

ELITE LED DEMOCRATIZATION IN GEORGIA

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ABSTRACT

ELITE LED DEMOCRATIZATION IN GEORGIA

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The process of democratization in the successor states of the former Soviet Union has been widely studied by political scientists, sociologists and experts in area studies. Academic literature mainly focuses on the factors which would facilitate and/or hinder the process of democratization in the post-Soviet era. These include economic development, political culture, the nature of previous regime type, structural factors and the role of elite. This thesis analyzes the process of democratization in Georgia while focusing on the elite choices and initiatives. It mainly focuses on democratic achievements as well as the failures in democratization under the rule of three post-Soviet presidents of Georgia, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Eduard Shevardnadze and Mikheil Saakashvili. While doing so, it compares and contrasts the practices, priorities and policies of three leaders and evaluates on the impact of different leadership patterns on the process of democratization. This thesis argues that democratization in post-Soviet countries in general and in Georgia in particular is mainly an elite-led process. The success and failure of this process depends on the elite choices and initiatives and the power relations between and within the elite groups.

Key Words: Georgia, democratization, political elite, leadership.

ÖZ

GÜRCİSTAN'DA SEÇKİNLER VE DEMOKRATİKLEŞME

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Eski Sovyetler Birliği'nin devamı olan ülkelerdeki demokratikleşme süreci siyaset bilimciler, sosyologlar ve alan araştırması uzmanları tarafından kapsamlı olarak incelenmiştir. Akademik literatür esas olarak Sovyet sonrası dönemdeki demokratikleşme sürecini kolaylaştıran ve/veya engelleyen faktörlere odaklanmıştır. Bunlar arasında ekonomik kalkınma, siyasi kültür, önceki rejim tipinin doğası, yapısal özellikleri ve seçkinlerin rolü gösterilebilir. Bu tez Gürcistan'daki demokratikleşme sürecini, seçkinlerin tercihleri ve inisiyatiflerine odaklanarak analiz etmektedir. Esas olarak demokratik başarılarla beraber, Gürcistan'ın Sovyet sonrası üç devlet başkanı Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Eduard Shevardnadze ve Mikheil Saakashvili'nin dönemlerindeki demokratikleşme yolunda yaşanan aksaklıklara da odaklanmaktadır. Bunu yaparken bu üç liderin uygulamaları, öncelikleri ve politikalarını karşılaştırır ve değişik liderlik özelliklerinin demokratikleşme sürecine etkilerini değerlendirir. Tezin tartışma konusu genel olarak Sovyet sonrası ülkelerde ve özel olarak Gürcistan'da demokratikleşmenin seçkinlerin yürüttüğü bir süreç olduğudur. Buna göre; sürecin başarısı ya da başarısızlığı, seçkinlerin tercih ve inisiyatifleri ile seçkin gruplarının kendi içlerinde ve birbirleri arasındaki güç ilişkilerine bağlıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Gürcistan, demokratikleşme, siyasi seçkinler, liderlik.

To My Family

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Georgia issued her declaration of independence on 9th of April 1991, after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The early years of independence were turbulent, due to problems associated with the transition period regarding the shift from an authoritarian system to a democratic one, the transition from a state-centered to market centered economy and also the nation-building process. Moreover, the post-independence period is also marked by a civil war between and within the relatively weak organs of the state (including the government, police, army, and judiciary organs), and relatively strong warlords. These warlords emerged as a result of the requirement for military power against the separatist minority movements in the country. Georgia has been a multiethnic society, including three autonomous regions; South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Adjara. Control over the Adjara territory was achieved in 2004 after the aggressive election campaign of Saakashvili. The first two regions are those in which the most tense conflicts have perpetuated, due to the demand for full independence from the central authority with Russian support and military protection. The Georgian central government's response was to use primarily diplomatic instruments to try to solve the problem.¹ In 1992, Georgia lost her *de facto* control over South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The Georgian community and the communities of these two regions have developed xenophobic attitudes against each other and the expulsion of ethnic Georgians from these regions has increased the impetus of the conflict. In such an environment, the central authority has lacked the coercive power to use against the separatists and has had to rely on small militia in this conflict. These small militia became larger and stronger in time, finally achieving victory over the government.

In the following years, harsh economic conditions, coupled with an incapable state which was unable to provide most basic goods and services to the public due to

¹ Michael A. Weinstein, "Deadlock in Georgia: An Incremental Gain For Russia", *Power and Interest News Report*, 16 August 2004, available at http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=197&language_id=1

weak institutions, harmed the transition process of Georgia. The multi-ethnic structure of the Georgian society and the antagonism between these groups, which was strengthened during the ethno-nationalist policies of the first years of independence, also had a negative impact on this process. The ethnic conflicts and antagonism, especially between Georgians and the South Ossetians and Abkhazians, and the rivalry for control between the government and the authorities of these two groups had a serious erosive effect on the Georgian transition towards democracy. These were the most serious obstacles before the nation-building process of the newly independent country. Especially, as the conflict escalated into a civil war, all economic resources were exploited and concentrated on the conflict by both sides, simultaneously harming the state-building process. The existing state was not strong enough to bring the conflict under control and lost authority to the illegal warlords; severely damaging the transition process in Georgia. .

Since 1991, Georgia has had three presidents, all having different backgrounds. The first president of Georgia was Zviad Gamsakhurdia, from the declaration of independence until the beginning of 1992. He was the national hero of the independence struggle, a hard-liner nationalist and previous dissident. This period was dominated by ethnic clashes and civil war. The next president of Georgia was Eduard Shevardnadze who had a communist background. As the Party First Secretary of Georgia, he served as the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union. This period saw stability and reconciliation among different political circles within the country, but also a drastic increase in corruption and the personalization of state affairs. He was ousted in a civil movement, the Rose Revolution of 2003, by the coalition of the opposition and civil society. The leader of the Revolution, Mikheil Saakashvili, a lawyer educated and oriented to the West, became the latest president of Georgia.

The Rose Revolution marked a turning point for the democratic transitions within the post-Soviet territory. It was the first and most effective example of peaceful revolutions aimed to achieve democratization. It took its name from the roses Saakashvili gave to Shevardnadze and his deputies during the opening session of the new parliament after the parliamentary elections held in November 2003. The revolution was engineered by a coalition of political and civil forces in the country, with the support of international actors, such as the United States and the European

Union as well as inter-governmental and international non-governmental organizations, who were critical of the Shevardnadze rule in terms of democratic achievement. Yet, the new administration under Saakashvili owed its success and legitimacy to the strong public support. In other words, the current government was considered to be legitimate both by local and international actors. As of November 2007, Georgia is considered as a successful and hopeful example of democratization stories in the international arena. The democratization efforts of the new government increased the international support it has enjoyed. As will be indicated in the following chapters, the main pillar of the Rose Revolution was to make Georgia a democratic state, based on European democratic values.

However, recent events in Georgia indicate that the country still has various issues with the democratization process. Oppositional forces and political parties have intensified their criticism and protested against the Saakashvili government with the demand of the organization of early presidential and parliamentary elections, which were to be held in November 2008. Saakashvili used force against the protesters and declared a state of emergency. However, in a few days, he declared that the presidential elections would be held in January 2008, earlier than the protesters had demanded. Developments in the near future will show whether the Saakashvili regime will respect democratic values in its relations with the opposition and in the election process, or not. Time will show if Georgia will achieve full democratization, however recent events have showed that the process is not over yet.

The aim of this thesis is to analyze the process of democratization in Georgia while focusing on leadership patterns. The main argument is that Georgia followed different paths to democratization under different leaders. In other words, the elite choices and initiatives, as well as diversifying backgrounds of the three leaders, have determined the nature of liberalization and democratization in post-Soviet Georgia.

Post-Soviet transitions basically meant a change in regime type. The starting point of this change was the breakdown of authoritarianism, and the expected (or targeted) outcome was the consolidation of democratic regimes in these countries. However, the transition process has proved to be more difficult than the early examples of transition to democracy (i.e. Latin American and Southern European cases), as post-Soviet transitions were characterized with their triple dimensions. Post-Soviet countries have had to manage triple transitions; from planned to market

economy, authoritarian rule to democracy, in addition to the nation and state-building processes. Another peculiarity of the post-Soviet transitions was the uncertainty of the process. The uniqueness of the post-Soviet case and the absence of such examples of transition from a communist regime type to democracy increased this uncertainty. They did not have a concrete path to follow, as these countries also differ from each other with their ethnic complexities.

Democratization is understood as a shift from an authoritarian rule to democracy. There are different approaches to democratization. Roughly, we can divide them into two as the narrow and broader definitions.² The former focuses on the democratization of formal institutions, whereas the latter focuses on the existence of democratic institutions, such democratic elections, which can not be seen as the only criterion for democratization, but also requires “popular consent, popular participation, accountability and a practice of rights, tolerance and pluralism”.³

The main theoretical approaches to democratization are:

- Modernization Theory (which emphasizes the interrelationship between economic development and democratization),
- Transition Theory (which applies a historical approach in the analysis of democratization, by putting a special emphasis on elite behaviors),
- The Structural Approach (which discusses long term historical changes in regard to the interrelationship between different power structures),
- Path Dependency (which focuses on the impact of the previous regime on the democratization process), and
- The Elite-led Approach (which emphasizes the primacy of the role of the elite).

Common to all these theories is that their research basis is the domestic environment of a state on the path to democracy. On the other hand, the impact of the global order, the role of the development of the civil society, the institutionalization of democracy through elections and some other prerequisites, such as the existence of a “state” are also taken into consideration. However, while each focuses on

² This division is made by Anders Uhlin, *Post-Soviet Civil Society, Democratization in Russia and the Baltic States*, (Routledge Press, New York, 2005), p. 18.

³ Ibid.

different dimensions, each of them also take the impact of other elements into consideration.

The theoretical framework of this thesis derives from the literature on democratization and puts emphasis on the elite-led democratization approach. As one of the central arguments of this thesis is that democratization in post-Soviet countries is an elite-led process where choices regarding authoritarian and semi-authoritarian modes of government and democratization are largely determined by the preferences of the ruling elite. In such countries which did not follow a classic historical modernization process as in the case of Europe, proper public-ground for democratization does not occur. As a result, the execution of state, public and economic life becomes an elite business. Opposition to the usual way of governance within the public sphere can most efficiently arise under the leadership of a circle within the ruling elite. I argue that if the governing elite is unwilling to democratize, it is less likely for a post-Soviet country to democratize. In other words, both achievements and failures in transition to democracy are heavily influenced by the elite choices. In short, democratization in most of these countries is the result of elite relationships and struggles. What is also peculiar in the Georgian case is that the last attempt for democratization (i.e. the Rose Revolution) was also supported by societal actors and civil society forces. The peaceful shift is achieved through a consensus of different elite groups. The opposition and civil society's demands for further democratization were also supported by some sections of the governing elite. Therefore, pact formation among different elite groups resulted in the election of a democratic government. To what extent the Saakashvili government has been successful in democratic consolidation is yet questionable.

Georgia is considered to be a successful example of a revolutionary leadership change, in a peaceful way. The support given by the public to the opposition during the revolution is very important, but the starting point of the revolution and its initial success mostly depend on the success of the opposition elite, both in persuading the public and by maintaining its unity. During the 16 years that have passed since independence was achieved, the Georgian democratization process has been affected by many different factors, such as the problems stemming from ethnic conflict, communist heritage and international factors. The focus of this thesis

will be on the domestic factors which have affected the leadership patterns of the three presidents of Georgia within the framework of democratization.

In Chapter 1, the literature on democratization will be reviewed. The aim is to compare and contrast different approaches to democratization with reference to the post-Soviet transition.

Chapter 2 focuses on the approach to elite-led democratization while exemplifying the general leadership patterns in post-Soviet countries.

Chapter 3 consists of the analysis of the democratization process in Georgia while highlighting the choices and practices of the three presidents, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Eduard Shevardnadze and Mikheil Saakashvili. Major historical events which affected the process of democratization will be covered under these three periods. Comparisons will be based on the leadership patterns of the three presidents on the issues of nation building, institutional reforms, political pluralism, attitudes towards opposition, political centralization and corruption. The reason for this comparison is that this thesis claims democracy is an enterprise of the elite in lately modernized communities which did not create democratic public development within their history. The discourses of the three presidents on democratization will also be analyzed.

The last chapter concludes with an overview of post-Soviet democratization of Georgia with reference of diversifying leadership patterns.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE DEMOCRATIZATION LITERATURE

This chapter consists of a short review of the democratization literature. The first aim of this chapter is to give a general understanding of what democratization is, with reference to different authors. The second aim is to compare and contrast different approaches to democratization within this literature, again with references to various theorists. The final aim is to evaluate these theories with the post-Soviet transition.

In the first part of this chapter, I will focus on the definitions of democratization. These definitions will help us to make comparisons between different approaches. In the second part, I will focus on the approaches to democratization. In the last part of the chapter I will try to show to what extent these approaches are relevant to our discussion on post-Soviet democratization.

2.1 Definitions of Democratization

Democratization is defined as the transformation of a non-democratic regime into a democratic one. This process is informed by historical legacies, the preferences of elite actors, domestic processes, as well as the impact of international actors.

Potter defines democratization as the “political changes moving in a democratic direction”.⁴ This regime change is conceptualized by Gill through the three following phases: regime breakdown, democratic transition and democratic consolidation.⁵ The first phase requires the disintegration of old regime structures and is followed by the establishment of the new regime’s structures in the second

⁴David Potter, “Explaining Democratization”, in *Democratization*, ed. by David Potter, David Goldblatt, Margaret Kiloh, Paul Lewis, (Polity Press in association with The Open University Press, Cambridge, 1997), p.3.

⁵Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization, Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process*, (Macmilan Press, London, 2000), p.8.

phase. Finally, when a democracy is consolidated, these new structures become stabilized and gain legitimacy and authority within the society.

In definitions of Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead, transition is "the interval between one political regime and another".⁶ The main focus of this definition is the uncertainty of the transition process. The uncertain character of the transition is both related to the outcome of the process (it may result in democracy or something else) and the process itself (the process has insufficient structural and behavioral parameters that are not efficient enough to predict the outcome).⁷ Przeworski supports this argument by defining the establishment of democracy as "a process of institutionalizing uncertainty".⁸

Geoffrey Pridham defines democratization as an "umbrella term", including the whole process of regime change from non-democratic regimes to democratic regimes.⁹ Accordingly, democratization is a multi-dimensional process, because, it is not only the change of procedures and rules, but also relates to societal dimensions, linkages between the elite and the masses.¹⁰ This process is divided into two as transition and consolidation. While transition is the first stage during which the old regime begins to collapse, consolidation is the "stabilization" of new regime's (that is democracy) rules.¹¹

While it is accepted that there is a distinction between transition and consolidation, and when the transition period is over, that the previous regime breaks down and the consolidation of a democracy starts; there must be some necessary conditions for the achievement of the process. Linz and Stepan argue that a democratic regime needs five prerequisites to be consolidated, in addition to the

⁶ Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter (ed.), *Transitions From Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions About Uncertain Democracies*, (The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1986), p.6; quoted by Gill, p.44.

⁷Ibid.

⁸ Adam Przeworski, "Problems in the Study of Transition to Democracy", in *Transitions From Authoritarian Rule, Comparative Perspective*, ed. by Guillermo O'Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead, (The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1991), pp.47-63, p.58.

⁹ Geoffrey Pridham, *The Dynamics of Democratization, A Comparative Approach*, (Continuum, London, 2000), p.16.

¹⁰ Ibid, p.17.

¹¹ Ibid, pp.19-22.

existence of a state, because, first of all, “democracy is a form of governance of a state”.¹² Accordingly, after meeting the necessity of statehood, there must be a “free and lively civil society”, “a relatively autonomous and valued political society”, “rule of law to ensure legal guarantees for citizens’ freedoms and independent associational life”, a usable state bureaucracy, and lastly “an institutionalized economic society”.¹³

Common to all definitions, the emphasis is made on procedural and institutional elements of democracy. In other words, the first free and fair election held in a country is considered as the beginning of democratization. For instance, Karen Dawisha defines democracy as a political system based on the free and fair election of its leaders via “regular elections based on multiple candidacies and secret balloting” and universal suffrage,¹⁴ and claims that democratization of a country begins with the first free and fair elections being held, a criterion which must be accompanied by civil liberties, political rights and democratic institutionalization at the national level.¹⁵ Accordingly, the criterion of a consolidated democracy is also based on choice being exercised in completely free and fair elections. In this view, a common one shared by many analysts, free and fair elections, and elections in general, are accepted as a prerequisite of democratic consolidation. Linz and Stepan also state in their definition of democratization that it “requires open contestation over the right to win control of the government, and this in turn requires free competitive elections, the results of which determine who governs”.¹⁶ However they also challenge to this view. They call this one-dimension-view the “electoralist fallacy”.¹⁷ According to Linz and Stepan, while it is a necessary condition for a democracy, it alone is not sufficient. Elections can not be seen as the most important

¹² Juan J. Linz, Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation, Southern Europe, South America and Post-Communist Europe*, (The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1996), p.7.

¹³ For detailed definitions of these concepts, see *ibid*.

¹⁴ Karen Dawisha, “Democratization and Political Participation: research concepts and methodologies” in *Democratic Changes and Authoritarian Reactions in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova*, ed. by Karen Dawisha, Bruce Parrot, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997), pp.40-65, p.40.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p.42.

¹⁶ Linz, Stepan, p.3.

¹⁷ Linz, Stepan, p.4.

criterion of democratization, but this is solely a procedural element of democratization. Therefore, the electoralist fallacy results in undermining on-going processes of liberalization, varying degrees of authoritarianism and attempts for democratization.

2.2 Theoretical Approaches to Democratization

All theorists underline different aspects of the democratization process. Some of them focus on the societal dimension; some emphasize the role of significant actors, while some others insist on the necessity of some institutional or socio-economical prerequisites. The main approaches to democratization are as follows:

- Modernization Theory (which emphasizes the interrelationship between economic development and democratization),
- Transition Theory (which applies a historical approach in the analysis of democratization, by putting a special emphasis on elite behaviors),
- The Structural Approach (which discusses long term historical changes in regard to the interrelationship between different power structures),
- Path Dependency (which focuses on the impact of the previous regime on the democratization process), and
- The Elite-led Approach (which emphasizes the primacy of the role of the elite).

According to the *modernization theory*, which claims that “there is a positive correlation between economic development and democracy”,¹⁸ democratization was related to the level of economic development. This approach is based on the studies of Lipset, in his work “Political Man” (1960), who says “the more well-to-do a nation, the greater the chances that it will sustain democracy”.¹⁹ This theory emphasizes “a number of social and economic prerequisites” that are necessary for successful democratization. Accordingly, the democratization of a country is directly related to its socio-economic development and modernization.²⁰ Although many other

¹⁸ Gill, p.3.

¹⁹ Seymour Martin Lipset, “Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy”, *American Political Science Review* 53, 1, March, 1959; quoted by Gill, p.3.

²⁰ Potter, p.11.

factors, such as political institutions, ethnic clashes, party systems, political culture, colonial legacies and international relations, are also important in this relationship; the socio-economic development is the main concern of the theory. Because, accordingly, what determines the form of the class struggle is the “economic development” and the “development of education level”, while economic development is also strengthening the middle class in a country which is effective in support of moderate and democratic parties in a political system, by helping democratization.²¹ However, Gill also states that further research indicates that the nature of the relationship is not linear; “the probability of democracy does not increase automatically as the level of development rises”.²²

Hood, on the other hand claims on this issue that,

“Economic modernization is not a magic formula that creates democracies. Most scholars find economic development very helpful to democracy-especially if democratic proponents lend a hand in launching successful economic policies-but economics itself does not explain sufficiently why democratic transitions occur. In fact, some countries that adopt democracy are economically backward.”²³

Gill explains the effect of economic development on democratization by emphasizing the importance of industrialization and the middle class that subsequently emerges.²⁴ According to Gill, “the new middle class, the industrialists, businessmen and the financiers”, who start to influence the economic sphere, also start to participate in the political sphere with their own organizations in order to put pressure on the regime for policy changes. The indigent masses, on the other hand, start to migrate to the cities from the countryside and they also become a pressure group for the development of their poor conditions.²⁵

²¹ Ibid, p.12.

²² Gill, p.3.

²³ J. Steven Hood, *Political Development and Democratic Theory-Rethinking Comparative Politics*, (M.E Sharpe, New York, 2004), p.15.

²⁴ Ibid, p.15.

²⁵ Ibid.

The *transition theory*, on the other hand, is based on Rustow's article "Transition to Democracy", and focuses on how a democracy comes into being at first.²⁶ The method used is a historical approach. In this approach, first of all, there is a phase of "national unity" and "sharing of a political identity". This phase is followed by a "political struggle". The claim made regarding this phase is that democratization is always born out of a conflict between opposing groups in all countries, rather than being a simple result of "peaceful evolution".²⁷ The third phase is the 'transition or decision phase', during which the political players "decide to compromise and adopt democratic rules".²⁸ In the last phase, which is called the 'habituation phase', those democratic rules become habituated. The political elites of the transition period are replaced by a new generation, who have habituated democratic rules and believe in them. After that, the democratic regime is said to be established.²⁹

Potter explains the difference between the two theories by saying that transition theory explains democratization by focusing on "historical political processes marked by social conflict".³⁰ According to this,

"[...] action, struggle, 'hot family feuds', and eventual conciliation historically in particular countries is what democratization is about, not inexorable movement on the comparatively bland terrain of timeless social requisites. What derives these historical processes is the agency of political elites in conflict. Democracy is produced by the initiatives of human beings".³¹

The third approach to democratization is the *structural approach*, which focuses on long-term processes of historical change. While the transition theory explains transition to democracy with a special emphasis on elite behavior, the

²⁶ Dankward Rustow; "Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model", *Comparative Politics* 2, No.3, 1970, pp.337-363; quoted by Potter, p.14.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid, p.15.

structural approach emphasizes the importance of changing power structures,³² power relations between different social classes or other social forces. The main assumption is that the interrelationship between different power structures, such as economic, social and political power structures, is what determines the behavior which makes the conditions progress to liberal democracy.³³ Accordingly, the structures of power have historical phases of change, and due to this, analysis made through this approach are mainly long term.³⁴ These historical periods are analyzed at the basis of the interrelationship between industrialization and democratization or social classes and state.

Apart from these three approaches, Potter also states six explanatory factors, which are all referred to by these approaches in explaining democratization. These factors are economic development, social divisions, state and political institutions, civil society, political culture and ideas and transnational and international engagements, including war.³⁵

Path-dependency is one of the main arguments of Linz and Stepan. In order to understand what it means, the conceptual framework in which it takes place must be explained. Linz and Stepan introduce two dependent variables in the research of democratization. These are “completed democratic transition” and “consolidated democracies”.³⁶ Accordingly, what determine the “completion of a transition to democracy” are the free and fair elections made to determine the government, the agreement made on the procedures for this election, the capability of the government to implement new policies, and the domination of legislation, execution and jurisdiction within their own areas of power.³⁷

After defining their dependent variables; which are “completed democratic transition” and “consolidated democracies”; Linz and Stepan put forth their

³² Ibid, p.18.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid, p.24.

³⁶ Linz, Stepan, p.xiv.

³⁷ Ibid, p.3.

independent variables. The first is “stateness”.³⁸ Stateness is the relationship between the state, the nation and democratization. The existence of a sovereign state is the first prerequisite of democracy, because it is a governance type and regime types cannot exist without a state. When a large number of people, usually specific groups, do not want to belong to that state, and wish to establish a state of their own or join with another state, as in the case of the post-Soviet republics, serious problems arise within the state preventing any democratic development from being consolidated. In countries which have more than one significant ethnic group, the problem is transformed into the question of who will constitute the political community (polity) of that state. “When there are profound differences about the territorial boundaries of the political community’s state and profound differences as to who has the right of citizenship in that state, there is what we call a ‘stateness’ problem”.³⁹ The stateness problem did not attract much attention until after the demise of the Soviet Union, because the research area of democratization up until that time was southern Europe and Latin America, where competing nationalisms within one territory did not constitute a problem (except the Spanish case). Therefore, the two, namely the state and the nation, may not always overlap.

Another independent variable in the arguments of Linz and Stepan is “path-dependency”, which emphasizes the character of the prior regime type in democratization. For this, they make a new typology of non-democratic regime types, and add post-totalitarianism to sultanism, totalitarianism, and authoritarianism.⁴⁰ Linz and Stepan, after giving four types of undemocratic regimes and explaining them, discuss the interaction between them and the democratization period.

“They try systematically to relate these regime types to transition paths, attempting to show how the contours of the latter are shaped by the conditions of the former [...] all arenas will be at a low level of development under both totalitarian and sultanist regimes, and at higher levels differing according to their

³⁸ Ibid, p.16.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ For more details about the regime typology, see Linz, Stepan, p.46.

circumstances of the case (eg. the authors' distinction between 'early', 'frozen', and 'mature' post-totalitarianism)."⁴¹

From all these discussions, Linz and Stepan underline three conclusions: The first is that the more complex the ethnic structure of a country, the more complex will be the agreement on the fundamentals of democracy. Secondly, even this does not mean that democratic consolidation is impossible in such communities; the situation requires a considerable crafting of democratic norms. Finally, it is a fact that some solutions to the stateness problem are in conflict with democracy.⁴²

On the other hand, Gill criticizes the concept of interrelation of the success of democratization to the type of culture in a country - some of these studies saw a link between a civic culture and democratic forms, some others sought to link these with such things as belief in the legitimacy of poliarchy, the rational and individualistic values embodied in European culture, and the presence of Protestantism. However according to Gill, this literature could not be efficient in explaining how these values led to democratization. He says that such focus on culture was more successful in explaining the endurance of democracy arguing that a regime becomes more secure if its "structures and processes" are in accordance with the values of the masses and the elites.⁴³

Jean Grugel formulates his own framework for the analysis of democratization. In his approach, the main focus is given to the state, civil society and the global order. In this thesis, the state dimension used in this framework will be analyzed.⁴⁴

Accordingly, a democratic state must have the following characteristics:⁴⁵

- Territorial integrity
- The rule of law
- Minimality of legal violence exercised on its citizens

⁴¹ Hood, p.74.

⁴² Ibid, p.29.

⁴³ Gill, p.2.

⁴⁴ For detailed information about Grugel's framework, see Jean Grugel, *Democratization, A Critical Introduction*, (Palgrave Press, China, 2002), p.64.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p.68.

- Representative and popularly elected government, together with constitutionalism
- The existence of more than one power foci
- Formality of access to decision-making
- Commitment to social and economic justice.

Accordingly, although democratization of a state requires the combination of “*institutional change* (the form of the state), *representative change* (having influence over policies and to whom is the state responsible for), and *functional transformation* (what the state does or the range of state responsibilities)”, the main focus is given to the first dimension.⁴⁶ For a regime to be called a democracy, elections must be free and fair (this is mostly seen as the first signal for democratization), political parties must be independent of the state-or government, political plurality and competitiveness must be accepted, and constitutional limits to the power of the leader must exist and be guaranteed, whether it is a presidential or a parliamentary system.⁴⁷

Grugel also defines the obstacles to the democratization of a state. These are “nationality problems”, “diminished sovereignty”, “poor state capacity”, “authoritarian legacies”, and, “the political fallout from economic reform”.⁴⁸ One obvious fact is that in all of the post-Soviet countries, nationality problems became every-day politics.

How democratization is studied is another important dimension of this subject. Grugel argues that the democratization studies of 1970s and 1980s pursued “a process-oriented approach, concentrating on identifying the mechanisms or paths that lead to democratization”, by making a clear distinction between transition and consolidation.⁴⁹ Within the discussions of the democratization literature, an important common point is the significance given to the distinction between *transition* and *consolidation*. This distinction becomes more important when the post-Soviet countries are the focus of research, because of the transition from a

⁴⁶ Ibid, p.70.

⁴⁷ For detailed discussion about the distinction between presidentialism and parliamentarism, see *ibid*, p.75.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p.77.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p.3.

system to a different one. Generally speaking, the transition period is the period of deciding on democracy as the new regime type, after the achievement of independence from the authoritarian Soviet rule. This period, if democratization is to survive, is followed by the consolidation period, which means that the rule of democracy is institutionalized and accepted as the legitimate and most appropriate way of ruling by the community.

In the 1990s, when it became visible that some countries attempted but could not achieve democratization, while others did; attention turned to the consolidation phase of democratization. Consequently, the new topic of interest became the factors which make democracy strengthen or weaken.⁵⁰ For instance, while Di Palma defines the consolidation of democracy as its becoming “the only game in town”; Diamond, relates consolidation with legitimation, which means that all political actors, both the elites and masses, believe that democracy is “the most right and appropriate” regime for the community, and in which all political actors respect the rules of democracy.⁵¹ Even in times of dissatisfaction with and bad performance of democracy, this respect must be kept to the constitutional system and democratic institutions and this belief must be beyond ethnic, class or national divisions.⁵² In this way, it can be said that democratic consolidation constitutes a kind of loyalty to democracy, a “principle commitment” to it, and a “shift in the political culture”.⁵³ According to Diamond, legitimating must mean more than a normative commitment, that it must be “habituated” in the words of Rustow.⁵⁴

When we look at the consolidation dimension of democratization, Graeme Gill defines it as the stabilization of the new structures both in institutions and minds.⁵⁵ Linz and Stepan give some criteria for consolidation. Accordingly, what shows us that a democracy is consolidated is the absence of any “significant national,

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Larry Diamond, *Developing Democracy, Toward Consolidation*, (The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1999), p.65.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Rustow, quoted by Diamond, p.65. For more details about consolidation and its “three tasks”, *democratic deepening, regime performance and political institutionalization*, see Diamond, p.64.

⁵⁵ Gill, p.8.

social, economic, political or institutional actors spending significant resources” to destroy the democratic regime in one way or another (behavioral dimension); the belief in the society in the convenience of democracy to their community as the only legitimate regime (attitudinal dimension); and the habituation of the resolution of conflicts within the limits of democratic laws and institutions by the governmental and non-governmental forces (constitutional dimension).⁵⁶

2.3 Post-Soviet Transition

In this last part of the chapter, I will try to show to what extent these approaches are relevant to our discussion on post-Soviet democratization. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the new independent states of Central Asia, Caucasus and the Baltic entered hard transition processes. It was hard in two ways. First, the process was not “re-democratization” as it was in the Latin American cases. This was the first experience of democracy in their histories. Such necessary factors that a community must possess for a successful democratization, as it is explained in the previous part, did not exist in any of the post-Soviet independent states. On the other hand, for some of those countries independence itself was a first time experience. Being a state and composing a nation was not deeply rooted in their histories.

Post-Soviet transitions were characterized with their triple dimensions. All these countries had to manage triple transitions; from planned to market economy, from authoritarian rule to democracy, in addition to the nation and state-building processes. What made these transitions hardest of all was the difficulty of the nation and state-building processes.

From the view-point of nation-building, concept of nation was very new in Central Asia and Azerbaijan in comparison with the Baltic States, Armenia or Georgia. The Central Asian countries and Azerbaijan were products of communist regime and even their ethnic identities were the makings of Soviet nationalities policy, which went back to the years of Lenin.⁵⁷ The ideological conflict between national-identity building and the ethnic heterogeneity created during the Soviet period in these countries was the basic difficulty faced the first years of their

⁵⁶ Ibid, p.6.

⁵⁷ For detailed information about Soviet nationalities policy, see Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, (Indiana University Press, Indianapolis, 1994).

independence. Ethnic conflicts dominated politics, and sometimes escalated into civil wars, as in the case of Georgia. This process also negatively affected the state-building process. After independence was achieved, the creation of efficient state institutions with difficult economic conditions (because the capital flowing from Moscow had stopped) lost preeminence to ethnic clashes. In turn, the ineffective state institutions and weak state authority, failed to prevent the escalation of these conflicts. The interrelationship between state-building and nation-building in these cases turned into a negative correlation. The decrease in state authority resulted in the increase in the density of ethnic conflicts, and vice versa.

At this point it is important to mention that in the post-Soviet countries, which were composed of many ethnic groups, nation-building processes after independence required for the leaders' populist policies to privilege the dominant nation's values, language, religion, etc, in order to gain public support. In turn, this created an exclusive nationalist approach. However, contrarily, democracy requires an inclusive understanding of citizenship, in which every individual is not seen as the member of this or that nation, but an equal citizen of the country, as all others.⁵⁸

While in the Baltic States and in Central Asia, the main problem was between the Russians living in those countries and the titular nations; in Caucasus and in the Balkans, the common question was the ethnic clashes between the neighboring countries and within the countries. While Azerbaijan and Armenia were in conflict with each other over the territorial units both claimed on the territory of the other (Karabagh and Nakhcivan), Georgia fell into a civil war because of the ethnic clashes between ethnic Georgians and minorities. Such ethnic problems pose a big obstacle to democratization, and the most exciting example is Georgia. First of all, such nationalistic sentiment is easily used by politicians in the early days of independence and the hatred against the "other" is increased. Following the increase of this hate against each other, the dominant ethnic group applies exclusive national policies against the minorities, as in the case of Gamsakhurdia period against the minorities, Ossetians and Abkhazians. The result is civil war, which creates its own illegal paramilitary groups upon which both sides feel dependent, its own black market and illegal weapons and drug smuggling, its own internally displaced people and many

⁵⁸ Hood, p.25.

casualties on either side, its own elevation of hatred, and at the end a hard nationalist approach which is the opposite of the democratic civil understanding.

Such problems in the post-Soviet countries bring in turn a state which has lost all its authority and capacity to perform its duties and commitments to its citizens, and “must be flexible enough to respond to pressures from them”.⁵⁹ Such a failure of the state, in turn requires foreign states or agencies to repair the economic, social and political life of that country, mostly after the dispute comes to a complete or partial termination. Again in turn, this poses another obstacle to democratic development, being the role of outside forces, as in the case of Balkans. The most apparent example of this kind of impact is experienced in the economic field. Another dimension of this issue is the reduction of the role of the state during the liberal transition, which also clashes with the previous role of the state during the communist years.

When we take a general look at the post-Soviet countries, none of them possessed the six prerequisites that Linz and Stepan claim a regime needs to be consolidated, when the Union collapsed: “stateness”, a “free and lively civil society”, “a relatively autonomous and valued political society”, “rule of law to ensure legal guarantees for citizens’ freedoms and independent associational life”, “a usable state bureaucracy”, and lastly “an institutionalized economic society”. However, the Baltic states had a greater chance to complete these lacking requirements as their position is closer to the European democracy, both historically and geographically. First, they had a European tradition coming from their past. Second, Europe assisted the Baltic democratic transformation in order to secure its borders with Russia and to include those on the border within the European democratic system. The late accession of the Baltic states to the Soviet Union as a result of the occupation of the formers by the latter, prevented them from fully integrating to the Soviet system, because they did not prefer it, but they were forced to. This created a difference between the Baltics and the rest of the Soviet Union. The Central Asian and Caucasian republics were mostly the parts of the Soviet system mentality, because they were among the first members and were not forced to join later.

In short, in all of those countries in Central Asia and Caucasus, all these five areas; the “free and lively civil society”, “a relatively autonomous and valued

⁵⁹ Grugel, p.82.

political society”, “rule of law to ensure legal guarantees for citizens’ freedoms and independent associational life”, “a usable state bureaucracy”, and “an institutionalized economic society”; were the domains of the state, and the state was the Communist Party. However, when we look at those countries after almost two decades of independence, the situation does not seem different than it was before. Because of the identification of state with strong leader in most of them, all these areas are controlled still by the state. When the civil society organizations are supported by the international organizations, they have to give priority to the issues as their European supporters prefer, such as women’s rights; and this fact diverges from the realities of their own community. The impact of the political society is limited to the political parties and their circles that are allowed by the governing body and most of them are either already pro-governmental or anti-governmental. The impact of the economical society is also limited to certain individuals and their families or clans; and it is also important to mention that the economical and political circles are strongly connected to each other, that they are mostly coming from same families or cities based on the regionalist tradition in those countries. However, the most striking problem with these countries is the reluctance of the leaders to establish the rule of law. In fact, this is a vicious circle that the absence of rule of law leads to the problems in other areas and those problems also make the establishment of rule of law more difficult. Here, the point is that the key actors for the strengthening of rule of law are the state and the government.

At this point, it is worth to mention Horowitz’s explanation for different democratization processes, which can help us to understand the difference between the Baltic States and the others, through the political culture of those countries.⁶⁰ Accordingly, the reason why some nationalist popular front movements were more aggressive in the search for democratic institutions and others not, was their pre-communist histories. This thesis claims that the fact that the Baltic countries were forced to join to the communist community and became a part of the Soviet Union as a result of Russian occupation also contributes to the explanation of their respective democratic achievement. In Georgia and Armenia, which also had strong pre-

⁶⁰ Shale Horowitz, “Sources of Post-communist Democratization: Economic Structure, Political Culture, War, and Political Institutions”, *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 31, No. 2, June 2003, pp.119-137, p.122.

communist histories and national identities, the massive protests and strong popular movements during the last years of the Union can also be explained through their different political culture from the Central Asian countries. Horowitz explains this approach by claiming that in countries which have stronger pre-communist histories and strong national identities based on those histories, though suppressed for a period of time, the desire to break free from the near past was stronger than it was in others.⁶¹ Democratic achievements of the three Baltic States can also be explained with their more democratic pre-communist history. The three were independent states between 1918 and 1940, and in the 1920s, multi-party elections were held.⁶² Estonia's constitution was very respectful towards the rights of the minorities, as one of the most sensitive in Europe.⁶³ This democratic experience and the loss of independence as a result of the secret agreement of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact in 1939 contributed to their eagerness for their titular nationalities against the Russian minorities and for their democratic achievement.

From this point of view, after long years of Russian domination, it was natural for the titular nations to pursue an extreme nationalist path. In Caucasus, the first leaders of the fledgling independent states were national-front leaders. As a result, the exclusive nationalist policies in the early years of the post-Soviet countries constrained any development of a healthy democratization process. Such an extreme nationalist approach also existed in the Baltic countries, and they experienced very tense conflicts with the Russian minorities. In the end, even democratic Baltic States still have exclusive nationalist views written into their constitutions. On the other hand, their situation also proves that this issue is not itself the reason for democratic failure, as with the other factors; none alone are sufficient to provide an explanation.

In sum, in a multinational country, if the goal is full democratization, the crafters of democracy who control the state must take into serious consideration the multi-nationality, different cultures and "awakened political identities" of the country. Linz and Stepan argue that, even though the elites of a multinational country

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Linz, Stepan, p.403.

⁶³ Ibid.

apply a nationalist policy which does not violate human rights, this still diminishes the opportunities for a democracy to be consolidated.⁶⁴

When we consider the last two parts of the definition of the completion of a transition made by Linz and Stepan, that are the capability of the government to implement new policies, and the domination of legislation, execution and jurisdiction on their own power areas, are also important when the post-Soviet countries are considered. Accordingly, the three institutions of a democracy, legislation, execution and jurisdiction; must be able to perform their powers independently from other foci of power and also the government must have the authority in policy-making. However, when we look at the post-Soviet countries, even governments - sometimes only the leaders - have the authority to apply policies in some countries, this is not the general case, and it is nearly impossible to talk about an institutional independence. The two most important reasons for this are the chaos and civil wars in some cases which produced mafia-like military crime groups that had control over the political, social and economic lives of those countries; and the clan based, patron-client relations that undermined the independence of state institutions. These are mostly reflected in the three Caucasian countries. For instance, in Azerbaijan and most Central Asian countries, institutional independence came under the domination of the leaders. In Georgia and Tajikistan, in addition to this fact, civil wars and the anarchical groups they created prevented the leaders or the governments to implement political decisions. Especially the economic power of such groupings, which was obtained through illegal trading or international contacts, or control over an economic resource, attracted attention and concern.

As pointed out in the previous part, Grugel emphasized the importance of the first factor for “*institutional change* (the form of the state), *representative change* (who has influence over policies and to whom is the state responsible for), and *functional transformation* (what the state does or the range of state responsibilities)”, a combination of which is required for the democratization of a state. From this point of view, it seems impossible to say that post-Soviet countries have completed their transition to democracy, excluding the three Baltic States. Especially in Central Asian countries, free and fair elections are not visible under the dictatorships in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan seem to fulfill these

⁶⁴ Hood, p.35.

criteria more than others, and Tajikistan lost its flowering oppositional political environment to the security problems and civil war at the beginning of the period of independence. In Caucasus, the situation seems a bit more complex with its problematic political and social structure and its closer relationship with Europe. The patron-client relationships and clan-based traditional behaviors are still strong in the three Caucasian countries. However, Azerbaijan is the most problematic of the three in terms of organizing free and fair elections, under the strict control of the leader (the Aliyevs) over the political and economical life of the country. Armenia seems to have a more reliable election system because of its early ability to apply respectively democratic values, before the other two, in a more peaceful way. This was the result of the mono-ethnic social structure which prevented inter-ethnic conflicts within the country and allowed for the unification of the country around the Karabagh conflict, together with the inclusion of the old Soviet elite within the new state's political structure. However, it can be said that Georgia experienced the sharpest turning points in its political life after the achievement of independence. Following the first optimistic years of the Shevardnadze period in terms of elections, the end of his leadership came with the glory of the opposition in the country, of which activities were triggered with the electoral fraud in the last elections. The first elections held after the Rose Revolution were the most free and fair election in recent years.

This thesis claims that institutional transformation is needed for a full democratization and the starting point for this is usually the organization of free and fair elections. However, it also claims that, previous political traditions are important factors for this new institutional design, and holding free and fair elections alone must not be seen as sufficient for democratization. The most visible instance of this fallacy is observed in the post-Soviet countries in Caucasus. All the first leaders of the new republics, Ter Petrosian in Armenia, Elchibei in Azerbaijan and Gamsakhurdia in Georgia were popularly elected nationalist leaders after independence. However, electoral frauds became the usual discussion of every election in the following years, especially in Georgia and Azerbaijan. In both countries, these nationalist leaders were replaced by old communist elite; Shevardnadze in Georgia and Aliyev in Azerbaijan. The ongoing political lives of both countries were influenced by old communist relationships and traditions under the leadership of these two ex-Soviet elite. So, it is possible to say that, path-

dependence was one of the important factors in these countries in the determination of the political practices, including the elections and party relationships with the government. In Grugel's words; "Legacies from the past-cultural, political, social condition shape and constrain how (and whether) democratization happens and the perceptions of key actors about what is, and is not, possible. Democratization is, in other words, path-dependent".⁶⁵ At this point, this issue brings us again to the legacies of the past. As pointed out before, institutional transformation alone is not enough, but the transformation of the old practices and political habits is also required in order to guarantee institutional transformation.

However, for most of the post-Soviet countries, particularly in the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia, the nature of the elections are yet questionable since we witness the anti-democratic practices of the governing elite to varying degrees. Thus, institutionalization of democracy through free and fair elections composes the core of an important debate about the criteria of democratization. I argue that elections do not necessarily bring democratization, particularly in the early years of post-Soviet independence, where democratically elected presidents failed in consolidating democratic principles. Free and fair elections at the national level can only be possible if democracy is consolidated through other democratic institutions, such as a constitution based on democratic principles, and through the respect and loyalty of those institutions to democracy, such as the legal system and bureaucracy, as well as the public.

⁶⁵ Grugel, p.10.

CHAPTER 3

ELITE-LED APPROACHES TO DEMOCRATIZATION AND POST-SOVIET LEADERSHIP PATTERNS

In the second part of the previous chapter, theoretical approaches to democratization were analyzed. These approaches were the modernization approach, transition theory, structural approach, path-dependency, and elite-led democratization. In this chapter, elite-led theories of democratization will be studied as the core theoretical approach of this thesis. The aim of this chapter is to analyze to what extent this approach is relevant to the post-Soviet cases. In the first part, there will be a brief summary of the elite-led approaches to democratization and in the second part I will exemplify general leadership patterns in the post-Soviet context.

3.1 Elite-Led Approach

In general terms, this approach places special emphasis on the role of elite actors in the democratization process of a country. Many theorists, also accepting the importance of other factors in democratization; such as institutional structure, civil society and the international dimension, attribute elite decisions as the decisive factor. Accordingly, elite relations, elite pacts and the decisions resulted from them play the key role. In this part, I will make a summary of these approaches with reference to various theorists. This thesis argues that the democratization phenomenon is completely an elite concern that the transition and consolidation periods are under the control of the elite leaders. A powerful leadership “committed to democratic and constitutional principles” plays a key role during the consolidation phase.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ John S. Dryzek, Leslie Holmes, *Post Communist Democratization*, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002), p.11; quoted by David C. Brooker, “How They Leave: A Comparison of How the First Presidents of the Soviet Successor States Left Office”, *Journal of Communism Studies and Transition Politics*, Vol.20, No.4, December 2004, pp.61-78.

Democratization is claimed to be a political process by Przeworski (1991, 19), based on rational choice.⁶⁷ The focus of this discussion is the transition theory. He argues that critical choices made by elites during the transition process are determined by rational calculations.⁶⁸ While the structural and modernization theories focus on some structural necessities for democratization, the transition approach focuses on actor behavior. Accordingly, elite behaviors are the main determinants of the democratization process. Christian Welzel indicates that democratic transitions are “rational processes of deliberate regime choice driven by negotiated elite pacts and settlements”, and consolidation of a democratic regime comes as a result of the “broadening” of the elite support into the mass support and the deepening of tactical agreements of elites “into normative commitments to democratic institutions among elites and citizens alike” during the “habituation phase”, in which elites and citizens become accustomed to democracy.⁶⁹

Schmitter, O’Donnell and Whitehead’s “*Transitions From Authoritarian Rule*” is regarded as a major source in the literature on the elite-led transition to democracy, which focuses on the conflicts and pacts between and within the authoritarian rulers and their opponents that support democratization.⁷⁰ Accordingly, the achievement of democratization is dependent on the agreements between elites and a good leadership. At this point, pact-making and negotiations between the regime and the opposition forces become an important point of democratic transition. O’Donnell and Schmitter define a pact as “an explicit but not always publicly explicated or justified agreement among a select set of actors which seeks to define

⁶⁷ Grugel, p.58.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Christian Welzel; “East Germany: Elite Change and Democracy’s ‘Instant Success’”, in *Elites After State Socialism, Theories and Analysis*, ed. by John Highley, György Lengyel, (Rowman & Littlefield, USA, 2000), p.103.

⁷⁰ Guillermo O’Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, Laurence Whitehead (eds.), *Transitions From Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives*, (The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1986); *Transitions From Authoritarian Rule: Southern Europe*, (The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1986); *Transitions From Authoritarian Rule: Latin America*, (The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1986); and Guillermo O’Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter (eds.), *Transitions From Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, (The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1986). All these volumes were published in a consolidated version Guillermo O’Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter, Laurence Whitehead (eds.), *Transitions From Authoritarian Rule: Prospects for Democracy*, (The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1986).

(or, better, to redefine) rules governing the exercise of power on the basis of mutual guarantees for the ‘vital interest’ of those entering into it”, and identify three possible types of pacts: a pact governing military withdrawal from politics, a political pact involving the gradual extension of political rights (often through the medium of political parties) and of inclusiveness, and an economic/social pact to facilitate the making of difficult economic decisions.⁷¹

Gill defines some necessary conditions for pact-making.⁷² One is the dependence between the parties, or the level of divergence of their political resources. None must have a free hand in claims and they must have similarly limited political resources, that is the “need for mutual reliance”. The success of the pact-making is also dependent on the privacy of the negotiations “with a limited number of partners”. That is “the more discussion occurs in public, the less room for maneuver leaders have and the less likely they are to accept the sorts of concessions that may be necessary for a successful pact to be completed”.⁷³ In addition, “pact-making can only succeed if leaders are able to ensure the obedience of their followers, unless, all parties to the negotiations have confidence that their partners can ensure that their own followers will abide by any agreements reached, and that confidence is well-founded, stable pacts are unlikely”.⁷⁴ Another important issue is “exit guarantees”.⁷⁵ These are the guarantees that are given to the “old elements” of the regime, in order to convince them that their interests will also be preserved within the new system, such as the guarantees of prevention from persecution generated by the decisions of the authoritarian rule, or such as offerings of immunity. According to Gill, “the identity of the governing authorities” is also very important for the negotiation process.⁷⁶ “the negotiators are sufficiently distant from those who run the old regime that they can gain the confidence of the opposition, and yet close enough

⁷¹ O’Donnel, Schmitter, *Transitions From Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, quoted by Gill, p.53.

⁷² Gill, p.54.

⁷³ Ibid, p:55.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid, p:56.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

to the regime to be able to reassure the former rulers that the process will not escape control and become dangerous to their interests”.⁷⁷

Gill places special emphasis on the role played by some individuals during the transition period.⁷⁸ Accordingly, “in a situation of regime transition, established rules will lose much of their authority and dominant individuals will become increasingly important. The qualities such individuals possess will be even more relevant than usual”.⁷⁹ For instance, in the transition models of Huntington,⁸⁰ *transition through transaction* is the elite led version of democratization through instituting liberalization. In this model, the democratization is initiated from within the regime. For this to occur, the government must be stronger than the opposition and five phases must develop; Firstly, reformers emerge within the authoritarian regime; second, they achieve the power in the regime; third, liberalization attempts fail; fourth, the reformers challenge to the conservatives in the regime by using backward legitimacy, and fifth, they co-opt the opposition through negotiations and pacts.

In the *transition through extrication* model, the regime weakens, still in power but unable to dictate the rules. As a result, even the regime negotiates with the opposition; the latter is more advantageous than the former. According to Gill, “the essence of extrication is negotiation between regime reformers and opposition moderates, with both realizing that neither can achieve democratization alone”.⁸¹ This has also its own steps. First of all, the regime starts to lose its power and authority after the initiation of liberalization. Then, the opposition uses this opportunity to bring down the regime and the government reacts to this very tensely. In the way, both sides start to negotiate for transition. This process of negotiation also requires both sides to recognize each other’s legitimacy in order to prevent the radicals from gaining power.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Gill, p.67.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave. Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1991), p.9; quoted by Gill, p.68.

⁸¹ Gill, p.69.

In *transition through replacement* only the opposition leads the democratization efforts and the regime collapses. Especially, the breakdown of personal dictatorships of the third wave are the examples of this type. This also has three steps.⁸² First of all, the opposition struggles for the collapse of the regime. When the actual collapse happens, the process of democratization begins, sometimes bringing the old opposition into conflict within itself.

Stepan lists ten ways of transition from non-democratic regimes to political democracy. The first group of them is connected with the impacts of international factors such as war or international intervention. These are “internal restoration after external occupation”, “internal democratic reformulation after external liberation” and “externally monitored installation”. The second group is based on cases where the authoritarians “initiate and control the process of democratization”. These are “transformation led from within the authoritarian regime, transition initiated by the military as government, and extrication led by the military as an institution”. The third group is based on the initiatives of the opposition. These are divided into two according to whether the major role is played by the opposition forces or by a revolutionary war or violent revolt.⁸³

Linz claims that, another problem of the transition period is between the reformers within the previous regime and the opposition, the first claiming to make reforms and the latter claiming for a complete break-up with the previous regime.⁸⁴ This is a question of what he calls “reforma or rupture”. And according to Linz;

“The analyses of different paths leading from authoritarianism to democracy, most particularly the transition by transaction, tends to focus attention on elite settlements, the roles of the leaders of the regime and the opposition. [...] average men and women [...] play an important and even decisive role[...]. However, a leaderless and disorganized people [...] demanding a change of regime may be unable to negotiate a transfer or sharing of power, or processes to achieve such a goal, and may be pushed

⁸² Ibid, p.70.

⁸³ Juan Linz, “Transitions to Democracy”, *The Washington Quarterly*, Summer 1990, pp. 143-164.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

to intransigent positions, and thus, their efforts will end if not in revolutions, then in repression.”⁸⁵

On the other hand, in Diamond’s model, it is obvious that elite factor is considered to be the most crucial element in democratization. In his model, consolidation takes place in two dimensions -norms and behavior- on three levels. These levels are the highest level -elites and the top decision makers, intermediate level- parties, organizations and movements and the level of mass public. The highest level is composed of “the country’s elites, top decision makers, organizational leaders, political activists and opinion shapers in politics, government, the economy and society”.⁸⁶ He relates the proportion of elite influence in democratization with their influence and power rate and concludes that the elites are the most influential actors for democratization. In addition, their influence is not related only with their direct control over the political life, but also with their power to influence or create a political culture. As a result, the political culture of the elites in a country matters more than previously thought. According to Linz, leaderships of new democratic regimes are very important for the well-being of democracy. This importance comes from their ability to convince their people to “lower expectations”, although democracy does not bring economic development immediately, it is the best way to free them from arbitrary rule.⁸⁷

An important point in Diamond’s ideas is that one of the most crucial preconditions for the consolidation of a democracy is not only agreement on the rules for the competition for power but also a mutual commitment to the “fundamental and self-enforcing restraints on the exercise of power, [...] through the coordinating mechanism of a constitution, related political institutions, and often an elite pact or settlement as well, to enforce limits on state authority, no matter which party or faction may control the state at any given time”.⁸⁸

“Only when this commitment to police the behavior of the state is powerfully credible (because it is broadly shared among key alternative power groups) does a ruling party, president or

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Diamond, p.66.

⁸⁷ Linz, *Transitions to Democracy*.

⁸⁸ Ibid, p.70.

sovereign, develop self-interest in adhering to the rules of the game, which then makes those constitutional rules self-enforcing”.⁸⁹

Another example of the emphasis given to the elite role is Potter’s ideas about transition from the transition period to the consolidation phase, which is also a crucial point and has its own historical phases.⁹⁰ Accordingly, the role of the minority of the political elite, which is committed to democratic rule, becomes more important in this period. This minority can be able to “advance a polity toward democratic consolidation if they neutralize actors who are unconditionally authoritarian, promote preferences and practices compatible with the functioning of democracy, increase the number of democratic actors, and agree to subordinate their strategies (including competition among themselves) to the imperative of not facilitating a return to authoritarianism; this last is the great accord or pact of the second transition.”⁹¹

One of the characteristics of the transition period is its uncertainty. Gill relates the uncertainty of the transition period with actor behaviors and explains this with its characterization by “insufficient structural or behavioral parameters to guide and predict the outcome, leading to uncertainty and indirection”.⁹² In this idea, the main focus of study is the various elite actors whose maneuvers and relationships constitute the dynamic of the transition process. Accordingly, pacts put limits to the uncertainty of the transition period and offer guarantees to the circles within the society who may have a lot to lose because of the transition.⁹³ Participation in such dialogue and its possible outcomes are dependent on some factors such as the strength and unity of the regime and the opposition, and “the nature of the role played by forces in the society more generally”.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Potter, p.17.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² O’Donnell, Schmitter, *Transitions From Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions About Uncertain Democracies*, p.6; quoted by Gill, p.44.

⁹³ Ibid, p.57.

⁹⁴ Ibid, p.52.

In addition, Hood also argues that although many other factors are important in the democratization process, the most crucial role is played by the elites. According to him, popular demonstrations are mostly unsuccessful and the starting point for transition to democracy is elite negotiations. Mass participation in the process is seen as an obstacle to negotiation. Accordingly, mass support is not a necessary factor for democratization, but only becomes effective during the consolidation phase rather than transition, it does not even emerge until consolidation.⁹⁵ Because, as Hood claims, creating democratized mentalities takes decades and it is *transgenerational*,⁹⁶ and that popular demonstrations prevent any possibility for a smooth transition and usually lead to the neglect of the institutional and organizational capabilities of the elite. In addition, attitudes of the former leaders towards the new democratizing movements also affect the smoothness of the transition positively.⁹⁷

Apart from all these theories and claims, it must also be mentioned that the transition theory is criticized of being very narrow, which limits the democratization issue within the relationships between and pacts made by the elites, independent from institutional and popular dimensions.⁹⁸ For instance, it can be argued that institutions impose limitations to elite behavior and the most important point in the democratization process is the institutional structure. However, this thesis claims that, in parallel with Highley and Lengyel in “*Elites After State Socialism-Theories and Analysis*”, while this is true for consolidated democracies, it is not for transitional ones.⁹⁹ In the latter case, the existing institutional capacity is about to be changed by the new system and those who carry out the change are the transitional elites. For instance, according to Przeworski, popular mobilization may pose a threat to the interests of the elite and prevent them from political liberalization.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁵ Hood, p.31.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid, p.54.

⁹⁸ Grugel, p.61.

⁹⁹ Higley, Lengyel, p.1.

¹⁰⁰ Grugel, p.59.

Another point made by Grugel, is that this emphasis on elite behavior also causes neglect of the importance of civil society and social movements for democratization and even many transition theorists see these to be damaging for democratization.¹⁰¹ He also criticizes the transition theory of being based on the Latin American and Southern European experiences.¹⁰²

3.2 Patterns in Post-Soviet Leadership

The collapse of the Soviet Union is the most striking example of the elite-led re-formation of a system. The democratization -or liberalization- process of the Soviet Union can be explained by stressing the decisive role played by the Soviet elite around Gorbachev, rather than the society.¹⁰³ The departure point of this process was the declaration of *glasnost* and *perestroika*¹⁰⁴ as the transparency and restructuring policies of the Gorbachev regime. It was aimed to inform the public about the real situation in the Union, encompassing the economic and social fields. In fact, the more information was obtained by the public, the more they started to criticize the regime. In addition, the results of perestroika worsened the economic conditions in the Union, because it was not possible to liberalize the planned economy in a short period of time. As a result, after the initial decision of the ruling elite the societal factor in democratization came into force. Therefore, the societal factor became more obvious after the emergence of *glasnost* initiated by the elite, “principally in the form of national front movements and some strategic popular rallies”.¹⁰⁵ Because of these facts, more attention must be paid to the elite-led approaches of the democratization literature when the post-Soviet cases are the in question, as the break-up of one system and the construction of new ones are all the consequences of elite relationships and preferences. This thesis argues that the

¹⁰¹ Grugel, p.59.

¹⁰² Ibid, p.62.

¹⁰³ Gill, p. 210.

¹⁰⁴ *Perestroika* and *glasnost* are economical restructuring and transparency of the regime policies of the Soviet Union, which were initiated by Gorbachev in 1985.

¹⁰⁵ Gill, p.210.

liberalization policies during the last years of the Soviet Union, which resulted in the break-up of the Union, were basically the initiatives of the *nomenklatura*.¹⁰⁶ It is usually argued that the aim of the reforms made by Gorbachev was to strengthen the Communist regime by reforming it from the inside. It is true that Gorbachev did not aim to put an end to the Soviet history with *perestroika* and *glasnost*, but to strengthen it by initiating such reforms. However, the fact is that the result was initiated by the decisions of the leadership. However, the turning point was the change of leadership and the decisions taken subsequently.

Just before the complete collapse of the Union, the number of critics of government policies increased among the public and public demonstrations intensified, especially in the Baltics and Caucasus. These demonstrations were mainly based on the national demands and the result of deallocation of national sentiment in those republics. It is important to mention that the Gorbachev administration also seemed reluctant to repress these movements, but also showed that it was able to use force against them in Armenia and Georgia. It must be accepted that the Russian public's nationalist sentiments and independence demands played a very decisive role in the decision of the elite's to declare that the Union was over.

However, after independence, the public role decreased dramatically. Central Asian countries fell under the rule of dictators. Caucasus found itself within intense ethnic conflicts, including inter-state and intra-state ethnic clashes. Even after the formation of popular movements in the republics, we see that significant individuals, who were members of the Communist Party in Central Asia, held the authority completely in their hands and movements dependent on those leaders and their decisions started to re-emerge. In Caucasus, it was not old Communist but nationalist leaders who performed the same role. Leaders of those movements, in most cases became the first presidents of the new states.

It is important to mention that all post-Soviet governments have adapted presidentialism as the regime types of their countries. The preference for presidentialism was due to the absence of the multi-party system for a parliamentary regime. Moreover, for most groups transition necessitated the rule of a 'strong man'

¹⁰⁶ *Nomenklatura* refers to the elites of the Soviet Union, who held the key administrative posts in all fields, and who were all members of the Communist Party.

which could only be achieved through a presidential rule. In turn, presidentialism led to the consolidation of a new type of authoritarianism in the subsequent years of independence. However, the exclusion of the society, not from politics, but from governance during the communist rule resulted in strong dependence on the ruling elite, mostly an individual. This means that a noteworthy amount of the Soviet people were Party members during the Soviet rule, but public did not have a say in governance. Governing was completely an elite business in the Soviet Union. This must be viewed as the result of the elitist tradition in those countries. This tradition is based on the characteristic and personal skills of the leader. During the Soviet period, politics was largely an elite-business. The nationalist movements in the end of that period were based on the characteristics of leading individuals in those communities. And the leaders of those movements adapted presidential systems in their countries with the support, or acquiescence, of the rest of the elites and the public.

In many post-Soviet countries (except those in the Baltic) Soviet “etatism” survived institutionally in state organs and local governments.¹⁰⁷ This situation is described as the dissolution of the Party apparatus into various state structures and institutions, a situation during which most of the “middle-range *nomenklatura*”, such as local officials, came to higher posts.¹⁰⁸ But, when we think the old communist / new presidents, we also see that they adopted liberalization policies and used democratic rhetoric when they came to power. Therefore, even the effectiveness (or dominance in some cases) of the old *nomenklatura* in the post-Soviet countries can be seen as part of the continuity with the previous communist regime, however they can not be regarded as the same.

In relation to their theory of path dependency, Linz and Stepan, while relating the prior regime type and its impact on transition to democracy, make a comparison between totalitarian and authoritarian regimes from the point view of leadership. Accordingly, states of the Soviet Union were neither totalitarian nor authoritarian after Stalin’s death, but post-totalitarian. From a leadership dimension, the difference between an authoritarian and a totalitarian regime comes from the leader’s exercise

¹⁰⁷ Robert C. Tucker, “Post-Soviet Leadership and Change”, in *Patterns in Post-Soviet Leadership*, ed. by Timothy J. Colton, Robert C. Tucker, (Westview Press, Colorado, USA, 1995), p.9.

¹⁰⁸ Efrem Maiminas, “Treaktoriia nashego dvizheniia”, *Nezavisimaiagazeta*, February 4, 1993; quoted by Tucker, p.10.

of power. In a totalitarian regime, there is no constraint to the charisma of the leader brought by laws or procedures and even if the leader comes from a revolutionary party or movement, members of that circle are also vulnerable to the decisions of the leader, as well as the rest of the population.¹⁰⁹ On the other hand, the limits of leadership are determined by norms and rules, even if they are predictable and ill-defined in an authoritarian regime.¹¹⁰ In a post-totalitarian regime, there is still a strong relationship between the leadership and the revolutionary party or movement.¹¹¹ However, the difference between a totalitarian and a post-totalitarian regime in means of leadership is the bureaucratic and technocratic tendency of the post-totalitarian leaders. “The central core of a post-totalitarian regime normally strives successfully to enhance its security and lessen its fear by reducing the range of arbitrary discretion allowed to the top leadership”.¹¹² Another point is that in most post-totalitarian regimes, the leader comes from the party apparatus of the regime, in contrast to the selection of the leader in an authoritarian regime, from powerful and legitimate groups by co-optation, which is not directly connected to the regime.¹¹³

The argument is that,

“The limited party-bureaucratic-technocratic pluralism under post-totalitarianism does not give the regime the flexibility for change within the regime that co-optation of non-regime elites can give to many authoritarian regimes. The desire to resist the personalized leadership of the First Secretary-ideologue can be a source of change from totalitarian to post-totalitarian, but it can also lead eventually to the oligarchic leadership of aging men supported by the *nomenklatura*”.¹¹⁴

According to Robert Tucker, in such a framework, in which most of the old institutions and old ways of thinking survived, individual factor and leadership

¹⁰⁹ Linz, Stepan, p.46.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid, p.47.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

became very important in the transition¹¹⁵ and he summarizes the general view of post-Soviet countries as follows:

“In Ukraine and Belarus, leadership at top levels aimed at most to change things at a measured pace. President Nursultan Nazarbaev of Kazakhstan grappled with the task of developing that huge state’s economy and trying to build a nation-state where none had existed before [...] In [...] Uzbekistan, [...] president Islam Karimov espoused the idea of a “strong state” with virtually unlimited presidential power [...] an official Karimov personality cult was promoted [...] In Turkmenistan, Saparmurat Niazov, the Republic’s communist leader since 1985, stayed on as an autocrat with the title of President and a personality cult reminiscent of Stalin’s. In Tajikistan, the civil war [...] brought into office a harshly authoritarian regime totally dependent on Russian military support. War, civil war, and extremist separatism rendered leadership for reform a moot matter in the three Transcaucasian republics. Only in three Baltic republics did changes go forward in peace”.¹¹⁶

When the post-Soviet countries are considered, democratization is mainly an elite business. As it was claimed in the path-dependency theory, past traditions created their own political style, mostly based on clan and patron-client based relationships. This political structure also creates its own economical elite, which is mostly undistinguishable from the political elite, which means the political elite also mostly benefits economically from the existing system. This situation comes both from the ownership of the political elite in the market, and from the exploiting of the power of the legal system as a means of coercion towards the economic circles. So, the strength of the ruling elite comes from both political and economic domination. As a result, within the society, a balancing economical circle to the political elite which demands democratic changes through the means of legal system can not be found. The process of democratization, stems from foreign intervention (its consequences are also unpredictable as in the cases of Iraq and Afghanistan) or the self-determination of the ruling elite to take democratic steps.

¹¹⁵ Tucker, p.10.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

When we look at the transition models of Huntington, which are *transition through transaction*, *transition through extrication*, *transition through replacement*; the third one reflects what has been experienced in the post-Soviet Black Sea countries in the last few years. The last examples of such changes were observed in Georgia in 2003 and Ukraine in 2004. Georgia's *Rose Revolution* and Ukraine's *Orange Revolution*, together with the *Tulip Revolution* in Kyrgyzstan were specific examples of the opposition victories. Although pact-making is usually used for the negotiation and agreements made between the governing and the oppositional circles, in these countries, the cases were marked by the dominance of the opposition groups. The pacts in these revolutions were unique in their oppositional character. These pacts included the political and civil society oppositions, and the security bodies of those countries. In general, security forces mostly side with the ruling body; however, the support of the security forces for the opposition is a unique characteristic of these revolutions. The opposition in these countries was characterized by the participation of the political, social, civil, police and military circles and lastly with the international support. As it is clear, in these cases, particularly in Ukraine and Georgia, there were no negotiations or agreements made between the leadership and the opposition elite, but within the opposition itself.

These three cases are also examples of the Stepan's three-type model's last group, which is based on the initiatives of the opposition and divided into two according to the major role whether played by the opposition forces, or by a revolutionary war or violent revolt. The three cases reflect the first of the last group, in which the initiatives of democratization were taken by the oppositional forces.

On the other hand, what we have seen in Georgia and Ukraine is the division of the ruling elite within itself. As a result, a part of the ruling elite becomes the opposition, and because they were among the rulers before, they can easily find their power bases within the society. These cases exemplify elite pacts within the opposition, but not between the governments and oppositions. Most important power centers within these countries sided with the opposition, and the ruling elite, the leader mainly did not have a chance but to leave office. This reminds us of the importance of unity between state's institutions. The success of these revolutions was also the result of the disunity of state organs under the leadership of the president. Gill discusses the importance of regime unity during the transition period. According

to him, if the regime remains unified and it does not come under pressure, it does not facilitate liberalization.¹¹⁷

However, as indicated by O'Donnell and Schmitter, many regimes come to disunity, mostly between the hard-liners and soft-liners, within itself. Gill states that, "different patterns of regime disunity, and their interaction with opposition forces, characterize different types of transition. [...] An important element in this equation is the attitude within the regime to the possibility of withdrawing from power".¹¹⁸ The main impulsion behind the Rose Revolution was the belief among the opposition that Shevardnadze would not leave the office himself, through democratic means. Coming to power through democratic elections is not the end of the process. What determines the success of the democratization efforts of a leadership is his or her decision about leaving office, that the point is to leave through democratic ways, just as he or she came.

When we focus on this claim, we can see that existing governments in Georgia and Ukraine did not initiate any reform but left the office. Because, I argue that even these changes are called "revolutions" in these two countries, they were governmental changes in reality. In fact, the regimes did not change. These cases saw the replacement of a leader and government through social enforcement (not through use of military force) by a new leader and his government, who claim to remain loyal to the democratic norms and not to leave them only in rhetoric. When the Constitution and rhetoric of the previous ruling elite are analyzed, the main argument is that they are based on democratic values. Shortly, the regime is a democratic one, but only on paper. The changes that we observe in the two countries were leadership changes, the replacement of the old leader who uses democratic rhetoric but undemocratic practices, by a new leader, who promises to put that democratic rhetoric into practice. So, what must be analyzed at that point are the practices of the new ruling elites within the framework of democratization.

In the next chapter, the leadership practices of the three presidents of Georgia after its independence, Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze and Saakashvili, are going to be analyzed. Leaderships of these three presidents are going to be analyzed within the framework of democratic practices, their institutional reforms and the elites under

¹¹⁷ Gill, p.50.

¹¹⁸ Gill, p.51.

their leaderships. One of the main focuses of this chapter is to find the reasons why each was replaced by the other. The research questions of this chapter are: Why did the Georgian population support an ex-communist against its first nationalist, anti-communist leader immediately after independence? Why was Shevardnadze replaced by a western-oriented, young politician, who was strongly supported by the public? As will be shown, reasons for these changes in the choices of the public have so much to do with the leadership skills of the presidents. Before this section, it will be useful to provide a brief summary of the Georgian pre-independence political history.

CHAPTER 4

POST-SOVIET GEORGIAN LEADERSHIP

The case in Georgia was an enormous institutional transformation after the collapse of the communist rule, as it was in all post-Soviet countries. It was very difficult to conduct state and nation-building process concurrently. The first leader of the country had to take into consideration all these negative factors. “[...] policy makers and assistance organizations must recalibrate their expectations about the pace of reform in transitional countries confronting such serious institutional challenges”.¹¹⁹ In addition, as it is pointed out by Brooker, “during times of political upheaval, such as when a country is gaining its independence after a long period of external domination, the actions of political leader also have the potential to shape a country’s political culture. At times like this, culture and leadership are interdependent”.¹²⁰

But before, it will be useful to give a brief summary of pre-independence Georgian history.

4.1 A Brief Summary of Georgian Pre-Independence History

Until the Russian occupation, Georgian history is composed of territorial and political divisions. Christianity started to extend in Georgia in the 330s. This had a great impact on the Western orientation of Georgia.¹²¹ This orientation showed itself during the rivalry between Byzantium and Persia in 500s, and Georgia was continuously divided between these two power centers of those times. In the beginning of the 2nd millennium, Turkish influence started in Caucasus through the

¹¹⁹ Sanja Tatic and Christopher Walker, “Entrenched Corruption And The Challenge To Democratic Accountability”, Overview Essay, *Countries at the Crossroads* 2006, available at <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=140&edition=7&ccrpage=36>.

¹²⁰ Brooker.

¹²¹ David Mchedlishvili’s personal website (head of Automation Department, National Parliamentary Library of Georgia), available at <http://members.tripod.com/ggdavid/georgia/history.htm>.

Seljuks. Following Turkish states continued this influence. During the 1200s, Georgia came under the rule of the Mongolians. During the age of the Ottoman Empire, Georgia was continuously divided or changed hand between Iran, Russia and the Ottoman State. It is possible to see the impacts of Muslim-Arabic culture and Christian tradition together in Georgian culture.¹²²

Russian conquest of Georgia started and was completed in the beginning of the 19th century. After the Russian invasion, Georgian society was restructured and Russified, in addition to the protection gained against Muslim invasions. During one century of Russian rule, Georgian national awakening was completed.¹²³ Although the domination of Russians in the political administration and Armenians in the economic field, all levels of Georgian society were mobilized, under the Menshevik leadership.¹²⁴ After the revolution in 1917, a local administration was established, which was named as the Transcaucasian Commissariat, and it changed into the Transcaucasian Federation. These establishments were short lived and Georgia declared independence in May 1918 under the Menshevik rule. However, after invading Azerbaijan and Armenia, Red Army also invaded Tbilisi on 25 February 1921. Nevertheless, the ruling group in the country developed independently from the Bolsheviks, which created its own ruling elite.¹²⁵ In that year, there were more than 9.000 communists in Georgia, which were peasant in origin; and this number turned into 33.000 party memberships, mostly Georgian ethnically.¹²⁶ Purpose of full sovereignty, attributed by the Mensheviks and local communists, was left behind, and Georgian politics was dominated by the Communist Party from then on.¹²⁷ Soviet rule was accompanied with a significant economic growth and increase in literacy. Nativization policies of Moscow and promotion of Georgian art and language, in addition to the relative freedom given to the peasants and the land

¹²² Peter Nasmyth, *Georgia, In the Mountains of Poetry*, (Routledge Press, Oxon, 2006), p.8.

¹²³ Suny, p.166.

¹²⁴ Ibid, p.181.

¹²⁵ Ibid, p.234.

¹²⁶ Ibid, p.235.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

reform were among the factors that lessened the opposition against the communist rulers.¹²⁸

On 12 March 1922, three Transcaucasian republics formed the Federal Union of Soviet Socialist Republics of Transcaucasia (FUSSRT). When the Bolsheviks declared the formation of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), the FUSSRT was turned into the Transcaucasian Federated Soviet Socialist Republic (TFSSR) on 10 December 1922, and entered to the USSR on 30 December. When it is compared with Stalin's idea of "Soviet-man, this entity was based on the softer ideas of Lenin, who kept the policy of "national self-determination", which promoted the preservation of national cultural elements.¹²⁹ With this policy, three Caucasian entities were also given some "atomization that theoretically reflected the communal needs and aspirations of national minorities living among the three, titular new nations".¹³⁰ In Georgia, this policy created the autonomous district of South Ossetia, autonomous republic of Abkhazia, and the autonomous republic of Adjara.¹³¹ In 1936, TFSSR was dissolved and Georgia became the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic (GSSR).

During the rule of Stalin and his policy of reducing regional autonomies and increasing Russian dominance, Georgian integration to the Soviet Union was completed, both politically and economically.¹³² The change in Georgian society, that was the economic transformation and development of a peasant society, was not the result of their determination of their fate, but the result of the urbanization and industrialization process of an "internal colonialism".¹³³ During this process, Suny claims that, Georgians remained cohesive and aware of their national territory.¹³⁴

Towards the end of the Soviet Union, Georgia and the whole Caucasus were among the most mobilized parts of the Union, with increasing opposition to the

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹Thomas Goltz, *Georgia Diary, A Chronicle of War and Political Chaos in the Post-Soviet Caucasus*, (M.E. Sharpe, Inc., Armonk, New York, 2006), p.33.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Suny, p.258. For detailed information about Stalin's policies, see Suny, p.237.

¹³³ Ibid, p.291.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

center and national demands under the leadership of national elites. In the Georgian case, the country achieved independence with Gamsakhurdia's leadership in 1991. The Soviet rule ended in Georgia leaving behind a self-conscious nation and ruling elite. However, in the first years of independence, this national consciousness proved dangerous for the multi-ethnic structure of the Georgian society, which was exaggerated by the wrong ruling policies of the national elite and leader, as it will be analyzed in the next pages.

4.2 End of the Soviet Rule and Georgian Independence

After the demise of the Soviet Union, Georgia seemed one of the most promising post-Soviet countries in the path towards democratization. In Charles King's words, Georgia is defined as follows in comparison with other post-Soviet republics:

“Georgia is the only member of the Commonwealth of Independent States, the association of 12 former Soviet republics that can be said to have genuinely democratic aspirations.”¹³⁵

As a result of the Gorbachev's *glasnost* and *perestroika*, the first oppositional movements started in Georgia at the end of 1987. One of them was the Ilya Chavchavadze Society, which was composed of old dissidents, and another was The Helsinki Union, which has dedicated itself to the preservation of the Georgian culture. The Ilya Chavchavadze Society fragmented into different groups in 1988 as the National Democratic Party and National Independence Party. The founders of The Helsinki Union, Gamsakhurdia (a foreign literature specialist) and Merab Kostava (musicologist) formed the Society of St. Ilya the Righteous. In the same year, the Communist Party supported the foundation of the Rustaveli Society in order to balance the opposition movements, which was also established for cultural aims.

These radical groups started to organize mass demonstrations in 1988 in order to protest the constitutional changes, which would give the USSR Congress of People's Deputies the right to abolish any republican law that is in contradiction with the all-Union laws. These demonstrations showed the power of the national

¹³⁵ Charles King, “A Rose Among Thorns: Georgia Makes Good”, *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2004, available at <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20040301facomment83203/charles-king/a-rose-among-thorns-georgia-makes-good.html>.

liberation movement in Georgia, with hundreds of thousands of people in participation. The difference of the Georgian liberation movement from the Baltic states' was that it did not participate in the elections to the Soviet organs such as the Supreme Soviet, but insisted on the establishment of a completely distinct National Congress.¹³⁶ The Georgian Popular Front was established in the autumn of 1988 as a result of the insistence of the liberal intelligentsia; however the emerging 9th April events prevented it from having any effect in political terms.

The events of 9th April 1989 in Tbilisi constitute a turning point in Georgian history on its road to independence.¹³⁷ The starting point of the 9th April events was the request of the Abkhazians from Moscow to become a separate Union Republic in March 1989. Tens of thousands of people emerged to the city center in order to protest this request. Protests were organized by the radical opposition movements of the National Democratic Party, the National Independence Party and the Society of St. Ilya the Righteous. These protests paved the way for the unification of different opposition groups around a national question. Most of the demonstrators were students and workers and the protests started on the 16th April. The next day, the First Secretary of the Georgian Communist Party asked from Moscow to arrest the opposition leaders in the Republic and Moscow decided to send Soviet military units to Tbilisi. These units used force against the protesters and the leaders of the opposition were arrested. The use of force against the peaceful protesters and the arrest of the opposition leaders completely damaged the image of the Communist Party and Moscow in Georgia.¹³⁸

The result of the 9th April events was completely the reverse in the sense that it was planned by Moscow. The nationalist independence movement emerging through the unification of the opposition to the Communist Party, was in support of national and territorial integrity. The opposition became more radicalized and it even cleaned out the rest of the moderate voices from within, and was determined to achieve independence. So, as pointed out by Jonathan Aves, the 9th April events strengthened the radicals in the opposition who were willing to break completely

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ For detailed information, see Jonathan Wheatley, manuscript.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

from the Union and Moscow.¹³⁹ Nationalist sentiments among the Georgian community and the support given to the radical circles which wanted full independence from the Soviet Union rose.¹⁴⁰ Another consequence of the 9th April events was that it carried the Georgian Popular Front into a different path from its Baltic counterparts. This was due to the nature of the Popular Front movements, that they usually had a conciliatory role in the Republics. Aves describes their role as being opposed to independence and anti-communist demands, and receiving freedom of organization and access to the official media in turn.¹⁴¹ In the founding congress of the Popular Front in July 1989, Gamsakhurdia's radical allies dominated the congress.

This atmosphere contributed to the emergence of Gamsakhurdia in the Georgian political life as the most prominent figure and he became the oppositional leader. The Georgian opposition showed unity immediately after the 9th April events, but conflicts started to emerge over the South Ossetian question within the opposition. The South Ossetian problem was based on the protests against a state language program which promoted the use of the Georgian language and the Southern Ossetians wanted to upgrade their status to an autonomous republic. The final purpose was to unify with North Ossetia. The Georgian nationalists refused these steps. Gamsakhurdia, who was among the hard-liner nationalists, organized protests and marches to the capital city of South Ossetia and it was stopped by the Soviet troops. These events resulted with splits within the opposition. While Gamsakhurdia's main concern was the rights of ethnic Georgians against ethnic minorities, the moderates were believing that national liberalization had to be the primary concern.¹⁴²

In 1990, Gamsakhurdia founded the Round Table, which was composed of various oppositional groups. Round Table was an umbrella political organization, and was consisted of the Society of St. Ilya the Righteous, The Helsinki Union, The

¹³⁹ Jonathan Aves, "The Rise and Fall of the Georgian Nationalist Movement, 1987-91", p.161; quoted by Wheatley.

¹⁴⁰ Wheatley.

¹⁴¹ Aves, "The Rise and Fall of Georgian Nationalist Movement, 1987-91", p.162; quoted by Wheatley.

¹⁴² Wheatley.

Monarchist-Conservative Party, The Merab Kostava Society and The Popular Front Radical Union (a splinter group from the Popular Movement).¹⁴³ Jonathan Wheatley puts emphasis on the fragmented structure of the opposition at that time and notes that there were more than 30 groups in the October 1990 elections to the Supreme Soviet, which represented 10 different blocs.¹⁴⁴ Gamsakhurdia's Round Table won the elections by receiving more than half of the votes, and Georgia declared its independence on 9 April 1991, under his leadership.

However, the chaos with such a fragmented political environment which dominated those years under his leadership turned into a civil war at the end. Gamsakhurdia's ethnic nationalism alienated the minorities of the country. His eagerness to collect as much power as he could in his own hands and his dictatorial tendencies alienated even many of his supporters.¹⁴⁵ These were also added by the failures in the conflicts with South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Moreover, this chaotic environment strengthened the paramilitary leaders in the country, such as Ioseliani of Mkhedrioni and other military leaders, such as Kitovani of the National Guard, which also dominated the following years of the country in all areas of life. These militarized groups possessed the monopoly of security in the country and they used illegal ways of generating economic income, such as drug-trafficking. Their monopoly in such areas caused the ruling elite to rely on their power and in turn this situation increased their political power. At the end, it was the alliance between these two leaders which forced Gamsakhurdia out of power on 6 January 1992. Their formula for the next general elections was to include all parties and groups in the parliament, except Gamsakhurdia's followers.¹⁴⁶ Wheatley claims that this formula was the result of the awareness of their weakness and fear from alienating any actor.¹⁴⁷ They next invited the former First Secretary (1972-1985) and former Soviet Foreign Minister (1985-1990) Eduard Shevardnadze to the country to play a leading role in the political process and Shevardnadze came to Georgia on 7 March 1992.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Vladimer Papava, Michael Tokmazishvili, "Becoming European-Georgia's Strategy for Joining the EU", *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 53, No. 1, January/February 2006, p.27.

¹⁴⁶ Wheatley.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

The two men, Kitovani and Ioseliani, together with the former Prime Minister Sigua established the Military Council, and then transformed it to The State Council, including Shevardnadze, in order to operate until the elections were held. The elections were held on 11 October 1992, and Shevardnadze became the Head of the State. However, the political life in Georgia was dominated by Kitovani and Ioseliani as the real power holders. They were still the leaders of their military units. What destroyed the order in the country completely was the rivalry between the military groups of these two leaders.¹⁴⁸ They were not only coercive units anymore, but they were also conflicting for economic power. They became illegal trading mafia-like organizations.¹⁴⁹ These conditions were also contributed to by the wars in Abkhazia and Western Georgia with the Gamsakhurdia followers.¹⁵⁰ In 1993, Shevardnadze took control of the power ministries, he declared a state of emergency, decided to join the CIS and created the ruling party, the Citizen's Union of Georgia (CUG).¹⁵¹ As a result, as the Head of the State, he increased his maneuvering capacity, decreased the strength of paramilitary groups, and provided stability in the country.

After the stable years up until 1996, the level of corruption increased dramatically. The stable but corrupt and incapacitated life in Georgia increased the opposition in the country, culminating in the Rose Revolution in 2003. The turning point of the events in Georgia was the parliamentary elections held on November 2nd 2003, which Shevardnadze had promised to hold fairly. However, international observers and the opposition in the country again declared the elections to be unfair.¹⁵² When the official results were not released until the 20th November, opposition demonstrations and protests started in Tbilisi which turned into a mass movement in Georgia, under the leadership of opposition parties and with the support

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ For detailed information about the formation and structure of CUG, see Ivlian Haindrava, "Letter From Georgia, Looking Beyond Shevardnadze", *Problems of Post-Communism*, January-February 2003, pp.22-28.

¹⁵² Cedric Soule, "Bye Georgia!", available at http://www.kafkas.org.tr/perspektif/2004_subat/11_Cedric%20Soule_29.1.2004.htm

of the media, civil society groups, and the young activists, called *Kmara*.¹⁵³ The opposition, led by the ex-Minister of Justice, Mikheil Saakashvili, and supported by the civil society and the masses, arranged street demonstrations and protests, which did not turn violent. These events forced Shevardnadze to resign. Immediately, a provisional government was formed and Nino Burjanadze, one of the leaders of the coalition between Saakashvili's National Movement, Zurab Zhvania and Nino Burjanadze's Democrats, became its president. Presidential elections were held on the 4th January, 2004 and Mikhael Saakashvili became the new president of Georgia. Parliamentary elections were held on the 28th March, 2004 and the government was established with another opposition leader, Zurab Zhvania, as its prime minister.¹⁵⁴

4.3 The Period of Zviad Gamsakhurdia (1989-1991)

Gamsakhurdia was the leader of the opposition in Georgia from 1989 up to his election as the first president of Georgia in 1991. The increase in tensions between the Soviet administration and the opposition was the result of the 9th April events in Tbilisi, during which the Soviet troops suppressed the protests by using force and many people died. Wheatley describes the political environment in that period with the following words:

“The radical opposition remained undisciplined and fragmented still further; the Popular Front played a merely peripheral role; the Georgian Communist Party, lacking legitimacy in the eyes of the people, was irreversibly weakened; Gamsakhurdia, the leader with most charisma and populist appeal, emerged as the dominant leader, and in November 1990 his group assumed political power; the Mkhedrioni became even more powerful and proved a dangerous opponent to Gamsakhurdia; war broke out in South-Ossetia; and finally, Gamsakhurdia's own

¹⁵³ For detailed information about *Kmara*, see Laurence Broers, “After the ‘revolution’: civil society and the challenges of consolidating democracy in Georgia”, *Central Asian Survey*, September 2005, pp.333-350.

¹⁵⁴ For detailed information, see OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Report on 28 March 2004 Partial Repeat Parliamentary Elections in Georgia, 23 June 2004.

circle fragmented and the first non-communist leader was driven from power in a military coup”.¹⁵⁵

Gamsakhurdia was a previous political dissident, always in support of the interests of ethnic Georgians in the autonomous regions of Georgia, mainly in Abkhazia and South-Ossetia.¹⁵⁶ Until the formation of his own opposition group, the Round Table, in 1990 he organized marches and protests against South Ossetians a few times and his extremely aggressive attitude towards the minority groups created disintegrations within the Georgian opposition at that time.¹⁵⁷ In 1990, Gamsakhurdia founded the Round Table, which was composed of various oppositional groups. The Round Table consisted of the Society of St. Ilya the Righteous, the Helsinki Union, the Monarchist-Conservative Party, the Merab Kostava Society and the Popular Front/Radical Union (a splinter group from the Popular Movement).¹⁵⁸ In 1990, two elections were held in Georgia, the first to elect the National Congress and second for the election of the Supreme Soviet. Gamsakhurdia's Round Table Bloc won the elections for the Supreme Soviet on 28 October with 54% of the votes.¹⁵⁹ The 1990 elections in Georgia were regarded as the first totally free and fair elections in the Soviet Union¹⁶⁰, and at the end, on the 9th April 1991, Georgia declared independence from the Soviet Union under the leadership of Gamsakhurdia.

During his leadership, Georgia experienced a seriously chaotic political climate, also including the outbreak of war with South Ossetia in September 1990. The main reason of the political chaos was the fragmentation of political and military power between the state and other paramilitary groups. In order to make an analysis of the leadership characteristics of Gamsakhurdia, it is important to examine his attitudes during the tensions with South Ossetia, during his chairmanship as the Supreme Soviet. As it is mentioned before, his main pillar in politics was the defense

¹⁵⁵ Wheatley.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

of Georgians against the minorities in South Ossetia and Abkhazia. During the tensions with South Ossetia, which arose after the declaration of independence by the regional Soviet there, he failed to solve the problem through rational and peaceful ways and instead annulled the autonomous status of South Ossetia in 1990.¹⁶¹ According to Wheatley, this reflects his lack of political capability and personality in dealing with such serious political problems.¹⁶² Georgia's declaration of independence and the referendum held to help make this decision (in March 1991) are claimed to be a move of Gamsakhurdia to regain the popularity he lost during the South Ossetia problem.¹⁶³

Another important point in the leadership patterns of Gamsakhurdia, which also caused the alienation of his allies, was his ambition to concentrate as much power as he could in his own hands.¹⁶⁴ In order to achieve this, under his own initiative, Parliament made him the executive president and the National Guard, as the Georgian armed force was established.¹⁶⁵ He appointed Tengiz Kitovani, a friend of his and a supporter of the Round Table, as the chief of staff.¹⁶⁶ The Supreme Soviet adopted the Law on the Prefecture in April 1991, which led Gamsakhurdia to appoint his captains to the leaderships of the regions.¹⁶⁷ Lastly, again in April, Parliament passed another law increasing the power of the president. Accordingly, Gamsakhurdia would be free to appoint or dismiss the cabinet in agreement with the Supreme Soviet, dismiss the Supreme Soviet in agreement with the Prime Minister and the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet and there were no limitations to the term of the president.¹⁶⁸ The Presidential elections were held on the 26th May 1991 and

¹⁶¹ Irakly Areshidze, *Democracy and Autocracy in Eurasia, Georgia in Transition*, (Eurasian Political Economy and Public Policy Studies, Michigan State University Press, East Lansing, Michigan, 2007), p.22.

¹⁶² Wheatley.

¹⁶³ Areshidze, p.23.

¹⁶⁴ Wheatley.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

Gamsakhurdia won taking 86 % of the votes. This election was not as free and fair as the previous one, during which the media was largely controlled by Gamsakhurdia.¹⁶⁹

Another facet of the Gamsakhurdia leadership was that parliamentary opposition to him was nearly absent, because most of the members of Parliament were loyal to him.¹⁷⁰ However, the most serious barrier to his power was that of Mkhedrioni, of which the leader was Ioseliani. The power of Mkhedrioni was coming from its activities in drug smuggling; and it was also providing illegal protection to the business world.¹⁷¹ Mkhedrioni was a paramilitary group with a few thousand men, which was also entangled in the conflicts with Abkhazia and South Ossetia. Gamsakhurdia's efforts to repress the Mkhedrioni with the support of Russian troops were unsuccessful at the end of 1999, although its leader, Ioseliani, was imprisoned.¹⁷²

However, the most important event which in effect ended the power of Gamsakhurdia was the attempted *coup d'état* in Moscow, in August 1991. When he attempted to place the National Guard under the authority of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, in accordance with the directives given by the coup leaders, Kitovani refused and left Tbilisi.¹⁷³ Another important loss for Gamsakhurdia was the resignation of his Prime Minister Tengiz Sigua, as they did not see eye to eye on his economic policy.¹⁷⁴ Gamsakhurdia started to lose the support of most of his loyalists. Later on, anti-governmental strikes broke out in the streets, which included many officials of the republican television and the intelligentsia, as a result of the government's refusal to publicize a parliamentary debate about the anti-governmental demonstrations on TV.¹⁷⁵ The opposition was also supported by the National Guard and as a result,

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² For detailed information, see *ibid.*

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

Ioseliani was released from prison.¹⁷⁶ Finally, on the 6th January 1992, Gamsakhurdia was forced to resign. At the end, the political arena was dominated by the two military leaders, Kitovani and Ioseliani and the former Prime Minister Sigua.¹⁷⁷

In his article, Aves claims that one of the most crucial features of the consolidation phase of a regime in a country is the state monopoly over the use of force and resources within the territory of that state.¹⁷⁸ From this point of view, it can be considered that the period after 1989 and until the declaration of independence was a transition period. Therefore, the period which started with Georgia's independence on the 9th April, 1991, would be the consolidation period of the regime. However, Georgia, under Gamsakhurdia's leadership, fell into chaos, both economically and politically. Above all, from Aves' point of view, it can be said that even the state had no control and monopoly over the use of force. This role of the state was fragmented between the paramilitary groups of Ioseliani and Kitovani, which also had direct relations with the organized criminal activities in the country. This was also a struggle between the government and these mafia groups for the capture of the state apparatus, which in turn, would provide access to economic resources.¹⁷⁹ As previously mentioned, victory was claimed by paramilitary quasi mafia groups and the nationalist government of Gamsakhurdia was toppled.

According to Aves, such political struggle over the economic resources and political apparatus causes the emergence of autocratic tendencies in the leaders due to the absence of an effective civil society and middle class and the corrupted legal system.¹⁸⁰ When an assessment of Gamsakhurdia's leadership is made, it is clear that his leadership style had strong authoritarian tendencies. This assessment is also helpful to understand the reasons behind the replacement of a nationalist leader with an ex-communist.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Jonathan Aves, "Politics, Parties and Presidents in Transcaucasia", *Caucasian Regional Studies*, 1, available at <http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/crs/eng/01001-02.htm>.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

It is important to mention that national conflicts within a country also cause the authoritarian tendencies of the leader. An important criterion of the assessment of the leadership patterns of Gamsakhurdia is the existence of these paramilitary groups in the country. The question is why did these groups flourish? The reason behind the development of these groups as dominant actors in the political arena is the existence of war. The national question in Georgia, that is the existence of separatist ethnic movements, lack of national unity and the incapability of the state to cope with this problem caused these groups to grow stronger, because the government required power in order to protect territorial integrity. Therefore, it can be said that Gamsakhurdia's authoritarian style also resulted from the ethnic conflicts within his country and his lack of power to cope with it. He was forced to rely on the power of the illegal paramilitary groups. This in turn, caused the fragmentation of power. State rule came to be questioned.

Nodia relates the replacement of the nationalist Gamsakhurdia with the ex-communist Shevardnadze with the failure of the former in handling the two main dilemmas, and the success of the latter in the same area. Accordingly, one of those dilemmas was between democracy and autocracy. The main point was the co-existence of the necessity to have some authoritarian methods, which were legitimated by the revolutionary character of the independence movement and the general belief among the population and the elite regarding the necessity of democratic rules. However, Nodia also emphasizes that this second belief was not the result of the commitment to democratic ideals but that of the general western orientation of the country.¹⁸¹ When the claims of the opponents of Gamsakhurdia are taken into consideration, which are based on the illegitimacy of his authoritarian leadership; and his supporters' that he was not strong enough to suppress the opponents of his legitimate power; which are mentioned by Nodia; it can be said that Gamsakhurdia was not able to balance the necessities of having authoritarian tendencies together with enough tolerance.¹⁸²

A second argument can be made related to Gamsakhurdia's inability to balance the idealist and pragmatist attitudes to his leadership. Accordingly, his

¹⁸¹ Ghia Nodia, "Dynamics of State Building in Georgia", *Demokratizatsiya*, p.9, available at <http://www.demokratizatsiya.org/Dem%20Archives/DEM%2006-01%20nedia.pdf>.

¹⁸² Ibid.

previous image as a hero of the opposition contradicted with his new image of a leader, who had to make compromises and conciliations.¹⁸³

This thesis argues that, not in terms of the regime, but of democracy, the Gamsakhurdia period must be regarded as a transition period. As it is mentioned in the first chapter, many criteria for a democratic political environment were absent in those countries when the Soviet Union collapsed. This was also the case in Georgia. However, there were two advantages for Georgia to continue with a democratic regime. First of them was the free and fair character of the elections which were held in 1990 to elect the Supreme Soviet. However, this trend was not sustained during the 1991 presidential elections. The next important advantage of Georgia, when it is compared with other post-Soviet countries, was the existence of greater competitiveness in the political arena, in terms of the multiplicity of political power centers and the government's lack of power and ability to enforce sanctions. In addition, although the state apparatus was under the control of the Gamsakhurdia's supporters, Georgia had a relatively stronger tradition of political activity starting from the last years of independence. There was greater political fragmentation during the independence period. At that time, although Gamsakhurdia managed to obtain power, the fragmentation of the opposition to the Soviet administration was very serious. For instance, in Armenia, the Armenian nationalist Movement (ANM) and its leader Levon Ter Petrosian was able to achieve dominance in the political arena. In Armenia, the nationalist government did not exclude other political circles, including the communists. This created a relatively unified political spectrum. It must also be mentioned that Armenia had other advantages, such as the mono-ethnic structure of the society and the unification of this community around a nationalized Karabakh question. However, in Georgia, the struggle for political power was more intense. In addition, this situation intensified after Gamsakhurdia's victory. Nodia emphasizes the strong legitimacy of Gamsakhurdia when he first came to power as the leader of the nationalist opposition, as the only idea in the country was independence from the Soviet Union, which was to lose authority and legitimacy after the 9th April events.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, p.8.

It is undeniable that internal political fragmentations mattered most for the Gamsakhurdia leadership. Aves states that, a number of key political groups, such as the National Democrats, were excluded from the political process by Gamsakhurdia, in turn increasing hostilities towards him.¹⁸⁵ This alienation of some political groups also occurred for the old Soviet elite. Contrary to the Armenian case, the struggle between the nationalists and the *nomenklatura* ended with the victory of the former, and the latter was directly excluded from the political life. For instance, the old Soviet deputies were repulsed after the coup attempt in Moscow, in 1991.¹⁸⁶ Nodia claims that one important reason of the confrontational character of the Georgian politics during the Gamsakhurdia period was the dominance of the radical nationalist fractions in the country.¹⁸⁷ Accordingly,

“It was this confrontational character of political discourse and activities that was primarily responsible for the different kinds of conflicts that eventually developed in Georgia: those between various political groups or factions, which in due time led to a kind of civil war, as well as the ethnic-territorial wars and, in part, especially strong tensions with Russia.”¹⁸⁸

To sum up, with the words of Aves, “The combination of a weak state and a relatively open political system has made the Georgian political scene exceptionally unpredictable”.¹⁸⁹ After the resignation of Gamsakhurdia and the establishment of the Military Council by Ioseliani and Kitovani at the beginning of 1992, a war started in Abkhazia. At that time, the state did not have a disciplined army and this situation increased the power and role of the two leaders.¹⁹⁰

“Militants from the National Guard and the Mkhedrioni took upon themselves the role that had come to be played in Armenia by the 'power ministries' (Ministries of Internal Affairs, Economics and Justice) to extort funds from enterprises and

¹⁸⁵ Aves, “Politics, Parties and Presidents in Transcaucasia”.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Nodia, “Dynamics of State Building in Georgia”, p.8.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Aves, “Politics, Parties and Presidents in Transcaucasia”.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

businessmen for the war effort. It frequently fell to them to obtain weapons, often by striking deals with local Russian military commanders. Not surprisingly, this activity, supposedly carried out under the banner of patriotism, soon turned into a simple 'business' with much of the militias' economic activity degenerating into protection rackets, arms and narcotics trafficking and control over vital commodities, such as petrol.”¹⁹¹

At this point, the leadership style becomes more important. It is clear that the importance of personal views and strategies is very prominent in politics, especially in cases of strong leadership. Gamsakhurdia managed the power as the favorite of the society, as a nationalist leader who was thought to be the best in defending the rights of the nation. However, his style was not suitable to the social structure of Georgia. In such a multi-ethnic country, especially in which such relations were very tense, an exclusive nationalist policy made the situation worse. As mentioned previously, the most important pillar of his policies was the defence of Georgian rights in the minority regions, mainly in South-Ossetia and Abkhazia. These exclusive nationalist policies of the leader enhanced social polarizations. In turn, together with incapacities, the newly independent state had to rely on paramilitary organizations in the conflict with those minorities. Then again, the personal decisions of the leader during the negotiations between two sides prevented any possibility for a solution. The important role given to the paramilitary leaders, in turn, increased their role in the decision-making process and limited the autonomy of the state and the leader. In Gamsakhurdia's removal from office was orchestrated through the alliance of these two bodies.

As Slider mentions, Gamsakhurdia was very intolerant to any opposing idea or person.¹⁹² Stephen Jones describes this point as “a sense of paranoia, a conspiratorial frame of mind, virulent anti-communism, and a tendency to self-glorification”.¹⁹³ His popularity as the leader of Georgians turned into an unpopularity as a result of these characteristics and behaviors. According to Wheatley, “Gamsakhurdia was able to play on the fears of Georgian citizens by

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Wheatley.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

portraying ethnic minorities as some kind of hostile ‘fifth column’ of Moscow”.¹⁹⁴ Wheatley interprets the change in the situation of Gamsakhurdia with the change in his status. Accordingly, his previous role as a popular leader was in contradiction with his new role as a statesman. While his radical attitudes won the support of the population, that same mode of behavior was not appropriate for a political leader, who instead should be conciliatory.¹⁹⁵

One of the aims of this chapter is to question the reasons of the replacement of a nationalist leader, popularly elected in elections regarded as free and fair, with an ex-communist elite. We may consider that holding free and fair elections can be necessary but not sufficient to call a regime as a democratic one. Excluding the absence of a lively civil society, Georgia, at the beginning of 1990s, can be said to have had a favorable political environment for further democratization with the existence of many political parties and blocks and a legitimate government. In fact, it is important to be realistic at this point that it is also impossible to speak of an effective civil society which had grown under the Communist regime. Generally speaking, the attitudes of a leader may mean more than it is thought. At least in this case, the autocratic tendencies of the leader (even if enhanced by the chaotic environment) and his eagerness to centralize power in his own hands and his uncompromising attitudes increased the tension and alienated both his allies and a large numbers of the minorities in the country. The incapability of the state increased power fragmentation and in turn this destroyed the authority of the government. As a result, the first stage of Georgian transition after independence became unsuccessful and Gamsakhurdia also lost his legitimacy and finally was forced out of office through a coup d’état.

On the other hand, it is clear that radical individuals become more popular than others during times of political enthusiasm. This was how Gamsakhurdia became so popular. After the 9th April events and together with the deepening feelings of nationalism during the independence process, such a radical personality was strongly supported. When it became clear that such radicalism did nothing to develop the political atmosphere but made things worse, leading to civil war and ethnic divisions, Gamsakhurdia lost that support of the Georgian people and as will

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

be debated further in the following section, a more moderate and conciliatory ex-communist came to power. However, another point of this argument which must be mentioned is, what brought the end to his leadership was not his radical nationalism, but vice versa.¹⁹⁶ “One has to remember that his legitimacy was undermined in the first place not by his being a radical nationalist, but by his not being radical enough [...]. Gamsakhurdia failed because he could not live up to his image.”¹⁹⁷

In the end, the fact is that the replacement of the first president of Georgia and the nationalist hero of the independence movement was replaced with an ex-communist, Shevardnadze. With the belief that he was the natural leader of the Georgian nation, Gamsakhurdia did not feel the need to build himself a political circle, because the existing nationalist circle, which replaced the *nomenklatura*, was naturally supporting him. He did not need to have conciliatory tendencies, neither against the paramilitary leaders nor ethnic minorities. This thesis argues that, Gamsakhurdia’s authoritative tendencies were also the result of his divine nationalist belief that he was a national hero and it was his natural right to rule the country on his own. This reflects that he behaved within the air of the revolution. However, being a politician requires different tendencies than being a nationalist independence hero. His government’s lack of experience and resources to rule the country also contributed to his downfall and he had to rely on illegal paramilitary rivals in his conflict with ethnic minorities.

4.4 The Period of Eduard Shevardnadze (1992-2003)

When Gamsakhurdia was forced out of office, the Georgian state was faced with questions of its independence and existence. It was difficult to centralize the authority of the state when Shevardnadze came to power. He was the First Secretary of the Georgian Communist Party between 1972 and 1985. Shevardnadze’s fame as a prominent republican leader started with this development. During this period, the impression he created in the eyes of the public was that of a “frank” politician in the solutions of the republican problems and his innovative political decisions were

¹⁹⁶ Nodia, “Dynamics of State Building in Georgia”, p.9.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

strongly supported by the public.¹⁹⁸ Shevardnadze's popularity increased when Gorbachev replaced him with Jumber Patiashvili in 1985, because the new First Secretary could not continue the politically innovative policies of Shevardnadze.¹⁹⁹ Shevardnadze's international popularity increased when he was appointed as the Soviet Foreign Minister in 1985. Shevardnadze became the international face of the Soviet Union in applying Gorbachev's *glasnost* and *perestroika*. He was among the circle who constructed the Soviet modernization efforts at the end of the 1980s. He was also sent to Tbilisi after the 9th April events in order to investigate.

Before the Military Council invited Shevardnadze to the country, they decided to go to democratic elections, without any minimum threshold. This meant that all political parties and groups would be included in the parliament, except Gamsakhurdia and his supporters. This formula was called "all minus one" by Ioseliani.²⁰⁰ According to Wheatley, the reason why a democratic solution was accepted was that the military leaders were not strong enough to fight against potential opponents and enemies.²⁰¹ Shevardnadze came to Georgia on the 7th March, 1992. The four men, Kitovani, Ioseliani, Sigua and Shevardnadze, formed a State Council, which included all political groupings opposing Gamsakhurdia and the representatives of the national minorities. This council stayed in power until the first elections. The presidium was composed of the four men, of which three had the right to veto decisions made. Sigua became the Prime Minister, Shevardnadze became the Chairman of the Council, and the other two remained as the heads of their military organizations. In May 1992, the number of the representatives in the Council was 68, which was raised to 92, representing more than 30 political parties and 20 social organizations.²⁰²

¹⁹⁸ Darrell Slider, "Democratization in Georgia", in *Conflict, Cleavage, and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, ed. by Karen Dawisha, Bruce Parrot, (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997), p.159.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Wheatley.

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid.

The first parliamentary elections, which were accepted as free and fair by international observers²⁰³, were held on the 11th October, 1992. The new government was an interim one which was responsible for drawing a new Constitution and was elected for 3 years.²⁰⁴ On the 31st August 1992, Shevardnadze was elected Chairman by the parliament and on the 6th November, 1992, he was made the Head of the State.²⁰⁵ Furthermore, he became the head of both the executive and the legislative organs and became able to appoint the ministers.²⁰⁶

It is important here to mention the appointments made by Shevardnadze in order to reflect his style of governance. The appointments included members from many different fractions, including the communists, non-communists and the paramilitary groups. It is clear that he tried to establish a “balanced cabinet”.²⁰⁷ Shevardnadze had a background in the communist circle and tradition. It was natural that his closest men were ex-communists, *nomenklatura*, from the time that he was the First Secretary. However, Shevardnadze made a good analysis of the political environment of Georgia and tried to build balanced political ruling elite. The cabinet of the ministers were mainly composed of the significant communists of the Soviet period.²⁰⁸ Together with the leading communists of the Soviet era, he included prominent members of the independence movement of Georgia in his appointments, from both the National Congress and the Popular Front. In addition, the paramilitary leaders, Kitovani of the National Guard and Khachisvili of the Mkhedrioni, were appointed as the Ministers of Internal Affairs and Defense.²⁰⁹ It is possible to comment on Shevardnadze’s decisions in two ways. First, it can be assumed that he did not have a sufficient power base and had to satisfy all circles in political terms, which together also brings economic satisfaction. This means that Shevardnadze’s closest circle, the ex-communist elite, became dominant and there was a new

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ For detailed information about the individual appointments of Shevardnadze, see *ibid.*

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

political elite structure in the country, which included the nationalists and the military leaders. Second, it can also be claimed that this was a strategy of Shevardnadze in order to strengthen his position. Because it is clear that such ruling elites, which were composed of fragmented circles could not be unified to be strong enough to govern. In this way, Shevardnadze created a weak government and increased his individual role and control over the political arena.

Until the mids of 1993, political chaos increased because of fragmentation of power. Though Shevardnadze was the leader on paper, he did not possess real power due to lack of power base. The activities of Mkhedrioni and the National Guard increased and even escalated into street clashes. The Georgian state was a failed one, because it could not even collect taxes; the use of force was rested on the hands of the paramilitary groups. For instance, though Ioseliani was only a parliamentary deputy, he was considered to be one of the most powerful men in the country.²¹⁰ In 1993, Shevardnadze started to consolidate his power. First of all, he personally took the control of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Then he called a state of emergency and started to rule by decrees. Later on, after Georgia was defeated in war with the Abkhazian separatists in September 1993 and when the Zviadists rebelled and started to march through the east in October, Shevardnadze was forced to rely on Russian support, and decided to join the CIS. He formed the Citizens' Union of Georgia (CUG).²¹¹ All these developments contributed to stability in the country. For instance, urban crime decreased dramatically.²¹² However, political assassinations continued, such as the assassination of the National Democratic Party (NDP) leader Giorgi Tchanturia and that of the director of the Foundation for Democracy and Revival, Soliko Khabeishvili.²¹³ In addition, an assassination attempt on Shevardnadze occurred in August 1995.²¹⁴ Shevardnadze found more room to maneuver after announcing a state of emergency. He started to appoint his supporters

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ For detailed information about CUG, see *ibid.*

²¹² For detailed information; see *ibid.*

²¹³ *Ibid.*

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

and loyalists to key positions and ministries.²¹⁵ He appointed ex-KGB officers to the heads of the three power ministries. Givi Kviraia became the new Minister of Internal Affairs, Igor Giorgadze the Minister of State Security and lastly Vardiko Nadibaidze, a career military officer, the Ministry of Defense after Karkarashvili's resignation. Shevardnadze did not only place his loyalists in key positions at the top levels of the state, but he also placed his trustees in administrative posts of cities and districts. However, he did not only appoint the ex-communists to key positions. He also appointed some young CUG members, who did not have communist backgrounds to key positions, such as the governors of some regions.²¹⁶ Thus, Shevardnadze became the most powerful actor of Georgian politics, as did his party, the CUG. The power of the CUG also owed much to the efforts of its Secretary General, Zurab Zhvania, who was pro-Western and who brought some young Western-educated Georgians to the country, such as Mikheil Saakashvili and Davis Onoprishvili to be included on the party lists during the elections.²¹⁷

One thing which must be taken into consideration is that in contrast with Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze had no real power base in Georgia when he came to power. Than the question is why Shevardnadze was chosen? The answer is that, his selection was the way of legitimizing the rule of the Council. The Council, especially its two military leaders, did not want to share their power. However, they chose Shevardnadze in order to obtain international legitimacy. He was famous in the Western world because of the role he played as the Soviet Foreign Minister, as mentioned before. His name would provide international recognition to the new administration, which came to power by force and as a result of a civil war. What Kitovani and Ioseliani needed was a name who would not pose a threat to their power and authority, but create a sympathy in the international arena. As Wheatley states, Shevardnadze was seen as a symbolic personality by the military leaders, whose "hands must be held".²¹⁸

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

Nodia finds this comparison between the two leaders very ironic, that where the former had very strong legitimacy and a power base but failed to build a nation-state, the latter succeeded despite of the lack of such power.²¹⁹ Accordingly, the military council of the two paramilitary leaders and the previous prime minister invited Shevardnadze solely to create a legitimate appearance in the eyes of the West. However, contrary to Gamsakhurdia, who weakened the support and power base that he had when he came to power, individually, Shevardnadze proved very successful in creating a power base for himself with his strong leadership skills within time.²²⁰ For instance, when he took the control of the Internal Ministry, his tactic was based on playing all actors against each other. He allied with Ioseliani against Kitovani, however, he also had problems with the former.²²¹

“If Gamsakhurdia was very good at alienating people and making enemies out of friends, Shevardnadze was the opposite—he was very good at attracting people and making friends (or allies, at least) out of enemies. He really showed himself to be an extremely skillful political gambler.”²²²

Another very important difference between Gamsakhurdia and Shevardnadze was the political environment during which they assumed power. In contrast with the nationalist enthusiasm and romanticism of the independence struggle, the expectations of the community were rather political stability and national unity after Gamsakhurdia’s departure. According to Nodia, this change in the public attitude and “Shevardnadze’s gradual rise to power” was the result of the disappointment which came after the giving up of the “national project” as a result of joining the CIS and thus gaining the support of Russia.²²³ Because all these developments were destroying the power bases and the legitimacy of the two military leaders, who claimed that they were the Georgian army, Shevardnadze was able to seize the opportunity to take power.²²⁴ The Ministry of Internal Affairs and the police became

²¹⁹ Nodia, “Dynamics of State Building in Georgia”, p.10.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Ibid, p.11.

²²² Ibid, p.10.

²²³ Ibid, p.11.

²²⁴ Ibid.

the main body of state coercion and hundreds of Mkhedrioni members were imprisoned.²²⁵ The Georgian state started to gain the monopoly of use of force. Mkhedrioni weakened considerably and lost much of its both economic and political power.²²⁶ Later on, the Georgian state started to collect taxes, indicating the existence of a real state. Another point is that the state started to imply some economic policies and monetary stability, even with the support of IMF loans.²²⁷ Lastly, and maybe the most important sign of state stability was the increase in the importance given to economic policies.²²⁸ Accordingly, before Shevardnadze's practices mentioned, the most important issue in Georgian politics was relations with Russia. However, after stability was guaranteed, economics became the most important issue in politics as in any other normal state.²²⁹

A very important point in the political life of Georgia was the possession of power. Between 1990 and 1993, power in reality was fragmented between illegal groupings and at that time, this dispersion of power was arbitrary to holding an official post. However, after Shevardnadze consolidated his rule, possession of power and state resources started to have a direct relationship with holding state offices. Power started to be centralized around Shevardnadze and the CUG as state power became the only mean of using the resources.²³⁰ Therefore, for those groups which were not able to enter state institutions, having any significant effect in the political arena became much more difficult. Therefore, the opposition in Georgia became weaker than ever.

The constitutional disputes were another side of the problem in Shevardnadze's authority. The Draft Constitution which was prepared in March 1993 by a commission was not accepted by Shevardnadze, who claimed that it did not give any authority to the president. The main disagreement was about whether the new Constitution would provide a presidential or parliamentary system. In the final draft

²²⁵ Wheatley.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Nodia, "Dynamics of State Building in Georgia", p.12.

²²⁸ Ibid, p.13.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Wheatley.

which was passed by parliament in August 1995, the President was provided with significant rights. There were individual ministers who were directly and only responsible to the President, however, the president did not have the right to dissolve parliament.²³¹ The Election Law and the Presidential Election Law were passed in Parliament in September, 1995. Accordingly, there would be a 5% threshold for the political parties and blocks to be elected on the party list system and both presidential and parliamentary elections were set to be held on the 5th November 1995.²³²

In the 1995 elections, many political groups were excluded from parliament as the result of 5% threshold. The Zviadists were also among those groups. The presidential elections were concluded with the victory of Shevardnadze. The OSCE observers declared the elections free and fair, but there were irregularities also reported by local observers.²³³ In the elections, Ioseliani was not elected and he was also imprisoned after the assassination attempt on Shevardnadze in 1996.²³⁴ Individually, as the president of Georgia, Shevardnadze possessed enormous power. With the 1995 Constitution, the President was granted the powers to appoint ministers with the approval of the Parliament (Article 73.1g), dismiss them (Article 73.1c), declare a state of emergency (Article 73.1g), dismiss local governance organs (Article 73.1h), issue decrees (Article 73.1i), appoint members of the National Security Council and appoint and dismiss generals as the chief of the armed forces (Article 73.4) and he had a very strong legislative power also, as he was able to present draft laws to Parliament, veto or amend laws that Parliament had passed and Parliament could only revoke, veto or pass the laws with a majority of three fifths for ordinary laws and a majority of two-thirds for constitutional amendments (Article 68).²³⁵ In addition, the role of the President and the State Chancellery as the Presidential organ, was the only means of coordinating the relations between the state organs, primarily between the executive and legislative; as the post of Prime Minister and Cabinet of Ministers was abolished with the 1995 Constitution and

²³¹ Ibid.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Ibid.

Parliament was completely distinguished from the executive organ.²³⁶ This is a fact which increased the role of the leadership, that was Shevardnadze, in state affairs.

It is clear that the major purpose and activity of Shevardnadze was to centralize and consolidate power, as the first step. When he came to the country, he was not able to do so, because he did not have a power base in Georgia. He was chosen, due to his bright career in the Soviet Union. However, in time, he acted very intelligently and played different power centers against each other and at the end, he eliminated all of his opponents. As mentioned in the first part, one of the arguments of this chapter is that democratic development depends on a stable statehood in the first phase. At least, different groups which control the economic and political life with their military character, naturally prevent any stability and predictability in the political arena. So, it can be said that Shevardnadze succeeded where Gamsakhurdia failed, and he was able to provide stability. This process did yield some undemocratic results, especially through the declaration of state of emergency and the centralization of power around Shevardnadze and his party. However, the problem with democratization during the Shevardnadze period is not these tendencies. This thesis argues that such dictatorial or autocratic attitudes can be considered as natural during the efforts to form the state and achieve stability. However, in order to democratize, the ruling elite, which centralized all power in its hands during this period, must be willing to sacrifice this power for democratization in the coming periods. But what determined the ongoing years of Shevardnadze rule was not a change through democracy, but the sacrifice of democracy for stability.

The most important phenomenon of those years in Georgia, which still attracts so much attention, was the level of corruption in the country. Broers characterizes Shevardnadze's rule with "the progressive entrenchment of vested interests and the informalization of Georgian politics", which is "linked to a dramatic rise in levels of corruption".²³⁷ In his book, Wheatley describes the processes and level of corruption in detail.²³⁸ First of all, in sum, the power distribution in Georgia was informally feudalized, that is "feudalization of power", both regionally at the

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Broers, p.334.

²³⁸ Wheatley.

level of regional officials and governors, and sectorally at the level of informal business networks and certain families between 1996 and 2001.²³⁹ Thus, he distinguishes between “administrative corruption” and “state capture” based on the definitions of Robin Bhatti.²⁴⁰ Accordingly, the first is related to the “securing of special treatment by private actors through the payment of bribes and favors to government officials”, and the second is the subornation of state decision-making “to systematically favor the interests of particular individuals, groups and entities”, however the second was more common in Georgia in various forms.²⁴¹

“First, there were instances when government bodies literally became the private fiefdoms of informal networks or families. Second, very often laws were deliberately drafted either to benefit a ‘favoured’ individual or group or to discriminate against a competitor. Third, (as in many other successor states to the USSR), top state officials would provide an informal ‘state roof’ to favoured businessmen, which involved striking a deal with them to exempt them from the payment of various taxes and duties and creating obstacles for their competitors. Finally, the fusion of the state with the shadow economy was cemented still further by the sale of public offices”.²⁴²

In addition, Wheatley points out that the “state capture” in Georgia was different from the traditional means of corruption.²⁴³ In the first case, corruption or “tolerance of corruption” was seen as the rule of the game and was used by the political elite to further their private interests. However, in the traditional sense, corruption occurs when the state is not strong enough to overcome the pressures of certain power centers in the country. One of the most important issues was the annulment and seizure of rule of law by the government officials, and informal personal relationships were the means of conflict resolution, rather than the rule of

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Robin S. Bhatti, “Tough Choices: Observations on the Political Economy of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia”, prepared for the World Bank, December 2002, available at www.cis7.org, quoted by *ibid.*

²⁴² Wheatley.

²⁴³ Ibid.

law.²⁴⁴ As mentioned by Wheatley, security, both personal and economic, became available for those only who had personal ties with the state structure as a “protector”.²⁴⁵ On the other hand, the state also failed to provide the basic goods for its people; public expenditure on health and education were very low (61 million USD-2.2% of the GDP- on education and 16 million USD-0.6% of the GDP- on health in 1999), which were lower than all other former Soviet republics, except Tajikistan.²⁴⁶ The result of the informality and personalization of state affairs was the exclusion of ordinary people, who did not have private ties within the state structure from the political life.²⁴⁷

The traditional way of such personalization and informalization of the state structure was not a phenomenon limited to the post-Soviet period but it had its roots in the late Soviet era. It is possible to say that the elite structure of Georgia did not show much change since the Soviet period and the same individuals retained power after independence.²⁴⁸ So the elite did not change either structurally or culturally. For instance, during both when Shevardnadze was the First Secretary (1972-1985) and state leader after independence (1992-2003), the informal personal relationships between the members of the *nomenklatura* were based on “the twin principles of rule-breaking and the collection of *kompromat*” (information used for propaganda against the opposers) for power.²⁴⁹ Between 1996 and 2001, most members of the National Security Council and the State Chancellery were previously communist officials and ex-*Komsomol* (*Komsomol* is the youth wing of the Communist Party, which was established in 1918) network members were also dominant in local governance.²⁵⁰ The structural similarity with the Soviet period, during which Shevardnadze was the First Secretary, was that the system continued to be hierarchical and centralized and as the Head of the State, he possessed the power to

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

install his supporters in key positions, such as the ministers, National Security Council members, State Chancellery officials and regional representatives.²⁵¹ The reason for this kind of state failure can be found in the events that occurred immediately after independence. In a mafia-dominated political structure, which was aided by military failures in the conflicts with the minorities and civil chaos, most of the state structure ceased to exist. Shevardnadze was able to rebuild it by “rehabilitating old networks from the Communist Party, from the police, from *Komsomol*, and from the shadow economic elite”.²⁵² Wheatley explains the corrupted system by claiming that it found its own financial resources whereas the state and Shevardnadze could not provide from the limited state budget; and the solution to this critical situation in time became a part of the internal structure.²⁵³

Finally, this period will be assessed from the point of view of democratization. It is in this period in which Shevardnadze’s consolidation of power started, beginning in 1996. In general, it can be said that Georgia, with the exception of the Baltic States, was the most free of all the post-Soviet republics. The evaluation of Georgian democratization must start from Shevardnadze’s consolidation of power and the provision of stability in 1996, because the previous years were dominated by the struggle of state-building, civil chaos, high fragmentation of power, the militarization of the society and power rivalries between mafia-like military leaders. One should keep in mind that the most important characteristic of the Shevardnadze administration was the pluralism in the elite structure. It is critical to point out that Shevardnadze dispersed power among many and diverse groups and that his style is reflected in the co-optation of his rivals by him. This mechanism can be accepted as a kind of elite pact, directed by the President and had its own informal rules. On the other hand, this was an elite pact in its real meaning, that the pluralism of Shevardnadze was not a reflection of political choices among ordinary people. Wheatley claims that what those who have a share in power, political parties or financial groupings etc, had lacked the support of the masses and that the basis of a

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ Ibid.

democratic attitude, which is actually the mass consent, was missing.²⁵⁴ Wheatley emphasizes this fact by outlining that the correspondence of informal power sharers with formal bodies was valid only for the Union of Democratic Revival and the New Faction, of which the first was totally undemocratic and always applied electoral fraud and the second was even unknown to the public.²⁵⁵ The CUG was an umbrella for most of other groupings and these also showed reluctance towards “democratic legitimacy”, because most were corrupt and unknown by the people.²⁵⁶ Therefore, the pluralism of Shevardnadze was not a democratic one, that those groups or parties did not illicit mass support. The reason of this was the concentration of political, economic and coercive power in the hands of elite, individually. What governed the country were the deals, clashes and private interest-based relations within the elite. The reason behind this fact was that the main source of power was Shevardnadze for the ruling elite and the legitimacy that they should have been seeking from the public was replaced by the support given by him.²⁵⁷ This meant that the similarity with the Soviet period was the delegation of power to the officials from above, not from below.²⁵⁸ In other words, “acquisition of political power depended on connections with existing power centers, rather than on public support”.²⁵⁹

Another issue, which can also be seen as a part of the continuity from the Soviet era, is that the CUG was the ruling party of Georgia, with a strong leader and which was based on clientelistic relations as in the case of the Communist Party. During Shevardnadze’s rule, although there were many parties, the political party system was not developed in democratic terms, as “they remained weak political actors, mainly because of differentiation in their capacity to mobilize resources” and they were personality based.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

²⁶⁰ Broers, p.336.

“The absence of differentiated ideological positions, while reflecting Georgia’s lack of economic choices as a donor-dependent state, is also dictated by the weighting of its political system towards the presidency. In an environment where clientalism is salient and resources scarce, this detracts from the importance of legislature, as the only way for the party leaders to distribute largesse is by joining the ruling party. The system’s bias towards the executive has further encouraged the instrumentalization of political parties as vehicles of personal ambition.”²⁶¹

The CUG was an elite-led party, based on the strong character of its leader, Shevardnadze and which provided resources and posts to its members.²⁶² Political parties were not strong and independent enough to reflect the public opposition²⁶³. The general rule was to offer important posts to important individuals who could bring votes to the party and in turn they were gaining access to the resources that were provided through their appointment.²⁶⁴ Wheatley’s notes also show that party membership in cases of the CUG and Abazhidze’s (Supreme Council Chairman of Adjara) UDR (Union of Democratic Revival)²⁶⁵ was very important in Georgia until the early 2000s. As in the case of the Communist Party, party membership was the easiest and maybe the most effective way of getting an official post and party membership rates were higher than any other post-Soviet state in Georgia. Wheatley relates this fact also with the traditional impact of clientalism.²⁶⁶ It was not only these two parties which were highly centralized and elite-led, but the general party type of Georgia was also the same, that leadership was the main impetus of the political life in Georgia. Wheatley defines this as “democratic centralism”, that

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² Wheatley.

²⁶³ There were nine parties active in the political life in Georgia between 1996 and 2001. These political parties were Citizens’ Union of Georgia (CUG), the Union of Democratic Revival (UDR), the Georgian Socialist Party (GSP), the National Democratic Party (NDP), the Popular Party (PP), the Union of Georgian Traditionalists (UGT), the Georgian Labour Party (GLP), Industry Will Save Georgia (IWSG), and the New Rightists (Novas). For detailed information see *ibid.*

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

²⁶⁵ UDR was Aslan Abashidze’s ruling party, which had direct and complete dominance on state institutions. For detailed information about UDR, see Broers, p.335.

²⁶⁶ Wheatley.

means “total subordination of ordinary party members to the leadership”.²⁶⁷ The consequence of this was that political life became totally independent from the public, which is the most critical essence of a democratic regime.

As mentioned in the first chapter of this thesis, free and fair elections are considered as a primary essence of a democratic regime. When we look at the elections held in Georgia during Shevardnadze’s presidency, we observe electoral fraud. The importance for this thesis of the irregularities during the elections is their close relationship with the dominance of the leader in the political life as mentioned in the previous paragraph. In most of the local areas, officials appointed by the central administration were the main instruments of the irregularities, that the election organs in these districts were composed of the supporters of the leader and his party. Wheatley defines this attitude as the belief among the “middle-level bureaucrats” that their main duty was to serve their leader.²⁶⁸ This fact is a reflection of a political tradition based on the strong leadership of the president, as it was during the Soviet period. Both in the parliamentary elections held on the 31st of October 1999, and the presidential elections held on the 9th of April 2000, international observers reported electoral frauds. As we will mention later on, the triggering event which ousted Shevardnadze and paved the way for the Rose Revolution was also the refusal of the elections which were believed to be fraudulent.

During these elections, what attracted the attention of the international observers was also the role of the media in the irregularities. For instance, it was reported that the media was biasing on behalf of the CUG.²⁶⁹ When we take a general look at the freedom of media for an assessment of the democratic tendencies during Shevardnadze’s presidency, the one thing that becomes clear is that freedom of media can not be compared with the Soviet times. First of all, the laws and generally the legislative standards were in favor of the independence of the media. The Law on the Press and Other Mass Media (1991) and the Constitution (1995) clearly provides freedom of media and the right to obtain information, and censorship and monopolization are also prohibited (Articles 24.2 and 24.3 of the

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

Constitution). There were about 200 independent newspapers in Georgia and most of them were critical of the Shevardnadze rule and of him, personally.²⁷⁰ The state-run Channel 1 and Channel 2 and the independent Rustavi-2 are the 3 main national channels of the country, in addition to 39 smaller independent TV channels.²⁷¹ The main problem of the independent channels outside of the capital is that they were put under political pressure and also faced financial problems.²⁷² It was during the 2003 Rose Revolution the Rustavi-2 constituted the basis of the media support to the opposition. One other indicator of the level of press freedom which also shows that the media is the most trusted institution by the public, is research conducted by GORBI in 2000.²⁷³

In the end, what determined the end of Shevardnadze's rule was also the disunity which occurred between the reformers and the rest within the ruling elite. What created this disunity was, on the other hand, decisions made by the leader and the other significant figures among the ruling elite in late 2001. The decisive action of Shevardnadze was to resign from the Chairmanship of the CUG and "to rely on the unreformed 'power ministries' [...] to secure his hold on power".²⁷⁴ This was followed by Saakashvili's resignation from Ministry of Justice and Zurab Zhvania's resignation from the Chairmanship of the Parliament. Afterwards, Shevardnadze attempted to close down the Rustavi-2 TV channel, which was supportive of the reformist group. All these events negated the divisions between the reformists and the conservatives within the ruling elite. What is important here is to question the behavior of Shevardnadze, because until that time, the most prominent characteristic of his rule was to co-opt his rivals and to hold together different fractions in his government. Both reformers and old Party members co-existed until that time. When he decided to do the reverse, that is to support one against the other, his rule also began to diminish. Following these resignations, Shevardnadze appointed his closest

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

supporters to key posts.²⁷⁵ Nino Burjanadze, who was a neutral figure and independent deputy, was elected to the Chairmanship of the Parliament. She would be a key figure of the Rose Revolution in 2003.

Saakashvili's and Zhvania's personal choices started to affect the developments, as with the personal decision of Shevardnadze to stand against the reformers. While Zhvania decided to follow a more cautious strategy, to remain within the CUG and try to extend his influence within the Party, Saakashvili decided to build "his own opposition movement".²⁷⁶ He established the "New National Movement" on the 7th November 2001 within Parliament. In the following months, other factions were formed within Parliament in order to support his movement, such as the "For Democratic Reforms", and he allied with significant figures.²⁷⁷ On the 7th May, his movement declared its candidate list for the next local elections held on the 2nd June 2002. In the elections for the Tbilisi *sakrebulo* (City Assembly), Saakashvili's National Movement came in as the second party and the CUG failed to overcome the 4% barrier.²⁷⁸ Saakashvili was elected as the Chairman of *sakrebulo* on the 4th November 2002. Support for the Labour Party was considered as a way to protest Shevardnadze and the reformers, because its leader was opposing and criticizing Shevardnadze, his elite and the reformers.²⁷⁹ As it is clear, Saakashvili's strategy, which was supported by his slogan "Tbilisi without Shevardnadze", was more successful than Zhvania's. Zhvania announced the formation of his new opposition group, the "United Democrats" on the 17th June. The split between Shevardnadze and the opposition sharpened when one of his closest men, Avtandil Jorbenadze, was elected as the Party Chairmen, as after that, all parliamentary

²⁷⁵ With these developments, the reformers lost most of their power and were only left with the Ministry of Finance, which was headed by Zurab Noghaideli. He was also dismissed on 2 May 2002 by Shevardnadze.

²⁷⁶ Wheatley.

²⁷⁷ These were Davit Berdzenishvili from the Republican Party; Zviad Dzidziguri from the Union of Patriotic Forces, which was a pro-Gamsakhurdia group; and Revaz Shavishvili from DAS-i.

²⁷⁸ Labour Party became the first with 25.5 per cent of the votes; National Movement the second with 23.75 per cent; The New Rights third with 11.36 per cent; Zhvania's coalition with the Christian Democrats gained 7.27 per cent; and Industry Will Save Georgia gained 7.13 per cent. For detailed information, see Wheatley.

²⁷⁹ Ibid.

committees, which were mostly dominated and headed by Zhvania's team, were dominated by pro-Shevardnadze individuals.

All these events reflect a clear break from Shevardnadze's previous conciliatory policies. After a few acts of violence, such as the bombing of the Liberty Institute's Tbilisi office, a pro-National Movement NGO, other groups such as The New Rights, within the CUG, also started to ally with other groups, such as the For Democratic Reforms, United Democrats and Traditionalists.²⁸⁰ Wheatley explains this division within the CUG with Jorbenadze's sudden rise to power, in expense of other groups, in addition to the unions of businessmen in the country, which had been supporting Shevardnadze a few months before.²⁸¹ They started to blame the government for "ignoring the interests of business and for tolerating the use of media terror, blackmail and extortion against their opponents".²⁸²

At that point the opposition started to move together with the support of international organizations. For instance, Saakashvili, Zhvania and David Gamkrelidze, the leader of the New Rights, went to Belgrade in order to meet with the leaders and organizers of the peaceful revolution which had happened there and ousted Milosevic.²⁸³ The idea of a peaceful revolution was the result of the belief among the Georgian NGO leaders that Shevardnadze would not leave the office through procedural methods.²⁸⁴ These trips and the international side of the Georgian opposition movement was organized and financed mainly by SOROS and the international dimension of the Rose Revolution is one of the most crucial forces behind it. However, this dimension is outside of the area of concern for this thesis and in the following section the events which led to Rose Revolution will be assessed.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

²⁸² Ibid.

²⁸³ Rose Revolution's main inspiration was the similar revolution which ousted Milosevic in October, 2000. Even the youth movement *Kmara* was based on the *OTPOR* in Serbia.

²⁸⁴ Wheatley.

4.5 The Rose Revolution²⁸⁵

Up until now, we have focused on how Georgian leadership and the changes in attitudes paved the way for the rise of the opposition from within. As portrayed, Shevardnadze's decisions played a very important role in the divisions within the CUG and his efforts to replace the opponents with his own supporters even increased the radicalization of the opposition. However, in terms of democratization, no significant step was taken. Fairbanks points out, that "there was no clear point of 'regime change' to look back at or forward to. This post-communist vagueness seems to have exhausted the Georgians' patience. They stayed with Shevardnadze for years, but none of the country's problems were ever solved."²⁸⁶

Consequently, his opponents started to become organized. First of all, the Liberty Institute and some other NGOs organized a youth movement, "Kmara!" (Enough!), which was modeled after the Serbian youth movement *Otpor* (resistance). Subsequently, the main arena of the rivalry became the elections, which were scheduled for the autumn. Shevardnadze's efforts to replace the members of the Central Election Committee increased tensions and the Parliamentary Speaker Nino Burjanadze declared her support for the opposition. Her decision was very contributive to the strength of the opposition, because her father was a very close friend of Shevardnadze.²⁸⁷ As illustrated, the personal relations with the leader were playing the most important role in political decisions and their reflections on the public. Later, she allied with Zhvania and their alliance was called "Burjanadze-Democrats". However, the most supported opposition leader was Saakashvili. This was directly related to his way of opposition. His decision to campaign for the elections in those areas where the opposition was not welcomed, pioneered incidents between the opposition and pro-government forces. All these factors caused Saakashvili to be seen as the real opposition to the government and increased his popularity among the public.

²⁸⁵ For detailed information about the day 22 November, see, Daan van der Schriek, "Tbilisi Revels After Shevardnadze's Resignation", *Eurasia Insight*, available at <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/112403a.shtml>

²⁸⁶ Charles H. Fairbanks, "Georgia's Rose Revolution", *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 15, Number 2 April 2004, pp.110-124.

²⁸⁷ Wheatley

The turning point of the clashes between the government and the opposition was the parliamentary elections on the 2nd November, 2003. Official results were not released until the 20th November and this, together with the claims of electoral fraud, increased the tensions. Two exit polls, which were published before the elections, gave more than 25% of the votes to the National Movement, and For A New Georgia²⁸⁸ as the second party. However, after the elections, the National Movement was left behind “For A New Georgia” as the results were released day by day. In addition to this, the OSCE criticized the elections severely with a report it published and claimed that the voters lists were amalgamated, claiming that the elections did not contribute to democracy and could not be construed as democratic.²⁸⁹ Street protests and large rallies started with the leadership of *Kmara*, in support of Saakashvili-Zhvania-Burjanadze. The November 2nd elections were declared to be irregular and falsified by both domestic and international observers.²⁹⁰ According to the official results, “For a New Georgia” won 21.32 per cent of the votes and became the first party. It was followed by the Revival, which won 18.84 per cent of the votes. The National Movement won 18.08 per cent and the Burjanadze-Democrats won 8.79 per cent. The next few days saw thousands of people gathering in the Freedom Square led by the announcements made by the Rustavi-2 and pro-opposition radio stations. When the crowd occupied the State Chancellery on the 22nd November, they met with no police or military resistance. The opposition leaders, led by Saakashvili, burst into the parliament when Shevardnadze was making the opening speech of the new parliament and Shevardnadze was forced to leave and declare a state of emergency. The next day, Saakashvili demanded Shevardnadze’s resignation in his meeting with the Russian Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov. Shevardnadze, following talks with the opposition leaders, resigned on the 23rd of November. All other high ranking officials in his administration also did the same in the following months and were replaced by the members of the opposition.

²⁸⁸ Shevardnadze and his supporters within the parliament formed an alliance, “For A New Georgia” in April, 2003. The alliance was formed between Shevardnadze, Avtandil Jorbenadze, Socialist Party leader Vakhtang Rcheulishvili, state railway company manager and the leader of the Great Silk Road movemet Akaki Chkhaize, and Levan Mamaladze.

²⁸⁹ Wheatley.

²⁹⁰ For detailed information, see OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Report on 2 November 2003 Parliamentary Elections in Georgia; 28 January 2004.

4.6 The Period of Mikheil Saakashvili (2003- 2007)

Michael McFaul states several factors that supported the success of the Rose Revolution: 1) a semi-autocratic rather than fully autocratic regime; 2) an unpopular incumbent; 3) a united and organized opposition; 4) an ability quickly to drive home the point that voting results were falsified, 5) enough independent media to inform citizens about the falsified vote, 6) a political opposition capable of mobilizing tens of thousands or more demonstrators to protest electoral fraud, and 7) divisions among the regime's coercive forces.²⁹¹ On the other hand, the success of the Rose Revolution owes much to the stance of Shevardnadze against the protestors, once he decided not to use force against the protestors. Although blocking the broadcast of oppositional Rustavi-2 channel for a period, his "reluctance to suppress information further (especially under foreign pressure)" increased the power of the opposition and the boosted chance of the revolution to be successful.²⁹² When we look at the Georgian case, we see a combination of these factors in addition to the support of international actors. However, the international dimension, the financial support of SOROS, and the political support of the Western countries is outside of the scope of this thesis.

The Rose Revolution is an interesting example of elite pacts, which were discussed in the first part of this thesis. The very successful combination of these forces was the most important driving forces of the revolution and without any of them the events might have progressed in a different direction. When we look at the Georgian dimension of these forces, we see the rivalry of elite pacts. On one side, there are the ruling elite, Shevardnadze, his party and other groups supporting him. On the other side, we see that the opposition came together around three leaders, Saakashvili, Zhvania and Burjanadze. Among these three, Saakashvili became the center of the post-revolutionary period because of his more aggressive style. The critical point of these groupings was the choice of the Georgian security forces.

²⁹¹ Michael McFaul, "Transitions From Post-communism", *Journal of Democracy*, Volume 16, Number 3 July 2005, pp.5-19.

²⁹² "Georgia: How to Make or Break a Revolution?", *RFE/RL Reports*, 28 November 2003, Volume 4, available at <http://www.rferl.org/reports/ucs/2003/11/34-281103.asp>.

Strangely, the Georgian police and military elite cast their lot in with the opposition. This was a very critical situation, because the strength of governing elite, apart from the financial dimension of the issue, comes from its monopoly to control the security forces and the weakness of the opposition in democratically problematic countries comes from their lack of ability to use force.

In the case of the Rose Revolution, an elite pact overwhelmed another elite pact. Because the Shevardnadze years were marked by a kind of a larger elite pact, members of the elite knew the rules, deals were made and the system was based on pleasing the elite in order to continue the system and stability. However, when the elite started to disperse, mainly as the conservatives and the reformers, the leader made a choice. The Rose Revolution was the result of the clash between these two groups and only one of them emerged victorious. The winning side was also composed of an elite pact, containing different political groups and leaders, various civil society organizations and academic circles. This pact was supported in the international arena and by the security forces within the country, as a result, one of the elite pacts won over the other and the leader of the victor forced the other to resign. The leadership of the Georgian opposition was a very decisive factor in the success of the revolution. They were able to unite their followers.

The most important characteristic of the post-2003 ruling elite is their pro-western orientation. The general outlook of these elite is successfully represented by the new leader, Saakashvili. He is young (he was only 36 when he became Georgian President); he is a western oriented and educated lawyer. He was the single candidate of the National Movement-Burjanadze-Democrats alliance and he was elected as the new President of Georgia on the 4th January, 2004 taking 96.24 per cent of the votes.²⁹³ Saakashvili's personal skills were the most decisive factor behind the Rose Revolution. It is clear that he was able to persuade ordinary citizens and the youth that he was suited to leadership. Here, the point is the ideological differences between the three presidents. As pointed out before, Georgia's first choice was an anti-communist, radical Georgian nationalist. However, he could not continue his success in leadership as he could while in opposition. He was successful while in opposition, but could not show this skill when he became the Head of State. After

²⁹³ For detailed information about the election process, see OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Report on 4 January 2004 Extraordinary Presidential Elections in Georgia; 28 February 2004.

this period Georgia's new leader, who was supported strongly by the public with a belief that he would bring an end to the chaos in the country, was an ex-communist, an old party leader and KGB officer, Shevardnadze. He was able to end the chaos which was created during the transformation led by Gamsakhurdia, but this meant a return to the old Soviet style, with the *nomenklatura* becoming again the ruling elite. Stability with the cost of change could continue for a long period. However, when a circle within the ruling elite raised their voices on behalf of change, the Georgian population chose to support "change". Shevardnadze's incapability of providing basic public services decreased his popularity among the public. In addition, he was also unable to repress the oppositional activities, or he did not choose to. Whatever the real reason was, this assisted the Rose Revolution to produce results in favor of the opposition.

It is usually questioned why a similar revolutionary governmental change did not occur in Azerbaijan, because the long-time leader Heidar Aliyev was replaced by his son Ilham and parliamentary elections were held a few weeks before the Georgian elections, which were declared by OSCE as a far cry from meeting OSCE and international standards of democratic elections. Here, the most important difference is the decisive actions of the government to use force against the Azeri protesters after the elections. A similar response to the protesters in 2004 after the presidential elections was also effective to suppress the oppositional uprising in Armenia. It must also be mentioned that the media has larger freedom in Georgia. As it is discussed in the previous parts of this thesis, the chaotic environment of the first years of independence in Georgia under the leadership of Gamsakhurdia paved the way for a free media. This was also strengthened by Shevardnadze's relatively free way of rule when it is compared with other ex-Soviet republics.

After coming to power, the new administration in Georgia, particularly Saakashvili himself, declared their 'national goals', as full integration with the Euro-Atlantic institutions; achieving territorial integrity of the country, democracy, liberal economy and rule of law; and combating effectively against corruption.²⁹⁴

²⁹⁴ Mikheil Saakashvili, "Georgia Stands on the Frontier of Freedom", Commentary, *Wall Street Journal*, 02.24.2004, available at http://www.kafkas.org.tr/perspektif/2004_mart/28_Mikheil%20Saakashvili_24.02.2004.htm. Saakashvili affirmed these goals also during a meeting in Berlin; see, Jean-Christophe Peuch, "Georgia: PACE Gives Saakashvili Warm Reception But Warns Over Democratic Process", *RFE/RL*, 29 January 2004.

Saakashvili was saying in his speeches that “(their) past identity and future destiny lie in the values and aspirations that unite the Euro-Atlantic community”.²⁹⁵ However, one of the most important positive results of the revolution was the recovery of international support and respect, because Georgia was now a democratizing country, with the parliamentary rule based on the will of its people. Negotiations with the IMF and World Bank started immediately, which were delayed in the late period of Shevardnadze administration.²⁹⁶

Immediately after coming to power, the first achievement of the new government was the peaceful re-integration of the Adjara autonomous region to Georgia in May 2004, a development which proved the seriousness of the new government to re-construct the country’s territorial integrity, which is seen as an important pre-condition for stability in Georgia and the efficiency of its democratic reforms. The government also made significant reforms in some areas. One of them is the social protection system, such as the protection of welfare, health-care, social security and pensions.²⁹⁷ Privatization of land and the establishment of a comparatively more strong fiscal discipline were also among those immediate reforms of the government²⁹⁸, in addition to reforms in the education system and infrastructural investments.²⁹⁹

Table 1: Georgia’s Democracy Score:

1999-2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
4,17	4,33	4,58	4,83	4,83	4,96	4,86

Source: *Nations in transit 2006, Democracy score. Year to Year Summaries by Region, Georgia.*

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Don Hill, “Georgia: Opposition Unites Behind Saakashvili for Top Post”, *RFE/RL*, available at <http://www.rferl.org/features/2003/11/26112003163828.asp>.

²⁹⁷ Devi Khechinashvili, “Georgia After the Rose Revolution: An Opportunity Lost, Economic Reform-Feature Service”, *Economic Reform-Feature Service* (published by Center for International Private Enterprise), 31 October, 2005, p.1.

²⁹⁸ Ibid, p.3.

²⁹⁹ Charles A. Kupchan, “Wilted Rose, Sukhumi Dispatch”, *The New Republic*, February, 2006, p.10.

Table 2: Nations in Transit Ratings and Averaged Scores for Georgia:

	1997	1998	1999	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Electoral Process	5.00	4.50	4.00	4.50	5.00	5.25	5.25	4.75	4.75	4.50
Civil Society	4.50	4.25	3.75	4.00	4.00	4.00	3.50	3.50	3.50	3.50
Independent Media	4.50	4.25	3.75	3.50	3.75	4.00	4.00	4.25	4.25	4.00
Governance	4.50	5.00	4.50	4.75	5.00	5.50	5.75	n/a	n/a	n/a
National Democratic Governance	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	5.50	5.50	5.50
Local Democratic Governance	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	6.00	5.75	5.50
Judicial Framework and Independence	5.00	4.75	4.00	4.00	4.25	4.50	4.50	5.00	4.75	4.75
Corruption	n/a	n/a	5.00	5.25	5.50	5.75	6.00	5.75	5.50	5.00
Democracy Score	4.70	4.55	4.17	4.33	4.58	4.83	4.83	4.96	4.86	4.68

Source: *Nations in Transit 2007, Nations in Transit Ratings and Averaged Scores for Georgia*, by Ghia Nodia.

Making institutional reforms in line with democratic norms is necessary for democratization. Presentation of the new Tax Code in June 2004 was one of the institutional reforms that the new government implemented. Accordingly, the number of taxes and amounts of some taxes such as VAT were also decreased in order to prevent the extension of the black market.³⁰⁰ Another area of reform was the police force of the Internal Ministry, in order to prevent the department to behave as a mafia-like organization. Many former officers were arrested and charged with corruption. The number of the staff of Ministry of Internal Affairs was decreased to 16,042 and a special police unit was established with higher salaries and better training.

Apart from these developments, the government explicitly showed great efforts to combat corruption in the country, which had its roots in all spheres of social, political and economic life and which is also a very serious barrier to democracy and democratization. The area of combating corruption seemed very important to many activists and to the public. It was a general belief that if Saakashvili could not prove successful in the fight with corruption, his end would be

³⁰⁰ For detailed information about the tax reform, see Wheatley.

the same with that of Shevardnadze.³⁰¹ Many former state officials of the Shevardnadze era were arrested on accusations of corruption.³⁰² They were all sentenced to imprisonment; however the controversy here was the release of some after financial contribution to the state budget.³⁰³ For this purpose, the governmental structure was reorganized in order to increase the responsibility of state officials and their wages (from 7\$ to 14\$) and to reduce bureaucracy.³⁰⁴ Lincoln Mitchell, the former Director of the National Democratic Institute's Tbilisi office states that "[...] Saakashvili's actions (against corruption) have increased public confidence and hope in the government", including also replacement of corrupted staff of the police department and bringing the Ministry of Defense under civilian control.³⁰⁵

On the other hand, the way of fighting against corruption also brought some problems with the execution of rule of law. However, the government had to take immediate action within the bounds of enthusiasm of the revolution in order to satisfy the demands of the Georgian public. The process of the arresting those who were suspected of corruption was a long one and during this process some illegal practices were adopted.³⁰⁶

As mentioned before, the freedom of the media in Georgia was always more developed than other ex-Soviet republics. After the revolution, it became clear that

³⁰¹ Molly Corso, "Georgian President Saakashvili's campaign Against Corruption", *Power and Interest News Report*, 20 December 2004, available at http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=247&language_id=1.

³⁰² For further information about anticorruption steps of Saakashvili, see Jean-Christophe Peuch, "Georgia: Saakashvili's Anticorruption Tactics Raising Eyebrows", available at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2004/1/D8C27633-B362-459B-BD39-260E4F4C7D1A.html>. Also see Don Hill, "Georgia: Saakashvili Raising Hopes That Corruption May Be Tackled In Earnest", <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2004/1/0A0316B9-F4A4-495B-8C45-E27E30FB8282.html>.

³⁰³ Among those arrested were former Minister of Fuel and Energy Davit Mirtskhulava, former Deputy Chairman of the Tax Department Vakhtang Chakhnashvili, former Minister of Transport and Communications Merab Adeishvili, businessman Bondo Shalikiani, head of MAGTI mobile phone company and Shevardnadze's son-in-law Gia Jokhtaberidze and former Minister of Internal Affairs Koba Narchemashvili. Jokhtaberidze was released after paying 15.5 million USD, Chakhnashvil was released after paying 1.5 million and Shalikiani after most of his business was nationalized (for detailed information, see Wheatley).

³⁰⁴ For detailed information, see Papava, Tokmazishvili, p.30.

³⁰⁵ Eric A. Miller, "Georgia's Rose Revolution: Momentum and Consolidation", *Eurasia Insight*, 22.11.2004, available at <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav112204a.shtml>.

³⁰⁶ For instance, police accused Shalikiani of having illegal guns, in fact, the police planted them on him (for detailed information, see Wheatley).

there are pressures on the free media and this causes to criticism about the respect of the government for freedom of speech. There are many events which demonstrate that the government has attempted to control TV and Radio broadcasts. It is a fact that, the power of the opposition during the revolution was strongly supported by free media in 2003. However, after the revolution, some events show that the new administration is not tolerant to critiques from media. One example of that was the arrest of the co-owner and anchor of a TV channel, Shalva Ramishvili, on the 27th August, 2005, due to an accusation of bribery taken from a parliamentary deputy, an event, which he claimed that was to prove the deputy was giving bribes.³⁰⁷ The point is that, his TV program was an arena for those who wanted to explain their opposing opinions. Nodia says that this is not a moral victory for the government to discredit a famous journalist, because the deputy accepts that his income increased after joining the ruling party as a result of a free loan given to him for an investment and says that this event is the symbol of the corruption of the new government.³⁰⁸ The new anchor of the program, Irakli Kakabadze, was also beaten in the street on the 7th September, an event which is considered to be a punitive action against a critical journalist.³⁰⁹

A talk-show program was banned³¹⁰ and on the 6th September, a local journalist was beaten, both were critical of government.³¹¹ Davit Zurabishvili³¹², resigned from the party because of these events and he claimed that the new administration was concentrating power in the hands of the few and strengthening the defense budget in order to preserve the integrity of the country, instead of

³⁰⁷ Ghia Nodia, "Georgia: Heading For A New Revolution?", *RFE/RL*, 8.9.2005, available at http://www.rferl.org/features/features_Article.aspx?m=09&y=2005&id=5C44309F-2F53-4427-B342-A3EF9AC84B05.

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

³¹¹ Jean-Christophe Peuch, "Georgia Government Under Fire over Journalists' Beatings", *RFE/RL Reports*, 12.9.2005, Vol. 5, no. 16, available at <http://www.rferl.org/reports/mm/2005/09/16-120905.asp>.

³¹² He was a human-rights activist who became the deputy chairman of the pro-government majority group in the parliament.

consolidating democratic institutions.³¹³ There are also other similar events, such as the arrest of Revaz Okruashvili, editor of *Sakhalkho gazeti*, on the 2nd August, who was charged with illegal possession and sale of narcotics, a controversial argument in which it is believed that the evidence was fabricated.³¹⁴ On the 4th May, Levan Sakhvadze, head of the Rustavi branch of Political Prisoners for Human Rights, was attacked; Zurab Kashlishvi, editor of "Objective," was beaten on the 10th May after writing about misspent funds in the local administration.³¹⁵

The government introduced new laws on freedom of expression and media, which Nodia says are as liberal as the European ones, but according to her the problem is the media itself, as it does not have enough economic resources to act freely.³¹⁶ Another fact is that 'self-censorship' is a way of taking media under control. Media center owners put pressure on their journalists in order to prevent any conflict with the government, because they mostly have other businesses.³¹⁷ Broers assesses this situation as the disappearance of politics from the media.³¹⁸

Another issue in which Georgia was always a step ahead of most of the other Soviet republics was the pluralism in political life. This issue, centralization and decrease in political pluralism, is also among those which the new administration was criticized about. After the Rose Revolution, it is mostly claimed that Georgia went into a one-party system. The United National Movement (UNM) coalition came under the control of two thirds of parliament after the 2004 elections. As the UNM

³¹³ Jean-Chtistophe Peuch, "Georgia/Ukrain: Citizens See No Improvement In Society, Economy After Revolutions", *RFE/RL*, 19.9.2005, available at http://www.rferl.org/features/features_Article.aspx?m=09&y=2005&id=40A8965C-381B-4998-9776-635DAE6BADCE.

³¹⁴ "Is the Bloom Off The Rose, Or The Rose Between Thorns", *RFE/RL Reports*, 5.10.2004, Vol. 5, no. 16, available at <http://www.rferl.org/reports/ucs/2004/10/16-051004.asp>

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Robert Parsons, "Georgia: Analyst Ghia Nodia Assesses Saakashvili's Attempts to Transform Country", *RFE/RL*, 15.6.2005, available at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/6/404C8894-8F48-4403-8045-BFDA6D4764EE.html>

³¹⁷ Ibid.

³¹⁸ Broers, p.345.

became the major party in Georgia, it is questioned whether it would also become a clientelistic ruling party as the CUG and the Communist Party.³¹⁹

Today, it seems that the problem is not with the presidential post, but related to Saakashvili's attempts to make his post more powerful. First of all, as a result of the parliamentary elections held in March, in which the coalition of Saakashvili's National Movement, and Zhvania's and Burdzhanadze's Democratic Bloc gained %66,2 of the votes, it became clear that, in the words of Stephen F. Jones "the parliament would become a presidential body".³²⁰

"The high 7% barrier meant only one other coalition, the Rightist Opposition–Industrialist–Novas bloc, gained representation in parliament. With support from two other parliamentary factions – the Majoritarians and New Majoritarians (representatives from the legislature's additional 75 single mandate seats) – Saakashvili is almost guaranteed the two-thirds necessary to change the constitution."³²¹

On the 6th February 2004, parliament passed a constitutional amendment, which was proposed by Saakashvili himself and which transformed the 1995 Constitution. Through this amendment, the President gained more power, with the rights to dissolve the Parliament in cases of failure to ratify the budget three times and to dismiss the cabinet of ministers, even if parliament is opposed. "The amendments (did) not affect presidential control over the appointments of governors and the ministers of defense, interior and security; and the president can be impeached by parliament only after higher courts have ruled that he has committed a crime or violated the constitution".³²² In addition, today, the judiciary system in the country is more dependent on presidential and executive power, as the president appoints its head and is the chairman of its higher body, the Judicial Council. All these factors demonstrate that the new constitution increased presidential and executive powers, while on the other hand reduced the power of legislative organs

³¹⁹ Wheatley.

³²⁰ Stephen F. Jones, "The Rose Revolution: A Revolution Without Revolutionaries?", *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, Volume 19, No 1, March 2006, p.44.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² Sebine Freizer, "The Pillars of Georgia's Political Transition", 2.12.2004, available at http://www.kafkas.org.tr/perspektif/2004_subat/5_Sabine%20Freizer_12.02.2004.htm

and the independence of the judiciary organs. Areshidze defines this as the regime moving away from institutional development and becoming more dependent on the “power and energy” of one person.³²³

In addition, election of the members of the Central Election Commission by Saakashvili from a shortlist of 30 people compiled by his staffers; amendments on the law on Tbilisi which provides the city’s major to be chosen by the municipal council, rather than to be elected popularly; a decree of Saakashvili which constrains the autonomy of the universities and increases the power of the rectors appointed by the President; and accusations that government members were involved in criminal activities increased the doubts about the democratization rhetoric of the new government.³²⁴

These changes show that Georgia now has a more centralized government. This thesis argues that, on the one hand, such a central authority may help the state to establish its control over the country. As we know, the absence of central authority, as in the case of the civil chaos which ousted Gamshakurdia, was a very important factor affecting the stability adversely in Georgia. In addition, during a revolutionary period, such a centralized, strong authority may enable the new administration to make its reforms more quickly. However, on the other hand, the utility of such a policy can develop a country in democratic terms only if the central power is ready to give up its powers when they become unnecessary for making fundamental reforms. In Georgia it does not seem that Saakashvili intended to increase his power only for a period of time, but views this as a right given to him by the people of Georgia after the revolution.³²⁵

Since the new administration in Georgia claimed full democracy when it came to power and because the revolution was a consequence of an opposition movement, its attitudes towards opposing voices is also criticized. This issue includes the positions of the media, opposition parties and civil society organizations.

³²³ Areshidze, p.195.

³²⁴ For detailed information, see Liz Fuller, “Georgia: Is The Country Becoming Progressively Less Democratic?”, *RFE/RL*, June 2005, available at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2005/06/847aa7e2-b863-4184-93cf-3a63a9196f4f.html>.

³²⁵ Liz Fuller (compiled by), “Georgian Leadership Mulls Constitution”, *RFE/RL Reports*, 30.1.2004, Vol. 7, No. 5, available at <http://www.rferl.org/reports/caucasus-reports/2004/01/5-300104.asp>.

The leader of the Rose Revolution was previously part of the political opposition in the country. This, to an extent, shows the strength of the opposition parties at that time; they had the capability to unite and encourage other elements to take action. However, after the revolution, opposition in Georgia does not seem as successful as it was at that time in political terms.

Table 3: At the beginning of 2006, there were 11 opposition parties against the National Movement-Democrats coalition

National Democratic Party – Akaki Asatiani
National Independence Party – Irakli Tsereteli
Rightist Opposition – David Gamkrelidze
Republican Party – David Berdzenişvili
Greens – Giorgi Gaçeçiladze
Labor Party – Şalva Natelaşvili
Independence Party – Konstantin Gamsakhurdia
People’s Front – Nodar Natadze
People’s Party – Mamuka Giorgadze
Socialist Party – Irakli Mindeli
United Communist Party – Panteleimon Giorgadze

Source: DEİK, *Dış Ekonomik İlişkiler Kurulu, Gürcistan Ülke Bülteni, Şubat 2006.*

Some events create question-marks regarding the tolerance of the government towards the opposition. One of them is the beating of Valeri Gelashvili in July 2005, a parliament deputy from the oppositional Republican Party, who became a prominent figure of the opposition and made critical speeches about the leadership.³²⁶ Another incident is the accusation of Giorgi Usupashvili, a lawyer and whose brother David was the leader of the Republican Party, for transferring money to his brother’s party in illegal ways.³²⁷

The opposition claims that the elections after the revolution were also not fair, because parties other than the ruling coalition, did not have enough time to make

³²⁶ Nodia, “Georgia: Heading For A New Revolution?”.

³²⁷ Ibid.

preparations for the presidential elections and the preparation of Saakashvili was already complete: the revolutionary campaign.³²⁸ In addition, the environment for opposition parties is also restricted by the government. Firstly, apart from appointing the administrator of the capital Tbilisi, in 2005, President Saakashvili selected 13 members of the Central Election Commission from a shortlist of 30 accumulated by his staff.³²⁹ It is clear that, efforts of the governing group to dominate completely the political arena in the country by using the leader's power, creates a very important obstacle before democratization.

Civil society in Georgia was one of the facilitators of the revolution. However, it seems that before the revolution, the civil society was strong because it sided with a strong political opposition against a weak governance. However, after the revolution, civil society has lost most of its power, as there is a strong governance and a weak political opposition in the country now. This weakness is attributed to some extent to the loss of most of their staff and leadership to governmental offices.³³⁰ In addition, when they supported the revolution, they were thinking that the new administration would allow them to continue their opposition and monitoring of the government; however, what happened is just the opposite. One of the examples of the government's efforts to exercise authority on the civil society was the attempt to nationalize the property of the Association of Trade Unions of Georgia in February, 2005.³³¹ In addition, many NGOs, who did not explicitly support the revolution, are faced with difficulties in gaining access to government officials, which proves that supporters of the government are privileged.³³² On October 18th, 14 civil-society activists published an open letter, in which they

³²⁸ For further information, see; Charles Recknagel, "Georgia: Saakashvili Faces No Serious Opposition In Presidential Vote", available at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2004/1/64883431-8361-47EA-8A2B-59B2608DAE12.html>.

³²⁹ Liz Fuller, "Georgia: Is The Country Becoming Progressively Less Democratic". Also see <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/pp070405.shtml>.

³³⁰ Parsons; Broers, p.345.

³³¹ Jean-Chtistophe Peuch, "Georgia: President Nominates New Premier", *RFE/RL*, 9.2.2005, available at http://www.rferl.org/features/features_Article.aspx?m=02&y=2005&id=AF858BD5-FB83-4CDC-882E-2422F3B6A47D.

³³² *Ibid.*

expressed their discontent with the Saakashvili leadership. They accused him of being intolerant towards opposing opinions, humiliating his opponents, and attempting to establish an ‘intellectual dictatorship’.³³³ Jaba Devdariani says that this letter must seriously be taken into consideration, because those were the one time supporters of Saakashvili.³³⁴

NGOs, both domestic and international, emphasize the human rights abuses, which did not decrease after the revolution. They demand that Western institutions put pressure on Saakashvili too, as they did to Shevardnadze.³³⁵ In the combat with corruption, many former government officials and businessmen were arrested. However, they were held in jail without being charged, and they were released after paying huge amounts of money.³³⁶ Human rights groups also accuse the government for not preventing attacks on them. Another issue about which the domestic and international civil society complains is the continuing culture of impunity. According to Ana Dolidze, by the end of 2005, violence and torture were still commonplace in Georgia.³³⁷ The claim here is that, such events are not researched by the officials efficiently, unless they are related to the previous Shevardnadze administration.

Opposition to the Saakashvili government got stronger during the last months of 2007. These mass protests and demonstrations, which were organized in Tbilisi, forced him to declare a state of emergency. The police used force against the demonstrators. Opposition groups and political parties were demanding for the elections to be rescheduled for an earlier date. In the end, Saakashvili declared that the Presidential elections were rescheduled for January 2008, and resigned from

³³³ Jaba Devdariani, “Georgia’s Rose Revolution Grapples With Dilemma: Do Ends Justify Means?”, *Eurasia Insight*, 26.10.2004, available at <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav102604.shtml>.

³³⁴ Ibid.

³³⁵ Jaba Devdariani, “Saakashvili Relies on Combination of Old and New to Asserts Authority”, *Eurasia Insight*, 26.1.2004, available at <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav012604.shtml>.

³³⁶ Khechinashvili, p.3.

³³⁷ Quoted by Peuch, “Georgia: ‘Culture of Impunity’ Blamed for Torture and Other Police Abuses”, *RFE/RL*, 22.12.2005, available at http://www.rferl.org/features/features_Article.aspx?m=12&y=2005&id=A075FBEF-4D5B-45C4-9E32-0B65DDE9C152, (Dolidze chairs Georgia’s Young Lawyers Association).

presidency on the 25th November 2007. After that the Parliamentary Speaker Nino Burjanadze started to act as the acting President of Georgia.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Since the declaration of independence, Georgia has had 3 presidents. The first was Gamsakhurdia, who was also the leading actor of the independence movement of Georgia. In this period, democratic development could not become a priority of the state. Instead, chaos, civil war, economic deadlock and the lack of state authority brought the end of his rule and he was replaced by an ex-communist, Eduard Shevardnadze. Although he was able to establish stability, the years of his rule were dominated by increasing corruption and economic deterioration. Except for the free and fair elections held in the first years of his rule, the country could not take any significant steps toward democratization, and politics were dominated by the ruling party and its leader. Mikheil Saakashvili became the next president of Georgia, who replaced Shevardnadze with the Rose Revolution. He is a western oriented politician. Georgia is regarded to be a more promising country in its way to democratization after the Rose Revolution. However, the country still has not completed this process, and the latest administration is still being criticized for its undemocratic policies.

In the first chapter, democratization is conceptualized with definitions and discussions among different approaches. Common to all these definitions, democratization is a process of regime change from a non-democratic regime to a democratic one. There were five approaches to democratization: modernization theory, transition theory, structural approach, path-dependency and elite-led democratization. All these approaches are focused on the domestic dimension of democratization; the level of economic development, the impact of the previous regime on the internal structure, the role of the elite of the country, and internal power relations, acknowledging the international promotion of democratization. This process is roughly divided into two as the transition and consolidation periods.

In the second chapter I focused on the elite-led approach to democratization, compared and contrasted different views of theorists, who claim that the role of the elite in the democratization process matters more than all other factors. Common to

all these views was that the elite make up the decision-makers and shapers in a country and their relations with each other, the pacts they made and their power relations play the decisive role in the democratization process. In the second part of the chapter, I tried to correlate these approaches to the post-Soviet case. We saw that, in Central Asia, communist leaders came to power and established their authoritarian regimes. The regimes in those countries were the most dependent on the personality cult of their leaders. The Baltic States were the most successful of all in their democratic processes in peaceful means. National Front leaders came to power in Caucasus, but could not prevent their countries from falling into ethnic conflict and wars.

On the other hand, the recent “color revolutions” in Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan are good examples of elite pacts, which are the most important factor in the democratization process.³³⁸ The basic argument of elite-led approach to democratization is that elite pacts play the key role in transition to democracy. These revolutions were the result of the efficient pacts made within the oppositional groups in those countries, who did criticize the governments and forced the presidents to resign. It is also argued that these were peaceful regime changes, “extra-legal” and “extra-constitutional” governmental changes, which gained legitimacy only through international and public support.³³⁹ However, this thesis argues that these revolutions were not revolutions per se, but leadership changes with the enforcement of oppositional groups in those countries, with a strong public support and without military intervention. They were only leadership changes, because the result in each case was the replacement of the ruling elite by the opposition group. What happened in Georgia in 2003 was not a regime change exactly, but a leadership change, with a claim of respecting democratic norms.

Chapter 3 was an analysis of the post-independence Georgian democratization process. The three post-independence presidents’ leadership patterns were analyzed within the framework of the democratization process. Gamsakhurdia was the first president. Gamsakhurdia, who was the first to challenge the Soviet rule

³³⁸ For further information and comparison about the Georgian and Ukrainian cases, see, “Georgia/Ukraine: Revolutions With Similar Roots, Different Legacies”, *RFE/RL*, available at <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/11/1C88A9CC-18C6-4938-ABF3-6B40CEC138FE.html>.

³³⁹ George Dura, “Georgia After the Velvet Revolution”, *CEPS-Center for European Policy Studies*, 19 February 2007, available at http://www.ceps.be/Article.php?article_id=293.

and promote the idea of independence, could not survive when he became the ruler. Gamsakhurdia's failure is a result of his inability to rule the country in a smooth way, because he did not have a background as a politician, but as a literature specialist. Although his achievements on the way of independence can not be neglected, his characteristic flaws turned him into be a leader who made Georgian democratization impossible, even he was the one who opened the door for that process.³⁴⁰ The ethnic clashes, territorial and sovereignty conflicts also challenged the stability which at the same time threatened his rule. It became clear that the functioning of state institutions needed more than nationalist sentiments, it also needed an experienced ruling elite.

Unlike Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze proved to be successful in creating stability in the country through establishing pacts within the ruling elite. His ruling style was based on the co-optation of all power centers and keeping them within the structure. This period is dominated by a pact within the ruling elite of the country, mainly the CUG and its satellite parties. However, Shevardnadze's success in bringing stability to Georgia could be achieved with the price of democracy. Corruption increased, state institutions became profit-making tools and governing posts were distributed in order to please protégés. The Shevardnadze period was completely dominated by the *nomenklatura* officials and the Soviet style of governance.

In November 2003, mass meetings and protests led by the opposition resulted in the Rose Revolution and a coalition of oppositional forces in Georgia forced Shevardnadze to resign and leave the country, blaming Shevardnadze for not respecting democratic norms, not preventing (and even increasing) corruption and being unable to provide basic goods and services to the public. Shevardnadze's decision to abide to the constitutional timing and leave office in 2005 also accelerated the opposition activities, to force him to leave before that time.³⁴¹ The oppositional coalition, led by opposition political parties and supported by international forces and civil society actors, arranged the elections immediately and won with an overwhelming majority. Saakashvili's government's policies to

³⁴⁰ Areshidze, p.20.

³⁴¹ Henry E. Hale, "Regime Cycles - Democracy, Autocracy, and Revolution in Post-Soviet Eurasia", *World Politics* 58, October 2005, pp. 133–65.

consolidate democracy were remarkable. They included anti-corruption, peaceful and successful reintegration of the Adjara territory, ensuring international recognition and financial support from international monetary organizations. Yet democratic consolidation seems to be an uneasy task. Some experts characterized these problems with the inexperience of the new government.³⁴² Even a comparison between the Shevardnadze and Saakashvili leaderships is made through describing the first as a “democracy without democrats” and the latter as “democrats without democracy”.³⁴³ Saakashvili and his team in office is criticized of creating a “Russian-style, hyper-presidential system”.³⁴⁴

The first nationalist leader of Georgia after independence, Gamsakhurdia, was replaced by an ex-communist with the strong support of the Georgian community, being the result of demands for stability in the country. Shevardnadze’s replacement with a western oriented representative of the young generation, who had no ties with the communist past, was the result of the complaints of non-democratic practices and corruption and international support. They all had strong public support at first, but the means of coming to power were revolutionary for all three. The crucial factor at this point which will play the decisive role is the way how Saakashvili will leave power. The way a leader leaves office plays a key role in establishing the “rules of the game” for the future democratic development of a country, that future leaders will constitute an example and enforcing factor of democratic behavior before them.³⁴⁵ Two previous leaders did not leave their posts in democratic ways, which is through free and fair elections, but instead they were forced to leave. Electoral fraud became a common practice to stay in power. The way the leader leaves his post is very important for the democratic change in a country. Oppositional protests as of October 2007 in the country against Saakashvili forced him to reschedule the

³⁴² Molly Corso, "Bush's Visit to Georgia Furthers its Independence from Russia", published on 06 May 2005, available at http://www.pinr.com/report.php?ac=view_report&report_id=294&language_id=1. Also see Rachel Clogg, “The Rose Revolution and the Georgian-Abkhazian conflict: light at the end of the tunnel?”, published in the *JRL Research and Analytical Supplement*, Issue No.24., May 2004, available at <http://www.c-r.org/resources/occasional-papers/rose-revolution.php>.

³⁴³ Fuller, “Georgia: Is The Country Becoming Progressively Less Democratic?”.

³⁴⁴ Areshidze, p.9.

³⁴⁵ Brooker.

elections. Whether he remains in power or not, the democratic standards of these elections are very crucial for the democratization process of Georgia.

We divided the democratization process of a country into two periods in the first chapter. These were transition and consolidation. The transition period is that during which the path the country will follow, that is democracy, is decided. The consolidation phase is the habituation period of democracy both institutionally within the state structure, and mentally both at the elite and public level. Georgia has completed its transition period, the promised path is democracy by all three leaders; however, it is not possible to suggest that the consolidation phase is over. The public supports democratic development; however, loyalty to democratic norms at the elite level is still not clear. We saw that holding free and fair elections did not prove enough for the democratic development of a country, but they must be habituated and become regular. Opposing circles to the government must be given equal rights and opportunities and they must not be forced to side with the government in this way. That is, ordinary people, parties and civil society must not be afraid of opposing the government. The media should remain free.

Georgia is still in the process of consolidating democracy. The future of democratic achievement is yet questionable. Nevertheless, it seems that elite choices and initiatives are still the key forces to determine the path toward democracy.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

A.1 Short biographies of three Georgian Presidents

A.1.1 Zviad Gamsakhurdia

He was born on 31 March 1939 in Tbilisi. His father Konstantine Gamsakhurdia (1893-1975), was an academician and an important writer. Gamsakhurdia was educated in philology and became an expert in literature. In 1955, during the times of Stalin repression on nationalist sentiment, he established a secret youth group, Gorgasliani, which focused on human rights abuses. Gamsakhurdia was arrested because of a demonstration in Tbilisi and once again in 1958 for making anti-communist propaganda. He was one of the founders of the Initiative Group for the Defense of Human Rights in 1973, the Georgian Helsinki Group in 1976, and he was the first Georgian member of Amnesty International and the International Society for Human Rights. He contributed to various periodicals, such as Okros Satsmisi ("The Golden Fleece"), Sakartvelos Moambe ("The Georgian Herald"), Sakartvelo ("Georgia"), Matiane ("Annals") and Vestnik Gruzii. In his academic career, he was a Senior Research Fellow of the Institute of Georgian Literature of the Georgian Academy of Sciences (1973-1977, 1985-1990), member of the Union of Georgia's Writers (1966-1977, 1985-1991), Associate Professor of the Tbilisi State University (1973-1975, 1985-1990). He made his PhD in the field of Philology (1973) and Doctor of Sciences (Full Doctor, 1991). In 1977 he was arrested and released until 1979. He played a prominent role in the pro-independence movements during the last years of the Soviet Union, and he became the first democratically elected president of independent Georgia on 26 May 1991, with more than 80% of the vote. However, he was forced to resign in the same year, in December 1991, and fled to Chechnya. Gamsakhurdia died on 31 December 1993, in Samegrelo region of western Georgia.

A.1.2 Eduard Amvrosiyevich Shevardnadze

He was born in 25 January 1928, in Mamati, into a poor family. He joined the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1948, and became a member of the Georgian Supreme Soviet in 1959. He was appointed to the Georgian Ministry for the Maintenance of Public Order in 1965 and served as the Georgian Minister of Internal Affairs from 1968 to 1972. In 1972, he became the first Secretary of the Georgian Communist Party. In 1976, he joined the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, and a member of the Soviet Politburo in 1978. He was appointed as the Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs in 1985. When Georgia's first President Gamsakhurdia was defeated, the Military Council of the defector militia leaders appointed Shevardnadze as the Acting Chairman of the Georgian State Council in March 1992. After the establishment of the presidential post in November 1995, he gained the 70% of the vote in the first elections and became the second President of Georgia. In November 2003, he resigned after mass demonstrations organized by the opposition, that resulted in the Rose Revolution.

A.1.3 Mikheil Saakashvili

He was born in 21 December 1967, in Tbilisi, as the son of a physician father and a historian mother. He graduated from the School of International Law of the Kiev State University in Ukraine in 1992. After working as a human rights officer for the interim State Council of Georgia for a short period of time, he received an LLM from Columbia Law School in 1994, Doctor of Law degree from The George Washington University Law School the next year and received a diploma from the International Institute of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France. In 1995, he worked as a lawyer in a firm, Patterson Belknap Webb & Tyler, in New York. At that time, he returned to Georgia upon the invitation of Zurab Zhvania, took place in the parliamentary elections, and won a seat in the parliament within Shevardnadze's party, the Citizen's Union of Georgia. He became the Vice-President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in January 2000. In October 2000, he became the Minister of Justice. He resigned in September 2001 from the CUG, and founded the United National Movement (UNM) in October 2001. In June 2002,

he became the Chairman of the Tbilisi City Assembly. After the victory of the Rose Revolution, he was elected as the third president of Georgia in the January 2004 presidential elections. As a result of the recent oppositional movements and mass protests in the country, he resigned from presidency in November 2007, and started to work for his election campaign for the elections he scheduled for January 2008.

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