it. A long period of dysfunctional inter-agency cooperation. Post-soviet inertia of using security system as governing levers for the people in power. All of this has been identified as part of the historical legacies in Georgia. All of the respondents have identified at least one (most of the times several) indicators of historical legacies, which points to the fact that this variable is present. Respondents have pointed to this factor as a main explanation behind policy continuity. This means that in light of the empirical evidence gathered from the interviews, historical legacies are the most important factor in explaining policy continuity. While other factors contribute as well, the factor of historical legacies has been considered the most important.

When it comes to the factor of policy learning, after the interviews, it became clear that the indicators of lack of knowledge and awareness on the government level are present. The absence of policy learning is an important factor that hinders progress in this area. Lack of knowledge is a factor behind continuity, and as mentioned by respondents, it does hinder change. The same is applicable to problem awareness since, as suggested by data gathered from the interviews when the problem is not acknowledged, this hinders the change and contributes to continuity. The absence of policy learning is acknowledged as a factor contributing to policy continuity, but it is not considered to be a decisive one because, according to the results of the interviews, even when there was awareness of the problem, the legislative framework did not get adopted; hence this means that it is not a decisive factor behind continuity.

Next, we can discuss policy diffusion. We saw that a lot of respondents identified foreign involvement, alliances, and strategic partnerships as important factors for modernizing policies. The absence of policy diffusion has been identified with factors of lack of learning from foreign models and recently damaged strategic partnerships. Based on the interview data, policy diffusion would play an important role in change, and therefore lack of it is contributing to policy continuity. Even though this has been identified as a factor aiding policy continuity, it has not been named to be a decisive one.

To sum up, while all the factors discussed contribute to the continuity of policy, historical legacies were considered to be the most important and, therefore, the main reason behind continuity in policy regarding the absence of a legal framework for critical infrastructure protection in Georgia in the time period of 2003-2023.

## **Conclusion**

In this thesis, the case of policy continuity regarding the absence of a legal framework for critical infrastructure protection in Georgia in the time period of 2003-2023 was examined from the perspective of different theories regarding policy change in order to answer the question: What explains the continuity in policy regarding critical infrastructure protection? The objective of this thesis has been to find out what is behind the continuity of policy regarding the absence of a legal framework for critical infrastructure protection. In order to do so, this study employed theories and concepts connected to policy change, such as Advocacy Coalition Framework, Historical Institutionalism, path dependence, policy learning, and policy diffusion. These theories provided different possible factors behind continuity, such as lack of active advocacy, high costs of reversal, historical legacies, lack of knowledge and awareness, and lack of alliances and strategic partnerships with countries that have better policies regarding critical infrastructure.

In order to determine the reasons behind policy continuity regarding the absence of a legal framework for critical infrastructure protection, the above-mentioned theoretical framework was then applied to the case of policy continuity regarding critical infrastructure protection in Georgia in the time period of 2003-2023, and utilising data from 16 in-depth elite and expert interviews and legal documents of Georgia; this thesis was able to identify the factors behind continuity and distinguish the decisive one.

The analysis of data, both the interview results and legal documents of Georgia, demonstrated that no such framework exists or was developed in the period under observation, and no change has occurred in the sense of creating a legal framework for critical infrastructure. When it comes to the explanatory factors, after careful examination of the results regarding each possible explanation behind this continuity, there have been several trends identified. After placing all the observations and answers from the respondents together, the results provided an explanation for the continuity seen in policy regarding critical infrastructure protection. To answer the research question, we can say that the continuity in policy regarding critical infrastructure protection can be explained by several factors, including lack of active advocacy, high costs of reversal, absence of policy learning and policy diffusion, and historical legacies in Georgian policy-making practices. Meaning that while all factors suggested in the literature were present to some extent, they were not all referred to as equally important. In particular, historical legacies were named as the main reason behind continuity. The concept of historical

legacies here contains in itself general neglect towards the security sphere, nihilism and distrust towards changes caused by the experience of Soviet occupation, nihilism towards procedures, instructions, planning, acting according to strategic documents and, in general, no understanding of the importance of documents, tendency of just-in-time management and not seeing the problem until problems are faced, a problem of acting only formally, prevalent tendency of following the flow, dysfunctional inter-agency cooperation and post-soviet inertia of using security systems as governing levers for the people in power. All of these above-mentioned factors are part of historical legacies, and they result in no political will to obstruct continuity. It is important to mention other factors that are present in Georgia that play a role in continuity, and if these factors were changed, it would affect the processes and make it more likely for continuity to end. First of all, we can mention the lack of advocacy in Georgia regarding this issue and, overall, the lack of involvement of the civil sector in security issues. Another issue was the factor of the high cost of reversal, which showed us that implementing this legal framework is not seen as something that would bring political gain. But this has not been identified as an obstructive issue regarding policy continuity or change. Another factor was a lack of knowledge and awareness. In this case, it could be said with certainty that if there were more information about this issue and more awareness of the importance of this change, there would be a better chance of it happening. The last factor is connected with influences coming from outside the country. Here we can say that better relationships and cooperation with strategic partners and good alliances would make it more likely for Georgia to implement a legal framework for critical infrastructure protection. As already mentioned above, though all of these factors play a role, the main reason behind continuity is that historical legacies create certain policy-making practices in which there is no political will to change continuity.

The goal of the study, finding the explanation behind continuity, has been achieved. It is important to look at the results in light of the limitations. While the methodological approach taken produced sufficient data to conduct the analysis, had it has been possible to have access to more insider information about the above-mentioned non-transparent processes, the findings could have been further substantiated by additional details that such information could have provided. As already mentioned, the desired goal has been achieved, but more insider information would affect the findings in a way that could potentially uncover more reasons behind continuity. With this in mind, with the sample that was used for this study, the desired results have been achieved.

To look further, even though the theories chosen for examining policy change, literature provided a sufficient basis for finding the reason behind continuity, had it been possible time-wise, examining more theories could have provided more possible explanatory factors and possibly unravelled more factors hindering the change that did not come up with the theories that were used for this study. Another limitation that we can take into account is that, even though this study provides the answer to the research question and sufficiently describes the reasons behind continuity in policy regarding critical infrastructure in Georgia in the time period of 2003-2023, there is an issue of limited generalisability, because it does not provide a possibility to look at other countries, because findings were specific to the case under consideration, and attempts to generalise findings require careful consideration of context conditions such as the size of the country, historical background and so on. If we connect this to the case selection, Georgia is a particularly good case to study because it is a country with pressure to change the policy and still without one; therefore, similar outcomes are more likely in countries with less pressure.

On the other hand, this thesis can be a stepping stone for further research about continuity or change in policy about legislative framework concerning critical infrastructure in countries with similar historical backgrounds. Further research can be considered in other countries, especially the ones that face similar challenges and display no change. One can explore whether historical legacies explain the outcome there as well. Secondly, this could be complemented by comparative studies on countries coming from the same historical background and developing in different directions. One example could be a comparative study on Georgia and Estonia, countries both with experience of Soviet occupation but very different approaches regarding policy regarding critical infrastructure protection. It could be insightful to conduct a comparative MSSD (Most Similar Systems Design) study and see the reasons behind such different developments.

Another direction of further research can be to look into the possible solutions for the continuity problem by looking at factors hindering the change and studying the ways of overcoming these factors. This thesis provides the factors which represent the problems that stand in the way of change; Therefore, this could be a starting point for further research on this topic. Considering there is not much that has been written about critical infrastructure in general, and nothing has been written about reasons behind the continuity of policy in this regard in Georgia, the wider implications of this thesis can be added to the academic literature regarding policy change in a

narrow lens looking at policy change connected to critical infrastructure. The findings of this thesis can have wider implications in relevance to policy as well. This could widen the prospects of such policy in Georgia because, as already mentioned, this thesis shows the factors that are hindering the change and, therefore creation of a legal framework for critical infrastructure protection, hence the findings provide information about what would needs to change in order for policy change to become more likely.

In conclusion, this thesis fulfilled its main goal and found the reason behind continuity. Alongside this, it uncovered a bigger problem of neglect towards security issues in Georgia. The factor of historical legacies can be critically examined and further researched. This study, then, has not only provided an answer to the research question with regard to the continuity of policy regarding critical infrastructure protection, but it has also highlighted the effect of past experiences and practices. In doing so, this thesis has contributed to the understanding of attitudes towards critical infrastructure protection in Georgia while providing additional opportunities to expand this research in the future and possibly find solutions to the observed problem.

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## Interview questions

1. Could you tell me a little about your work, your background and how you encounter the topic of critical infrastructure in your work?

### **Part 1: Measuring the outcome**

2. In your view that are the key elements of state policy for the protection of critical infrastructure today?
3. Have they changed over the last two decades? If so in what way? Are they more effective than a decade or two ago?
4. To your knowledge have there been any initiatives to introduce a framework for protection of critical infrastructure in Georgia?
5. Is protection of critical infrastructure a topic that comes up often during committee meetings? (Question for committee members)
6. If yes, what is the context in which it is discussed?
7. In your opinion, how effective is the existing framework for protecting critical infrastructure in Georgia? Do you see any shortcomings or gaps?
8. If we consider the role of critical infrastructure in war in 2008, or now in Ukraine, or more generally how organisations such as EU and NATO or surrounding countries focus on this topic, the protection of critical infrastructure seems to be of growing importance. But in Georgia there is an obvious need for development of legislative framework for critical infrastructure protection, I know that there was a special committee created in 2020, has there been any steps towards this before?
9. Why have they failed?
10. What is this committee doing now?
11. Why has there not been any reports of progress?

### **Part 2: Measuring explanatory factors**

12. Currently there is no overarching policy which is specifically dedicated to the protection of critical infrastructure in Georgia. In your view, what are the reasons behind this?
13. Do you think that change has not happened because Georgia does not need the policy change in this aspect, or there is another reason behind it, financial resources, expertise, etc. (These will be just to follow up, depending what they mention earlier)
14. What role do NGOs play? Are there any that advocate in this regard? / Is there any group or individuals inside or outside the government/public sector, who advocate for the adoption of such a framework?
15. In your opinion, what is the attitude towards such changes/reforms in society?
16. Is there anything else that you think is the most important for understanding how policy regarding protection of critical infrastructure in Georgia has developed?

### List of respondents

<b>Respondent number</b>	<b>Held positions</b>	<b>Date of the interview</b>
Respondent 1	Member of the parliament – deputy chair of Defence and Security Committee. National Security Council – deputy chair	25.03.2023
Respondent 2	Military Political Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia; various positions. Georgian mission to NATO, adviser; Head of the NATO Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia; Director of the European Affairs Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, ambassador for extraordinary assignments; advisor to the Minister of Defence of Georgia on foreign policy issues; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, Ambassador of Extraordinary Tasks; – National Security Council of Georgia, Deputy Secretary;	28.03.2023
Respondent 3	Former member of Parliament. Defence and Security Committee – deputy chair.	28.03.2023
Respondent 4	Member of parliament – Defence and Security Committee. Deputy to the minister of Foreign Affairs. Head of Security Council. Advisor of the president regarding security issues.	29.03.2023
Respondent 5	Member of analytical department of National Security Council. Deputy director of analytical department National Security Council. Director of analytical department of National Security Council.	29.03.2023



Respondent 6	Cyber security expert with over 20 years of experience in security policy and management, incl. senior positions in Anticorruption Bureau, Georgian Ministry of Defence and Intelligence Services.	31.03.2023
Respondent 7	Professor of International Relations and Security Studies. 9 years of experience in working on projects connected to strengthening governmental institutions' security sector (action plans, trainings and so on). Director of a non-governmental organisation working on security and cyber-security issues.	03.04.2023
Respondent 8	Senior researcher at a foundation concentrated on studying security and strategic studies. Professor at Tbilisi State University. National security and international security expert. Deputy Secretary of the National Security Council of Georgia; Different positions at the Information and Analysis Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia.	04.04.2023
Respondent 9	14 years of experience in military-political direction first in Ministry of Foreign Affairs, then in Ministry of Defence; Executive director of Georgian Atlantic Council. Diplomat, Senior Counsellor; Head of International Relations and NATO Integration Department – Ministry of Defence; Deputy Defence Minister.	04.04.2023
Respondent 10	Senior researcher at a think tank oriented on research on security issues. More than 15 years of work experience in international relations, security, and EU integration fields. First Deputy Minister at Ministry of Penitentiary; Director of International and Public Affairs as well as the advisor of the Prime minister at the State Chancellery of Georgia; Ministry of Internal Affairs – Director of Department of Information and Analysis.	05.04.2023

Respondent 11	Cyber-security expert; Chief Specialist of the Defence Policy Division at Ministry of Defence of Georgia; Chief Specialist of the Policy Division at Ministry of Internal Affairs of Georgia	05.04.2023
Respondent 12	Head of the government administration; Head of the National Security Council; Director of Information-Analytical Department at the Ministry of Internal Affairs; Deputy Head of Analysis and Coordination Division of Information and Analysis Department at the State Security Services; Special representative of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Representative of the State Security Service to the Geneva International Discussions; Head of Commission for creating legal framework for critical infrastructure protection.	05.04.2023
Respondent 13	17 years of experience working in public sector; Ministry of Internal Affairs – different positions at Informational-Analytical Department and administration, last position director of Informational-Analytical Department; Ministry of Penitentiary – Head of administration; Head of Regional Politics Office of Government Administration;	07.04.2023
Respondent 14	Cyber Security strategy and governance consultant with over 15 years of leadership experience and with solid expertise in critical infrastructure protection and resilience against advanced threats, including sophisticated and state-sponsored cyber-attacks; Director of IT Security at Central Election Commission of Georgia Associate Professor of Cyber Security Studies.	07.04.2023
Respondent 15	National Security Council – head of Analytical Department; Ministry of Defence – Several high positions over the years.	04.04.2023

Respondent 16	<p>First Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia;  Deputy Head of Military Cooperation Division, Military-Political Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia; Head of Military Cooperation Division, Military-Political Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia; Deputy Director of the Military-Political Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia; Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Georgia to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; Head of the Political Security Department of the National Security Council of Georgia; Head of the Foreign Intelligence Department of the Ministry of State Security of Georgia; Deputy Minister of State Security of Georgia; Head of the Georgian Intelligence Service; Deputy Minister of Civil Affairs of Georgia; Deputy Minister of Defence of Georgia; First Deputy Minister of Defence of Georgia; Deputy Secretary of the National Security Council of Georgia; Atlantic Council of Georgia, Vice President</p>	13.04.2023
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