

# The Legitimizing Role of International Rankings in a Hybrid Regime: A Dialectics of Depoliticization and Repoliticization

*Tskhadaia Giorgi*

*Caucasus University, Caucasus School of Governance, Tbilisi, Georgia*

**Abstract:** The paper investigates how discourses involving international indices are used to confer liberal democratic legitimacy on a hybrid regime. By examining the case study of Georgia and employing discourse analysis, it demonstrates that international organizations depoliticize the main concepts of the rankings in various forms and degrees. The paper outlines three modes of depoliticization—technicalization, economicization, and criminalization—and illustrates how they construct authoritative international indices measuring transparency, economic freedom, corruption, and the rule of law. Subsequently, it shows how the Georgian government repoliticized these depoliticized concepts and used Georgia's rankings achievements to argue its solid liberal democratic credentials. Consequently, the paper argues that the legitimizing discourse involving international indices exhibits a dialectical character, where depoliticization reinforces repoliticization. The paper concludes by outlining the implications of this study for understanding the complex relationship between hybrid regimes and the international liberal community, and suggests future research directions.