

POLITICAL PARTIES AND DEMOCRATIZATION IN GEORGIA

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ABSTRACT

THE POLITICAL PARTIES IN GEORGIAN DEMOCRATIZATION

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This thesis analyzes the development of the multi-party system and the role of political parties in the process of democratization in Georgia during both pre-independence and post-independence periods. The conditions shaping both the multi-party system and democratization are analyzed in the light of findings obtained through in-depth interviews with the representatives of political parties, civil society organizations and academicians in Georgia. In accordance with the post-Soviet political system, the nature of the relationship between the ruling party and the opposition is crucial. The diversification among the elite groups and the lack of pact formation among the political elite is the main reason which hinders the process of democratization. Hence, despite the Georgian political party system has numerous political parties; it is shaped in accordance with the dominant political party system.

Keywords: Georgia, Political Parties, Political Elites, Democratization

ÖZ

GÜRCİSTAN'DAKİ SİYASİ PARTİLER VE DEMOKRATİKLEŞME

Karadağ, Yelda
Yüksek Lisans, Avrasya Çalışmaları Bölümü
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Bu tez Gürcistan'daki demokratikleşme sürecinde çok partili sistemin gelişimini ve siyasi partilerin rolünü incelemektedir. Gürcistan'daki çok partili sistem ve demokratikleşme sürecine ışık tutmak için bağımsızlık öncesi ve bağımsızlık sonrası süreçler ayrıntıyla incelenecektir. Hem çok partili sistemi hem de demokratikleşmeyi şekillendiren koşullar Gürcistan'daki siyasi parti yöneticileri, sivil toplum örgütleri sorumluları ve akademisyenler ile gerçekleştirilen derinlemesine mülakatlar ile elde edilen bulgular ışığında yorumlanmıştır. Sovyetler sonrası gelişen siyasi sistemde iktidar partisi ve muhalefetin arasındaki ilişkilerin niteliği demokratikleşme açısından önemlidir. Siyasi seçkinlerin arasındaki farklılaşma ve mutabakat eksikliği demokratikleşme sürecini sekteye uğratan temel nedenlerdir. Dolayısıyla, Gürcistan'daki siyasi parti sistemi sayı olarak birçok siyasi partiye sahip olsa da siyasi sistem iktidar partisinin güdümündedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Gürcistan, Siyasi Partiler, Siyasi Seçkinler, Demokratikleşme

To My Mother

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AO	Autonomous Oblasts
AR	Autonomous Regions
ASSR	Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics
CIPDD	The Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development
CoE	Council of Europe
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CRRC	The Caucasus Research Resource Center
CUG	Citizens' Union of Georgia
EU	European Union
GCP	The Georgian Communist Party
GFSIS	Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies
GLP	The Georgian Labour Party
GSP	The Georgian Socialist Party
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
IRI	International Republican Institute

ISFED	International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy
IWSG	Industry Will Save Georgia
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDP	The National Democratic Party
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NED	The National Endowment for Democracy
Novas	The New Rightists
PASOS	Policy Association for an Open Society
PP	The Popular Party
SSR	Soviet Socialist Republics
UDR	The Union of Democratic Revival
UGT	The Union of Georgian Traditionalists
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNM	The United National Movement

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this thesis is to analyze the formation of the multi-party system and the role of political parties in the process of democratization in Georgia. While analyzing the process of democratization and the multi-party system, the thesis will focus on both pre-independence and post-independence periods. The analysis is based on the fieldwork where in-depth interviews were conducted with the representatives of political parties, civil society organizations and academics. The main focus was on the perceptions of the respondents and their interpretations of the post-Soviet experience. The main argument of this thesis is that the multi-party system in Georgia is still in the making and its contribution to the process of democratization should be evaluated in the long run. The post-Soviet political system can be analyzed with reference to the nature of the relationship between the ruling party and the opposition. Although there are a number of political parties in the country, this does not mean that their contribution to the process of democratization is remarkable. In other words the very existence of a multi-party system does not guarantee a vibrant and democratic environment. The diversification among the elite groups and the lack of pact formation among the political elite is the main reason which hinders the process of democratization. In order to analyze the role of the political parties and the multi-party system in the democratization process, the focus on the historical evolution of the political

parties and/or movements constitutes great importance. Therefore the thesis will also provide a historical overview of the process of regime change in the post-Soviet period with a particular reference to the emergence and the development of multi-party system.

The Georgian political movements and parties went through three key turning points; the period between 1918 and 1921, the period between 1991 and 2003 and the period in the aftermath of the Rose Revolution. The emergence of the political movements was inspired from the process of national identity formation during late 19th and early 20th centuries. The process was led by the Georgian intelligentsia. Before the first independent republic between 1918 and 1921, the Georgian intelligentsia aimed at restoring cultural and historical heritage in order to build national identity under the rule of the Russian Tsardom. At that time, the Georgians did not have any political representation at the parliamentary or/and local level.

Georgia declared its independence in 1991; the post-Soviet political system witnessed the presidencies of Zviad Gamsakhurdia and Eduard Shevardnadze. In both Gamsakhurdia's and Shevardnadze's rule, one could easily observe the patterns of continuity and the dominance of the Soviet political heritage whereas in 2003, the Rose Revolution constituted a turning point for the process of democratization in Georgia. The Rose Revolution was led by the United National

Movement and marked by a series of mass meetings with the participation of numerous actors such political elite, intellectuals, civil societal actors and students. The declared aim was to initiate a regime change towards democratization. Actually opposition to the Shevardnadze's rule emerged from his own political party, the Citizens' Union of Georgia, Young and western-educated political elites constituted an alternative. This new political wing of the Citizens' Union of Georgia represented Western-oriented reformist policies, which could be classified as Western-style state building process, embracing the norms for democratization. In 2003, as a result of the active protests and civic mobilization led by the UNM, Georgian political system entered into a new phase.

The political parties are of crucial importance in the analysis of the process of democratization. The multi-party system in Georgia has a number of problems which hinders democratization. These include the dominance of the ruling party, the presence of weak and fragmented opposition, dominant leaders in political parties and institutionalization problems due to lack of financial and human resources. Moreover the political parties are not products of the grass-roots movements. Instead, they are predominantly established on the basis of the relationship among the political elites, who cooperate and/or conflict with each other. Because of the dominance of the elite choices and initiatives this thesis argues that the post-Soviet democratization in Georgia should be analyzed with

reference to the elite-led approach. Since pact formation, compromise and negotiations among the political parties and elites are the key factors for the democratization process in Georgia.

In the first chapter, I would provide a theoretical framework for the analysis of the process of the post-Soviet democratization. Both definitions of democratization and approaches on how analyze the process of regime change will be discussed. In the second chapter, the formation and the development of political movements and parties will be analyzed from a historical perspective. The role of intelligentsia in the formation of political movements will be highlighted. The national identity is the key factor for the development of the Georgian political movements and parties. In this chapter, I will focus on pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet period in order to highlight historical context within which political movements occurred. Firstly, the Georgian political movements from the Russian Empire to the first Georgian Republic between 1918 and 1921 will be analyzed. Secondly, the changing dynamics within political parties after the dissolution of the Russian Empire and the establishment of the Soviet Union will be discussed in order to analyze the new positions of the Georgian political movements in response to this radical change. The dissident movements, of the Gorbachev era will also be discussed. Thirdly, the emergence of the Rose Revolution and its impact on the process of regime change will be analyzed. In the Chapter IV, the analysis of the multi-party system in Georgia and

its contribution to the process of democratization will be analyzed in depth. This chapter will also focus on the role of international actors in democratization in order to better understand the implications of interaction between domestic and international actors.

1.1 Methodology

This thesis is based on the fieldwork conducted in Tbilisi, Georgia in September 2009, also, between November and December 2010. During the fieldwork, thirty in-depth interviews were conducted with the representatives of political parties, civil society organizations and academicians. The questions asked to the respondents were mainly related to their perceptions on the nature of multi-party system, government-opposition relations, the process of democratization, the role of international actors and the expectations for the future (see Appendix B).

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to identify the role of the political parties in post-Soviet democratization in Georgia. In order to analyze post-Soviet democratization, definitions of democratization, theories of democratization and the post-Soviet democratization process will be expounded upon. Firstly, I will analyze the definitions of democratization and the role of political parties in the democratization process. Secondly, I will focus on some of the main theories on democratization, which are particularly on modernization approach, transition approach, structural approach and elite-led approach. Finally, I will concentrate on an analysis of post-Soviet democratization while referring to the case of Georgia in terms of analyzing the role of political parties for democratization.

2.2 Definitions of Democratization

The central question in studies of democratization is trying to analyze how one country transforms itself from authoritarian regimes to modern liberal democracies. Mainly, democratization indicates a transformation from an

undemocratic, an authoritarian system to a democratic one. Grugel defines democratization as “a transformation of the political system from non-democracy towards accountable and representative government.”¹ Pridham explains democratization as “All processes of regime change from authoritarian or totalitarian towards liberal democracy can be defined as democratization”² According to Pridham, democratization is a multi-dimensional process, which covers both the change of procedures and rules and societal dimensions as well as the linkage between the elite and masses.³In this sense, political parties are essential for building this kind of bridge between the elite and the masses within the institutional framework in order to advance the democratization process.

Democratization is not a linear process, which means that there is no one basic strategy for countries to transform themselves from authoritarian ruling to a democratic one. Democratization has three regime types, which are liberal democracy, partial democracy and authoritarianism⁴. Democratization cannot be changed suddenly from authoritarian one to liberal democratic one. No matter how many democratic steps are taken, there is always a probability to return to authoritarian regime, which is examined by Samuel Huntington as “reverse waves

¹Grugel, *Democratization, A Critical Introduction*, p.3.

²Pridham, *The Dynamics of Democratization*, p.16.

³Ibid

⁴Potter, *Democratization*, p.3.

of democratization”.⁵ Regarding to process of democratization, Gill analyzes the path towards democratization that covers three steps such as regime breakdown, democratic transition and democratic consolidation.⁶ The first step necessitates the overthrowing of the non-democratic former regime, which might indicate a transformation through political elite or revolution. The second step requires bringing a democratic regime to power that covers democratic values such as civil liberties, free and fair elections as well as the institutional development of the state apparatus and the political parties. The last step, democratic consolidation, involves elite consensus in order to establish stable democracy. Burton and Higley depict the importance of elites’ achievement to form a consensual unity as necessary for the development of a stable political system.⁷ For building the consensus related to the democratization, all political parties and political elites have to focus on the major route towards democratization. For instance, Przeworski defines the democratization as a political process based on rational choice led by political elites during the transition process dependent on their rational calculations.⁸

⁵To see more: Huntington S., *The Third Wave; Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, (University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, 1991)

⁶Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization, Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process*, p.8.

⁷Burton, and Higley, *Elite Settlements*, pp. 295-307.

⁸Grugel, p.58.

As well as the different definitions for the political parties in the democratization process, the theories about the democratization vary. The main focus of this thesis is to question to what extent political parties and political elites could provide democratization. Especially after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the democratization discussion entered into a new phase, thus, the theories of the democratization before 1989 do not exactly suffice the post-Soviet regime transformation as a result of multiple dimensions and different political elite roles of post-Soviet democratization.⁹ Within the dissolution of the Soviet Union, democratization studies indicate the role of political elites as the primary actor for democratization. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the role of political elites emerged as a driving force for democratization as an elite initiative. In the next part of this chapter, I will analyze the five different theories in order to explain and evaluate the post-Soviet democratization process. While these theories touch on the different focal points for democratization, closer look at the role of political elites and political elite consensus will be covered.

2.3 Theories of Democratization

There are a number of factors, which have been considered, while making the analysis of the process of democratization. The various approaches to the democratization cover diverse and crucial points such as elite behavior, socio-economic development, the historical context that the democratic regime

⁹Pridham, p.3.

transformation has to work with. In this part, I will discuss five major theories on democratization in order to analyze to what extent they are applicable for post-Soviet democratization process. The major approaches, which will be examined in this part of the chapter, are modernization theory, transition theory, the structural approach, the path-dependency and the elite-led approach. While modernization theory focuses on the relationship between economic development and democracy, transition theory reinforces the historical approach in accordance with the elite behavior. In addition, the structural approach analyzes the connection between long term historical changes and interrelation between different power structures. Also, path dependency examines the impact of the previous regime on the democratization phase.¹⁰ Lastly, the elite-led approach emphasizes the major role of the elites and pact making.

The modernization theory, which emerged with Lipset's article published in 1959, stresses the relationship between the level of economic development and democracy. According to Lipset, capitalism is the center of democracy because it leads to the production of wealth, educates the middle class, and leads to a number of cultural changes favorable to democracy.¹¹ Also, he clarifies the theory

¹⁰Juan 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)

¹¹Grugel, p.47.

as “the more well-to-do a nation, the greater the chances that it will sustain democracy.”¹² Diamond summarizes the modernization theory as follows:

The pessimism of the time was driven in part by the preeminence of modernization theory, which found a powerful correlation between democracy and the level of economic development. Most of the world’s democracies in the early 1970s were the advanced industrial countries of the West.¹³

Primarily, the modernization theory builds a lineal relationship between capitalism and democratization. Lipset categorizes all countries in terms of being more or less democratic by using two variables, which are wealth and education.¹⁴ The major critics about the modernization theory indicate that it does not suffice to explain the role of the historical legacies of the former regimes, political elites and elite consensus, towards democratization.

On the other hand, Grugel examines modernization theory as it directly connects democratization with globalization.¹⁵ He claims that the theory links the spread of democracy to modernity and the enlightenment idea of the universality of progress.¹⁶ Also, Potter stresses that ‘the extent of modernization, or levels of socio-economic development is the key.’¹⁷ In this context, modernization theory

¹²Quoted by Gill, p.3.

¹³Diamond, *The Spirit of Democracy*, pp. 10-11.

¹⁴Grugel, p. 49.

¹⁵Ibid, pp.46-47.

¹⁶Ibid, p.47.

¹⁷Potter, p.12.

necessitates capitalism as the corner stone of democratization process. However, this assumption was refuted by the theoreticians with their research about the interrelation between economic development and the spread of democracy. In this sense, Hood states 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 transition occur. In fact, some countries that adopt democracy are economically backward.¹⁸

Apparently, modernization theory lacks human factor by overemphasizing the role of economic development for the democratization process. As well as the lack of human factor, the modernization theory does not refer to the role of political elites and their initiatives through democratization. When the post-Soviet democratization process is analyzed, the major factor to initiate the regime change was led by dissident movements, a few of the more popular fronts include Azeri Popular Front, Georgian Committee for National Salvation, People's Movement of Ukraine, (*Rukh*). Therefore, the modernization theory would not be applicable in order to grasp the post-Soviet democratization process.

Transition theory emphasizes the role of political processes and elite initiatives and choices that account for moves from authoritarian rule to liberal democracy.¹⁹

¹⁸Hood, *Political Development and Democratic Theory-Rethinking Comparative Politics*, p. 15.

¹⁹Potter, *Democratization*, p.10.

The transition theory emerged as a challenge to Lipset's modernization thesis from Dankwart Rustow's article called 'Transition to Democracy' in 1970.²⁰ Apparently, Rustow puts down his theory to a historical approach as well as questioning the reason of 'how a democracy comes into being in the first place' instead of seeking functional answers for analyzing democratization.²¹ According to Rustow, there are four major phases for democratization to take root. First, he starts with 'background condition' which is national unity.²² He defines the first step as "It simply means that the vast majority of citizens in a democracy-to-be must have no doubt or mental reservations as to which political community they belong to."²³ Second, he gives emphasis to the 'preparatory phase', which indicates the possibility of prolonged and inconclusive political struggle, different power holders clash with each other. Third, he announces 'decision phase', where there is the first transition or decision step, 'historical moment' when the parties to the inconclusive political struggle decide to compromise and adopt democratic rules.²⁴ Fourth, there is the 'habituation phase'. During the last phase, political elites become habituated to democratic rules and believe in democratic values. The transition theory claims that democracy is created by conscious, committed actors, providing that they possess a degree of luck and show willingness to

²⁰Ibid,p.13.

²¹Ibid, p.14.

²²Rustow, *Transition to Democracy*, (ed.) Pridham, p.72.

²³Ibid, p.72.

²⁴Potter, p.14.

compromise.²⁵ Therefore, the transition theory underlines the importance of rational choice towards democracy instead of waiting for several dynamics such as economic development, resolved political conflicts to emerge and cause a democratic environment. Although the modernization theory emphasizes some structural requirements for democratization, the transition theory sheds light on the actor behavior. The transition theory depends on historically political processes related to social conflict and this condition constitutes its major difference from the modernization theory.²⁶ However, the transition theory is criticized for being overly elitist, excessively empirical and voluntaristic as well as concentrating to regions such as East and Central Europe and post-Soviet space.²⁷

The structural approach highlights the role of the changing power relations between different groups. According to the structural approach, the structures of power can be exemplified as economic, social and political poles. The interrelationships among these structures lead to democratization.²⁸ In 1966, Barrington Moore's analysis is accepted as the milestone for the structural approach. His analysis covered eight countries, namely Britain, France, the U.S., Germany, Russia, Japan, China and India, through the 19th century towards

²⁵Grugel, p.56.

²⁶Potter, p.14.

²⁷Grugel, p.60.

²⁸Potter, p.18.

modernization,²⁹ As well as the transition theory, the structural approach praises the role of the long term process of historical change and defines it as paramount.³⁰ Structuralists claim that democracies do not emerge suddenly, nor is it driven by individuals, classes or groups. Instead, they suggest that the transformation of state through class conflict causes democratization to take place.³¹ In this sense, the notion of state and state transformation oriented with the long term historical change, unlike elite behavior or the role of political elites in the political decision mechanism, are essential to grasp democratization from the structuralist perspective. For instance, Leftwich compares the modernization theory with the structural approach and announces some similarities such as ‘the economic power base of elites, the strength of civil society, the balance of class power and the political articulation of civil society’, were originally shaped by the structure of the economy and the state, in which industrialization has played a critical part.³² By underlining the relation between conflict and democracy, structuralists name the confrontation is a normal part of democratization process.³³ However, as transition studies indicate, the confrontational and uncompromised approaches of the political elites do not sustain a vital ground for democratization. Although structuralists draw attention to the existence of the class antagonisms of capitalist societies and the class difference as the

²⁹Grugel, p.52.

³⁰Potter, p.22.

³¹Grugel, p.52.

³²Leftwich, *From Democratization to Democratic Consolidation*, (ed) Potter, p.522.

³³Grugel, p.56.

denominators of the democratization, it does not touch upon how political elites sustain “the habituation process”, which political elites and citizens become accustomed to democracy with internalizing democratic values.

The path-dependency approach is formulated by the academic research of Linz and Stepan in order to re-evaluate the work of O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead. Linz and Stepan combine the elite choice, which were concentrated by O'Donnell, Schmitter and Whitehead, with the structural constraints within which they must act.³⁴ They highlight the existence of two dependent variables for maintaining democratization. These two dependent variables are called “completed democratic transition” and “consolidated democracies”.³⁵ On the other hand, the first independent variables can be described as “stateness”³⁶ that is the vital prerequisite for democracy to appear because without state no regime or type of governance would appear. For instance, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, newly independent states appeared and their transition to democracy started. However, without a more or less functioning state apparatus, there is no other way to build a democratic regime.

³⁴Gill, p.72.

³⁵Linz, Stepan, p.xiv.
Linz, Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation, Southern Europe, South America and Post-Communist Europe*, p.7.

³⁶Ibid, p.16.

According to Linz and Stepan, the second independent variable is the nature and characteristics of the previous regime type, named “path dependency”. They form a new typology/classification of non-democratic regime types varies from post-totalitarianism to sultanism.³⁷ Again, the Soviet Union example indicates that the authoritarian remnants of the Soviet regime still affect the democratization process of post-Soviet countries as the clear indication of “path dependency”. In order to sustain democratic consolidation as the third part of the democratization, Linz and Stepan necessitate various requirements as must-to-have for newly emerging democracies such as “a free and lively civil society that is free from the state”, “a relatively autonomous and value political society”, “the rule of law to ensure legal guarantees for citizens”, “a state bureaucracy to be used by the democratic government”, and “institutionalized economic society to mediate between state and market”³⁸ The path-dependency approach can be criticized for its overemphasis regarding the state being the cause of the path-dependency approach state is seen as the major implementer of the democratization. According to Linz and Stepan “modern democratic governance is inevitably linked to stateness. Without a state there can be no citizenship, without citizenship, there can be no democracy.”³⁹ However, the notion of citizenship is defined by the laws that are implemented by the political elites. Citizenship is not an abstract concept, which automatically enables democratization. At this point,

³⁷Ibid, p.46.

³⁸Ibid, p.16.

³⁹Ibid, p.28.

the path-dependency approach does not offer a tangible causality between the notion of citizenship, stateness and democracy, which may enable democratization.

Finally, the elite-led approach focuses on the key role of elites during the democratization process. It can be seen as the continuation or revised version of the transition theory in order to explain the post-Soviet regime change and democratization. According to the elite led approach, pact-making, compromise and negotiations are the key elements to achieve democratization. In other words, the relationship between the authoritarian rulers and opposition movements, which aim at liberalizing the regime, depict the major concentration of the elite led approach. 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,⁴⁰ which highlights the importance of the conflicts and pacts between and within the authoritarian rulers and their opponents that support democratization.⁴¹ Schmitter, O'Donnell and Whitehead focus on the elite-led transition to democracy by exemplifying conflicts and pacts between and within

⁴⁰Grugel, p.57.

⁴¹Guillermo 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).

the authoritarian rulers and their opponents towards a democratization process.⁴² Gill states that “A pact is defined by O’Donnell and Schmitter as ‘an explicit but not always publicly explicated or justified, agreement among a select set of actors which seeks to define (or better, to redefine) rules governing the exercise of power on the basis of mutual guarantees for the ‘vital interests’ of those entering into it.”⁴³ Furthermore, Gill continues to illuminate the importance of the pacts by illustrating O’Donnell and Schmitter’s academic research as “O’Donnell and Schmitter 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.”⁴⁴ On the other hand, pact-making is also seen as a form of conflict resolution.⁴⁵ Samuel Huntington unfolds the crucial notion of the pacts as follows;

Negotiations and compromise among political elites were at the heart of the democratization process. The leaders of the key political forces and social groups in society bargained with each other, explicitly or implicitly, and worked out acceptable if not satisfying arrangements for the transition to democracy.⁴⁶

⁴²Ibid

⁴³O’Donnell, Schmitter, *Transitions From Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, quoted by Gill, p.52.

⁴⁴Ibid, p.53.

⁴⁵Gill, p.57.

⁴⁶Huntington, *The Third Wave. Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, p.165.

Explicitly, the pact making and elite choices are directly interlinked with each other because once the political elite decide to compromise; pact-making becomes visible and leads to the democratization. Hence, in order to analyze the post-Soviet democratization process, observing the behaviors of the political elites as well as the political movements are vital because the process of dissolving from the Soviet Union was organized by the social and political groups initiated by the elites.

All these five key approaches, which are modernization theory, transition theory, the structural approach, the path dependency and the elite-led approach try to shed light on the democratization process from different angles by focusing on different causal relations such as economic conditions, historical legacies of the former regime, class conflicts, pact-making and the political elite behaviors in order to examine democratization process.

In a democratic regime, political parties are the major intermediary groups between state and society, while they have an institutional role for advocating different perspectives and policies. In order to attain the requirements of the democratization, political parties and the party system are the primary necessities of building democratic institutions. Also, they are vital for the regime breakdown, as the initial step of the democratization process, before the democratic transition

and democratic consolidation as Gill denotes.⁴⁷ On the other hand, Carothers underlines the role of a country's political elites as necessary to move towards democracy and fend off the contrary actions of the remaining antidemocratic forces standing in the way of democratization.⁴⁸ Explicitly, the political parties and the political elites are interrelated in terms of the democratization process because the political elites are responsible for preventing any antidemocratic drifts through political parties as it is frequently seen in the post-Soviet countries.

The major aim of this thesis is to analyze the role of the political parties for the democratization process in Georgia as a part of the post-Soviet democratization process. In Georgia, the democratization process depends on the initiatives and policies designed by the political elites, who aim at initiating Western democratic values. In this sense, in order to analyze the role of the political parties for democratization in Georgia, the elite-led approach is solidly relevant because it may illuminate the relations between different elite groups and how their cooperation and conflict create obstacles for democratization in Georgia as a part of the post-Soviet democratization process. Accordingly, the elite-led approach will offer a theoretical basis in order to scrutinize the relations between political elites because the democratization process has not been directed by any grassroots movements or historical modernization process. Hence, as the major aim of this thesis, I will analyze the political elite consensus and/or fragmentation

⁴⁷Gill, p.8.

⁴⁸Carothers, *End of the Transition Paradigm*, p.8.

in order to examine the impact of their relation to the democratization process with analyzing their cooperation and conflicts on certain issues for democratization in Georgia.

In the next part of this chapter, I will try to analyze the post-Soviet democratization process in Georgia by focusing on the role of political parties and the major challenges that political parties have to face during the democratization process in Georgia.

2.4 Development of Political Parties in Post-Soviet Georgia

The political parties have always been central for democracy because of their representative function. There is a causal relationship between the political parties, which cover different political elites, and the democratization process. Apart from the historical context of Georgian political parties, which will be analyzed in the next section, the Georgian political system experienced several challenges as a part of the post-Soviet democratization process. These challenges includes legal framework, dominance of single party, leadership supremacy, lack of institutional ground as well as the role of the Soviet legacy in the Georgian political arena. The major aim of this part is to analyze the Georgian political party system and the multi-party structure in the country during the post-Soviet democratization process.

Political parties carry the position as ‘mediating institutions’ between the governors and governed.⁴⁹ In order to analyze the role of political parties for the democratization process, Kitschelt denotes that “If democratic governance is about establishing linkages of accountability and responsiveness between citizens and competing political elites, democracies must create organizational vehicles that overcome problems of collective action and problems of social choice. Parties are the devices that can, but not always do, address these challenges.”⁵⁰ As it was mentioned by Kitschelt, the political parties constitute major importance for efficient democratization process as well as several challenges shared by the post-Soviet democratization process. The emergence of political parties in the post-Soviet space is an entirely different phenomenon because it is related to the Soviet experience, which brought completely different political, economic and social determinants for the development of the political parties in the post-Soviet space. The emergence of political parties in Georgia, as a part of the post-Soviet space, trace its roots back to the dissident groupings, which appeared in 1970s in order to take action against the communist rule in the Soviet Union. Also, these dissident movements were oriented with the protection of national unity and cultural identity. As well as the first source of the Georgian current political system, this ideological structure was the backbone of the nation and the state-

⁴⁹ John Kenneth White, *What is a Political Party*, p.5.

⁵⁰ Kitschelt, *Divergent Paths of Postcommunist Democracies*, in *Political Parties and Democracy* ed. by Larry Diamond, Richard Gunther, p. 300.

building process of Georgia within the declaration of the independence in April 1991.

Historically, Georgia experienced its first independence period between 1918 and 1921 after the abdication of the Russian Tsardom. Before the establishment of the first Georgian state, the Georgian intelligentsia was discernible in the Russian Empire in early 20th century. The Georgian intelligentsia was affected by the Tsarist autocracy due to its representation problem in many of the local administrative bodies in the Russian Empire. Therefore, the political movements in Georgia evolved outside the Russian parliament, *Duma*, and it did not embody any legal status such as political parties had for a long time. Rather, they developed as a mixture of political and social groupings instead of legal political parties, which would represent Georgian people in the Russian Parliament. While some groups in the Georgian intelligentsia focused on reviving Georgian national symbols and preserving Georgian cultural heritage against assimilationist policies of the Russian Empire, other groups denoted the importance of the social problems by disregarding the national problem. Consequently, the early emergence of the political movements in Georgia was divided between nationalists and socialists. The importance of the early independence period of Georgia, between 1918 and 1921, is that it triggered the dissident movements in the late period of the Soviet Union, as an inspiration. Georgian national values were highly depicted by the dissidents, who pursued Georgian independence struggle from the Soviet Union. They exemplified the first independence period

as the first attempt of the Georgian nation and state building process and mobilized the Georgian population with the nationalist discourse to declare their independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. The political arena was shaped in accordance with the political groups dominated by the dissident leaders, until the establishment of the Georgian state in 1991.

Six years after independence in 1991, the Organic Law of Georgia on Political Associations of Citizens declared regulations for political parties in 1997. According to the Organic Law of Georgia on Political Associations of Citizens, a political party is defined as “voluntary and independent association of citizens based on a common world outlook and an organizational structure that is registered in accordance with the rule established by this law and carries out its activities within the framework set forth by the Constitution of Georgia and other legislation.”⁵¹ Furthermore, a party is a “necessary legal constituent part of a democratic society” which “takes part in expressing the citizens’ political will.”⁵² The creation of the political parties does not require a hard bureaucratic process in Georgia. Parties are registered by the Ministry of Justice and they need at least 1000 members and a party statute. In this sense, Georgian legislation shows very liberal stance in terms of party creation for the further democratization process. However, constitutionally it is forbidden to establish any public or political entities, which aim is overthrowing or changing the constitutional order of

⁵¹Nodia and Scholtbach, *The Political Landscape of Georgia*, p.44.

⁵²Ibid

Georgia by force or violate the independence of the country or violate the country's territorial integrity or advocate war and violence, or attempt to induce ethnic, racial, social and national unrest is impermissible.⁵³⁵⁴ (Georgian Constitution, Article 26.3) Apparently, the basis of Georgian law defines the political parties as a crucial part of the democratic system. However, there are some restrictions, which are declared by the Georgian Organic Law in Article 6, in order to limit establishing a political party, if it is established in accordance with the "regional" or "territorial" principle. For instance, the case of *Virk*⁵⁵ presents the registration of parties based on ethnic division in the Georgian political system is not allowed. Nodia and Scholtbach denote about the establishment of *Virk* by stating that "this organization based in Javakheti, the region populated mainly by ethnic Armenians... It has been denied registration several times since 1998. *Virk* continues to act openly, but the fact that the party is not registered prevents it from taking part in the local or national elections."⁵⁶ In general terms, Georgian Organic Law tries to enable equal ground for all the political party initiatives in legal sense. Therefore, to prohibit ethnic and territorial based party structures may not be seen as an obstacle in terms of democratization process in Georgia. Instead, one can claim these legal

⁵³To see more,
http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session10/GE/EI_EducationInternational-eng.pdf

⁵⁴http://www.constcourt.ge/index.php?sec_id=48&lang_id=ENG

⁵⁵To see more, "Our Goal Is not Autonomy, Georgian Armenian Party Says"
<http://www.azg.am/EN/2003042601>

⁵⁶Nodia and Scholtbach, p.46.

arrangements; all parties can have an equal opportunity in order to cover the whole Georgia and Georgian population in terms of their major feature, which is representation.

Georgia has numerous parties as a result of the easy registration process. According to the Central Election Commission of Georgia, there are 26 political parties, which are registered at the Central Election Commission of Georgia.⁵⁷ Also, there are 10 more political parties, which were refused for registration.⁵⁸ On the other hand, the registration of political parties does not directly correlate with their participation in the elections because the numbers show that only 16 political parties participated in the elections by 2010 out of the total 26 registered political parties.⁵⁹ Although there are multiple political parties visible in the Georgian political arena, the Georgian political party system is not a multi-party system because it requires efficient political parties, which have equal or similar resources in terms of financial and human resources to maintain fair and equal elections.

For instance, Robert and Doreen Jackson define the multi-party system “public support is usually distributed among several parties in such a manner that the winning party is compelled to create a coalition with other parties to form a

⁵⁷http://www.cec.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=62&info_id=6228

⁵⁸http://www.cec.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=62&info_id=6228

⁵⁹http://www.cec.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=62&info_id=6228

government.”⁶⁰ Conversely, the ruling parties in Georgia are accustomed to have landslide victories and majority in the parliament, which creates a problematic environment for the democratization process. Nodia and Scholtbach define the Georgian political system as “dominant political party system”.⁶¹ Furthermore, they continue their analysis on the dominant political party system by denoting “In such a system, a single political party achieves outright victory in parliamentary elections and take full control of government agencies.”⁶² The strong ruling party, which emerges as a result of the electoral success, causes state apparatus to become merged with the ruling party. In other words, there is no division between the ruling party and the state. According to a report by Transparency International; “Characterization as a strong party is a result of electoral success – the winner takes all, quite literally, and captures the state apparatus. This ‘capture’, or merger of party and state, has been characteristic of Georgia since its very independence and is almost certainly the legacy of 70 years of communist rule.”⁶³ In this sense, the remnants of the Soviet Union are still discernible in the Georgian political system. Initially, the dominant party system and no clear division between the ruling party and the state apparatus can be identified as the key imitators of the Soviet legacy in the post-Soviet political party system in Georgia. Therefore, the number of parties do not provide a ripe

⁶⁰Robert Jackson, Doreen Jackson, *A Comparative Introduction to Political Science*, p.323.

⁶¹Nodia and Scholtbach, p.102.

⁶²Ibid

⁶³Transparency international, *Political Parties in Georgia: Issue of Party Financing*, p.1.

environment for multi-party functioning, although the Georgian political system is a multi-party system. Mouravi analyzes this dilemma by denoting that “The Soviet legacy of a mono-party system continues to have direct implications for the functioning of any strong political parties in Georgia that would not essentially represent any distinct social layers, values or group interests.”⁶⁴ Also, he analyzes the Georgian political system with Thomas Carothers’ well-known approach, which follows a “dominant power paradigm”.⁶⁵ Mouravi suggests that

The ruling party is often based not on ideology, values or vision but on the personality of a leader and power greed or career pragmatism; there is no separation from the state or business, no independent judicial power, under-controlled executive branch, high-level corruption and state-controlled pseudo-liberal system that serve certain group interests loyal to the authority.⁶⁶

As a result of the dominant political party system, the ruling party has access to control all means of the state apparatus and shape the political environment with its discourse. This condition may constrain the opposition parties’ position in order to have an efficient check and balance in the political system, as one of the major necessities of the democratization process.

In order to shed light on the party politics in Georgia, Kitschelt’s typology of parties constitute foremost importance because he suggests a classification of

⁶⁴Mouravi, p.17.

⁶⁵To see more: Carothers, Thomas. “*The End of the Transition Paradigm*”. *Journal of Democracy* 13.1: 5-21, 2002; also: Carothers, Thomas, “*Confronting the Weakest Link: Aiding Political Parties in New Democracies*”. Washington, D.C, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2006

⁶⁶Mouravi, p.27.

political parties, which underlines the problem for of young party systems. Kitschelt analyzes three ideal-types, which are programmatic, charismatic, and clientelistic parties.⁶⁷ Kitschelt identifies this typology as follows;

Programmatic parties base their work on specific party programs. They mobilize voters along social cleavages and issues that find explicit articulation in their platforms. The aims and policy proposals outlined in those platforms draw their substantive content from a certain set of ideological values (e.g. conservative, liberal, socialist, communist, or religious values) on which the party nourishes and develops.

Charismatic parties are defined by the leadership of a charismatic person. They deprive their constituency of their programmatic choices. Politics is reduced to the personal dimension, and programmatic choice is downgraded to a mere acclamation of the charismatic leader...Another, related problem with charismatic authority is its inherent instability, stemming from the fact that the regime's persistence hinges on the (political) survival of one single individual, the charismatic leader.

Clientelistic parties too violate fundamental democratic principles and thus hamper the legitimization of any democratic regime. Officially, they act as if they abided by and had respect for the rules of the game. During electoral campaigns, for instance, they purport to champion the production of collective goods. In fact, however, they provide personal favors, partisan benefits and services for their loyal clientele.⁶⁸

In accordance with Kitschelt's typology, the political parties in Georgia can be classified as clientelistic and charismatic ones because Georgian political parties do not have any strong ideological ground and lack of institutional basis or grassroots organizations. Therefore, leaders of the political parties are essential figures for the Georgian political arena, including both the ruling and opposition

⁶⁷Kitschelt, *Party Systems in East Central Europe: Consolidation Or Fluidity?*, p.449.

⁶⁸Kitschelt, *Party Systems in East Central Europe: Consolidation Or Fluidity?*, pp.449-450.

parties. Leaders are identified with their parties; therefore, voters' decisions are directly linked with leaders' credibility instead of ideological stand or party program. The role of individual leaders in order to determine the course of the party and its possible alliances based on the personalities of the leaders, who are the crucial element of the parties' identity.⁶⁹ As a result, when the leader is gone or overthrown, the political parties disappear as well in Georgia. Mouravi underlines the sudden changes of the dominant political party system by claiming "As soon as this party loses power, it immediately disappears (as happened with Shevardnadze's CUG, or Abashidze's Democratic Revival, but also to Gamsakhurdia's Round Table, which fell into pieces)."⁷⁰ The basis of Georgian political parties depends on clientelistic and charismatic party systems; therefore, it depends on leadership and clientelistic networks instead of compromise between the political parties and political elites. In order to highlight the impact of leadership over ideological basis in the political parties related to democratization, Croissant and Merkel state that "If ideology prevails over personalism and clientelism, the party has a positive effect on democratic stability and consolidation. If clientelism and personalism predominate, the opposite is true."⁷¹ Wheatley defines the Georgian political parties' position as follows;

All the main political parties in Georgia were highly centralized, top-down organizations. More were little more than fragments of current or former political elites...Both of these parties were 'clientelistic

⁶⁹Wheatley, *Georgia from National Awakening to Rose Revolution*, p.157.

⁷⁰Mouravi, p.26.

⁷¹Croissant, *Political Party Formation in Presidential and Parliamentary System*, FES Papers, www.library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/.../50072.pdf

ruling parties' in much the same way as the Communist Party had been in the 1980s and, like the Communist Party, were used to provide resources, often via the shadowy economy, to loyalists.⁷²

Having little ideological basis the government becomes, dependency on personalities and complex personal ties caused by clientelistic relations among the Georgian political elites and the Soviet legacy. The Georgian political party system has developed lacking democratic attributes. In this sense, it is hard to say that the nature of the political parties in Georgia contribute to the democratization process in the country.

On the other hand, institutionalization of the political parties could offer solid ground for democratization to take root. Bader defines the importance of the political party institutionalization as follows "The institutionalization of a party system enhances the prospects for democratic consolidation in states moving away from a recent authoritarian or totalitarian past."⁷³ Undoubtedly, the Georgian political parties have to face institutional problems, which directly hamper the democratization process in Georgia. Institutional problems are mainly derived from lack of financial and human resources. Firstly, party funding depends on three criteria; membership dues, donations and state funding.⁷⁴ The

⁷²Wheatley, p.155.

⁷³Bader, *Fluid Party Politics and the Challenge for Democracy Assistance in Georgia*, Caucasian Review of International Affairs, Vol. 2 (2) Spring 2008

formation of the political parties in Georgia has not emerged as the result of a grassroots movement. Also, social identity in Georgia is not strong and no organized class-based structure existed, instead, party formation in Georgia appeared due to inter and intra elite struggles.⁷⁵ The political parties could not meet the actual demands of the Georgian society and the Georgian people have not paid much attention to Georgian politics with voluntarism. According to the International Republican Institute's survey of the Georgian voters in June 2004, only 2.6 percent of the voters declared themselves members of a political party.⁷⁶ Therefore, party financing from membership dues are very limited. Secondly, according to Article 26 of the Organic Law of Georgia, parties are not allowed to collect funds from foreign nationals or companies, religious and civic organizations, state bodies and businesses with more than 10% state ownership. Thirdly, after December 2005, the Georgian political parties, which had at least 4 % of the votes in the latest parliamentary elections, will have financial support from the state budget.⁷⁷ The opposition parties' financial support from the state budget remains very limited to solve structural problems such as regional

⁷⁴Transparency International Georgia Report : "Political Parties in Georgia, Issue of Party Financing"
http://www.investmentguide.ge/files/22_10_223461_PoliticalPartiesinGeorgia,IssueofPartyFinancing-E.pdf

⁷⁵Wheatley, p.159.

⁷⁶Nodia and Scholtbach, p.105.

⁷⁷Transparency International Georgia Report : "Political Parties in Georgia, Issue of Party Financing"
http://www.investmentguide.ge/files/22_10_223461_PoliticalPartiesinGeorgia,IssueofPartyFinancing-E.pdf

development, electoral campaigning, and acquiring human resources compared to the ruling party. According to Bielasiak, competition among political parties is essential to the functioning of modern democracy.⁷⁸ However, in the Georgian case, it is impossible to find equal ground for the political parties as a result of a lack of financial and human resources. Almost all political parties in the Georgian political arena suffer from similar difficulties as the direct and indirect outcomes of the dominant political party system. According to Przeworski, in order to have democracy, first anti-authoritarian forces must unite against authoritarianism, but to be victorious under democracy, they must compete with each other.⁷⁹ Unfortunately, neither Georgian political parties nor Georgian political elites provide a democratic environment and equal opportunities for the Georgian political parties to achieve further democratization. Therefore, as a part of the post-Soviet democratization process, the Georgian case includes crucial obstacles during the process of democratization as a young state and pseudo-democracy.

⁷⁸Jack Bielasiak, *Party Competition in Emerging Democracies: Representation and Effectiveness in Post-communism and Beyond, Democratization*, p.331.

⁷⁹Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market; Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America*, p.67.

CHAPTER III

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The aim of this chapter is to shed light on the evolution of the political movements in Georgia as the key source of the political party development in the country. The evolution of the political parties in Georgia was preceded by the rise of social and political groups/movements led by the Georgian intelligentsia. In order to examine the historical emergence process of the Georgian political parties, the role of building national identity and nationalism constitute a substantial part of the historical development of the Georgian political parties. National identity building and political movements were the main motivation for discourse among the Georgian political elites on the path towards independence both in the first independence period between 1918 and 1921, and also in the late Soviet period. In order to elaborate the Georgian political parties and the political system, firstly, the rise of the national identity building will be analyzed in the Georgian political movements during the Russian Empire. Secondly, the dissident movements will be covered in order to grasp the political environment, which concluded with the second independence period in Georgia. Thirdly, the political party development in the post-independence movement will be examined within the presidency of Zviad Gamsakhurdia and Eduard Shevardnadze. Finally, the impact of the Rose Revolution on the Georgian political party system will be

scrutinized in order to analyze the Georgian multi-party system and its role on the democratization process in Georgia.

The first independence period, which took place between 1918 and 1921, can be identified as one of the major cornerstone of both the Georgian national identity and the realization of the independence struggle of the Georgian people. After the first independence experience, the Soviet conquest of Georgian land submersed the Georgian political movements. Thus, the evolution of the political party movement lost its dynamism in terms of mobilizing the Georgian people for another independence demand. However, the Georgian dissident movement, led by the Georgian intelligentsia, emerged around 1970s as a new interpretation of Georgian national identity. The outcome of the re-emergence of Georgian nation building was the inspiration of the first independence period that paved the way for the second independence of Georgia. Subsequently, Georgian nation building resulted in the independence of Georgia. The leaders of the Georgian dissident movement transformed into the new political elites of the country using a nationalist political discourse, the ruling party dominated. Later, the political elite circles played a crucial role shaping the Georgian political system with their elite consensus or conflicts. Therefore, the evolution of the political party system in Georgia is always dominated by the positive and/or negative relations of the Georgian political elites.

3.1 Political Context of the Pre-Independence Period

In order to analyze the political and social movements in Georgia, one should examine the political developments before the 1st independence period, which took place between 1918 and 1921. The emergence of the social and political movements began with the Georgian national identification to build the Georgian nation during the Russian Empire. According to Suny, “The Georgian national consciousness emerged visibly during the 19th century as a result of the educated elite, which led Georgian intelligentsia to arise as romantic poets and writers, linguists, political theorists, populists and eventually socialists.”⁸⁰ The role of the Georgian intelligentsia as the national identity building was inevitably discernible during the pre-independence period because the historical awakening process was maintained by the prominent leaders of the Georgian intelligentsia.⁸¹ Suny states that “They formed the basis of the Georgian cultural and historical awakening, which paved the way for Georgian national consciousness.”⁸² For instance, Ilya Chavchavadze can be identified as one of the members of the Georgian intelligentsia and an important figure of the national revival process of Georgia for building Georgian national identity. Wheatley depicts that

The nineteenth century Georgian writer Ilya Chavchavadze (1837-1907) expressed his conception of Georgian national identity by the

⁸⁰Suny, 1993, p. 95.

⁸¹To see more about National Identity Building in the South Caucasus: A. Ergun (2008) ‘Güney Kafkasya’da Etnik Kimlik ve Çatışma: Azerbaycan ve Ermenistan Ulusal Kimliklerinde Karabağ Sorunu’, Doğu Batı, Vol.44 pp. 195-211.

⁸²Suny, p. 132.

slogan *Mamuli, Ena, Sartsmunoeba* (Fatherland, Language, Faith) which gives clear priority to language, the secular component of nationhood, over religion. This ideological framework was further reinforced during the Soviet period when ethnicity was institutionalised and formed the basis for the administrative-territorial division of the USSR.⁸³

Also, Chavchavadze was one of the members of *Tergdaleuli*, who were young Georgians educated in Russian universities.⁸⁴ According to Nodia and Scholtbach, Niko Nikoladze and Giorgi Tsereteli were among the prominent intelligentsia closer to the radically progressive ideology that was developing in Europe and the Russian Empire at the time.⁸⁵ Another ideological movement was *Xalxosnebi*, who followed the lead of the Russian *Narodniki*, the Populists. They were inspired by the idea of educating the lower classes and exposing them to the progressive ideas. In 1892, the Georgian political arena did not only include nationalist movements, it also covered the leftist associations. For instance, the left oriented part of Georgian political movements belonged to the *Mesame Dasi* (the Third Company), it became the immediate predecessor of Georgian social democracy.⁸⁶ Mouravi names *Mesame Dasi* as “the first Marxist group” in the Georgian political arena.⁸⁷ In order to analyze how leftist movements appeared in

⁸³ Wheatley, *The Status of Minority Languages in Georgia And the Relevance of Models from Other European States*, European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI Working Paper #26) p.4

⁸⁴ Nodia and Scholtbach, p.91.

⁸⁵ Ibid

⁸⁶ Ibid

⁸⁷ Mouravi, p.11.

Georgia just before the 1905 revolution, Mouravi depicts that “Seven years later the Tiflis committee of the All-Russian Social Democratic Labour Party was formed, dominated by a Menshevik, legalist wing, led by Noe Jordania.”⁸⁸ Despite their differences, most of these groups were influenced by liberal ideas, later, opposed the Tsarist autocracy and saw their primary goal as educating the Georgian society.⁸⁹ On the other hand, all these groups addressed different preferences of the Georgian society. For instance, some focused on the “national” issue, preserving Georgian ethno-cultural identity against the assimilationist policies of the Russian empire known as “Russification”.⁹⁰ Others reinforced the social issue in line of the left-radical ideas of the time. This difference became later the main division within the pre-Soviet Georgian political class that existed between the nationalists and the socialists.⁹¹ Apparently, since the early 20th century, the nationalist sentiments have already emerged among Georgian people before the Bolshevik Revolution. Also, there was a strong Menshevik orientation, which had social democratic tendencies in the Georgian society.

As a result of Tsarist authoritarianism, legal party organizations and illegal settlement reached its peak during the 1905-1907 revolution. Also, not only Georgian people, but also the peoples that were ruled by the Tsarist regime were

⁸⁸Mouravi, p.11.

⁸⁹Nodia and Scholtbach, p. 90.

⁹⁰Ibid, p. 91.

⁹¹Ibid

experiencing turmoil; therefore, a demand for system-based transformation engendered a ripe environment for the Russian Tsardom to be taken down. For instance, there were many armed groups that were led by the forming political groups among Georgian people, as social democrats gathered many people to rise against the Tsarist rule.⁹² After the Revolution in February 1917, The Russian Tsar, Nicolai II, was deposed and replaced by a provisional government. Later, the Bolshevik government gained full control in October 1917, when the fate of the Georgian people changed. Shortly after the Revolution in 1917, Transcaucasian Commissariat was established as a local administration, then, it transformed into the Transcaucasian Federation, which were unable to survive. The downfall of the Russian Empire collided with the emergence of the first independent Georgian state between 1918 and 1921.⁹³ On the other hand, between 1917 and 1919, the Georgian political spectrum included the Social Democrats, the Social Federalists, the Socialist Revolutionaries and the newly created the National Democrats.⁹⁴ The idea of establishing a parliamentary republic started to be discussed for the first time. Meanwhile, the collapse of the tsarist regime in 1917 led to the election of an independent Social Democratic

⁹²Ibid

⁹³To see more: FiruzKazemzadeh. *The Struggle for Transcaucasia (1917-1921)*, New York, Philosophical Library, 1951; Hyperion Press, Westport, Conn., 1981; Ronald G. Suny. *op. cit.*; ZurabAvalov (Avalishvili). *Independence of Georgia in International Politics: 1918-1921*, London, Headley Brothers, 1940; Chalidze Publications, New York, 1982/Westport, Connecticut: Hyperion Press, Inc. 1990; Karl Kautsky, *Georgia: A Social-Democratic Peasant Republic – Impressions and Observations*. International Bookshops Limited, London: 1921.

⁹⁴Ibid

(Menshevik) government⁹⁵ in March 1918, a period that was frequently invoked by nationalist sentiments in the 1990s as Georgia moved once again toward independence.⁹⁶

During the first elections of the Constituent Assembly, the Social Democratic Party gained the majority of the votes and it constituted the backbone of new state structure. The Social Democrats in the Georgian parliament decided Noe Zhordania to be the republic's first president and adopted a democratic constitution.⁹⁷ Ronald Grigor Suny defines the Georgian society's ideological orientation towards Mensheviks as follows;

Their achievement in building a Georgian political nation was extraordinary. Their support among all classes of the Georgian people was genuine. And however ephemeral their accomplishments in the brief episode of national independence, the most impressive testimony to their successes is the fact that they could not be dislodged from Georgia except by a militarily superior force from outside.⁹⁸

The ruling group in the country developed independently from the Bolsheviks, which created its own political movement tended to the Social Democrat

⁹⁵The leading role was played by Georgian Mensheviks (32 members out of overall 125), Armenian Dashnaks (27) and Azeri Musavatists (30), as well as Esers (Socialist-Revolutionaries – 19), with just a few Bolsheviks (4).

⁹⁶Slider, *Democratization in Georgia, Conflict, Cleavage and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, p.158.

⁹⁷Ibid

⁹⁸Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, p. 207.

Mensheviks.⁹⁹ In May 1920, Lenin signed a treaty with the Georgian government recognizing its independence.¹⁰⁰ However, the independence of the Democratic Republic of Georgia lasted until 1921, when the Red Army invaded Tbilisi after Azerbaijan and Armenia. The Georgian political system began to be dominated by the Communist Party afterwards.¹⁰¹ Nodia analyzes the first independence period of Georgia as “This political identity, as the ‘national symbolics’ representing both a state and a community, would long outlast the institutional vestiges of the Republic following its invasion by the Bolshevik Red Army on 14 February 1921.”¹⁰² Then, Georgia remained in the Soviet Union for seventy years.¹⁰³

The importance of the first independence period is that Georgia experienced the first state building process as a result of the nationalist movement, which was started by the Georgian intelligentsia during the 19th century. Moreover, the first independent state would be a strong inspiration for the second independence movement led by the Georgian dissident movement, which appeared in the last period of Soviet ruling because the second independence struggle during the late

⁹⁹Ibid, p.234.

¹⁰⁰Slider, *Democratization in Georgia, Conflict, Cleavage and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, p.158.

¹⁰¹Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, p. 235.

¹⁰²Nodia, G. (1998) ‘The Conflict in Abkhazia: National Projects and Political Circumstances’, in B. Coppieters, G. Nodia and Y. Anchabadze (eds) *Georgians and Abkhazians: The Search for a Peace Settlement*, Brussels: VUB Press. Available online: <http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/Georgians/>

¹⁰³ICG Europe Report, *Georgia: What Now?* p.2.

period of the Soviet era was also motivated by the revitalization of Georgian national identity and nation building process as the continuation of the first independence experience between 1918 and 1921.

The Bolshevik administration brought to an end the Menshevik rule in Georgia. After the downfall of Tbilisi, the Menshevik Government retreated to Batumi without any serious resistance, finally fleeing to Europe on 16 March 1921.¹⁰⁴ On 21 May Georgia's new Bolshevik Government signed a treaty with the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic, and Georgia became part of the Soviet Socialist Republic, subsequently a constituent part of the Transcaucasian Federation.¹⁰⁵ Most of the prominent Menshevik leaders and members of Georgian intelligentsia, who remained in the country, were arrested by Bolshevik forces in January 1922 because Georgian intelligentsia was perceived as a potential threat to Soviet ideology within their nationalist discourse. Suny depicts the position of Georgian intellectuals as follows: "in the eyes of the central party leaders, the Georgian intelligentsia was petty-bourgeois and nationalistic in its outlook, and an intense struggle had to be waged against the remnants of Menshevism."¹⁰⁶ The Soviet administration took the precaution to suppress possible nationalist movements. For instance, administratively, as a major step to suppressing nationalist movements in the Caucasus, the republics of the region

¹⁰⁴Mouravi, p.12.

¹⁰⁵Ibid

¹⁰⁶Grigor Suny, *The Making of Georgian Nation*, p.241.

formed under the Transcaucasus regional committee, which was called *Zakkraikom* from 1922 to 1926.¹⁰⁷ As regard to *Zakkraikom*, the tie between Georgian land and Moscow had to be tighten in order to maintain direct control. Conversely, as a counter movement due to Moscow's entrenched controlling policy, the *Damkomi* was founded in 1921 by the underground political foundations, which were suppressed by the Bolshevik administration, as the main dynamic of the rebellious movement in 1924.¹⁰⁸ According to Nodia and Scholtbach, "after 1924 rebellion, the prominent leaders of *Damkomi* were either arrested or emigrated so that Georgian political formation and independence movement were vanished."¹⁰⁹ Also, there were some rebel movements in some regions of Georgia such as Guria, Kakheti and Svaneti against Bolshevik rule; however, they were also brutally suppressed.¹¹⁰

On the other hand, one of the major policies of Soviet rule was to solve national question in order to strengthen Soviet ideology because the national question was seen as the major obstacle against obscuring "proletarian consciousness". Lenin explains national question as follows;

The principle of nationality is historically inevitable in bourgeois society and, taking this society into due account, the Marxist fully

¹⁰⁷Slider, *Democratization in Georgia, Conflict, Cleavage and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, p.158.

¹⁰⁸Nodia and Scholtbach, p.93.

¹⁰⁹Ibid

¹¹⁰Mouravi, p.12.

recognizes the historical legitimacy of national movements. But to prevent this recognition from becoming an apologia of nationalism, it must be strictly limited to what is progressive in such movements, in order that this recognition may not lead to bourgeois ideology obscuring proletarian consciousness.¹¹¹

Therefore, between the years 1922 and 1936, Soviet administration simultaneously promoted national autonomy while subordinating national cadres and elites in order to consolidate centralized rule of the Soviet Union.¹¹² The Soviet nationalities policy had two major components, which were national territorial administration and *korenizatsiia* (nativization). As a result, different administrative units were formed based on different nationalities under Soviet rule and the local party leadership was built to ensure the Soviet regime. However, it led to different ethnic groups to build their national identity instead of solving national question. Gachechiladze unfolds how the dysfunctional Soviet attempt remained to solve the national problem by pointing out “Nevertheless in all the Union republics the local party leaderships in spite of the solemn declaration of their adherence to internationalism practiced some sort of ante-state nationalism and actually worked on the forging of new nations.”¹¹³ As a result of the Soviet territorial and nativization projects, four different types of units were created to order hierarchical power relations such as Autonomous Regions (AR), Autonomous Oblasts (AO), Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republics (ASSR) and

¹¹¹Lenin, *Critical Remarks on the National Question*, p.35.

¹¹²Demetriou, *Rising From the Ashes? The Difficult (Re)Birth of the Georgian State, Development and Change*, p.866.

¹¹³Gachechiladze, *National Idea, State-Building and Boundaries in the Post-Soviet Space (the case of Georgia)*, p.52.

Soviet Socialist Republics (SSR). In this sense, the Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic was established in 25 February 1921. Demetriou classifies the structure of these units as “Although such institutions permitted national historical, linguistic, and cultural development, and also a certain degree of national self-administration, in practice power was exercised at the level of the Georgian Communist Party (GCP).”¹¹⁴ After these new policies and new institutionalization of the Communist Party structure, the ties between the constituent republics and the center were fortified. Although these units were claimed to provide a space for national self-administration, it allowed the regional structure of the Communist Party take control. Meanwhile, the political and social movements were dispersed gradually as being labeled as anti-Soviet in order to secure the Soviet regime. However, it did not stop the new dissident movement from emerging in Georgia in the early 1970s due to the propagation of ‘samizdat’¹¹⁵ literature and calls to defend national identity, cultural and natural heritage.¹¹⁶ In April 1977, a young philologist Zviad Gamsakhurdia, who became the first president of independent Georgia later, was arrested for anti-Soviet activities.¹¹⁷ After his arrest, the dissident movement in Georgia reversed until Gorbachev’s *glasnost* and *perestroika* policies in 1980s.

¹¹⁴Demetriou, *Rising From the Ashes? The Difficult (Re)Birth of the Georgian State, Development and Change*, p.866.

¹¹⁵The secret publication and distribution of government-banned literature in the former Soviet Union

¹¹⁶Mouravi, p. 13.

¹¹⁷Ibid

3.1.1 Political Movements in the Pre-Independence Period

The Soviet Union entered into a new phase with the Gorbachev's *glasnost* and *perestroika* policies, which were aimed at bringing a new breath for the system in order to survive. Also, it caused a new distribution of power in the Georgian political arena because in 1985 Shevardnadze was appointed Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs and his former deputy, Jumber Patiashvili, became the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Georgia.¹¹⁸ *Glasnost* and *perestroika* triggered the re-emergence of national independence movements, which was dominated by dissident intellectuals and anti-Soviet discourse. As a result, Soviet rule was made an illegal occupation and symbols of Georgian nationhood and early independence of the Georgian people between 1918 and 1921 were underscored in order to mobilize people for independence activities from the Soviet Union. Demetriou discovers the re-emergence of the nationalist movement in Georgia during the late years of the Soviet rule by claiming that "Despite the professed 'national-socialism' of the GCP, the emotional resonance of 'dissident nationalism' calling for a return to the untainted pre-Soviet past forestalled co-operation between pro-independence activists and the Communist Party officials, the *nomenklatura*."¹¹⁹ As a result of Gorbachev's *glasnost* and *perestroika* policies, the first dissident movements started emerging in Georgia at the end of

¹¹⁸Mouravi, p.14.

¹¹⁹Demetriou, p.867.

1987.¹²⁰ Unsurprisingly, these opposition groups were highly motivated by the nationalist-orientations that survive with the inspiration of the first independence period between 1918 and 1921. One of the early crucial opposition movements was the Ilya Chavchavadze Society, founded in October 1987 by the former dissidents such as Chanturia and Tsereteli and Chkheidze.¹²¹ Its members covered both dissidents and the members of liberal intelligentsia. Also, another movement was the Helsinki Union, which has dedicated itself to the preservation of the Georgian culture. The founders of The Helsinki Union later affected the fate of the country because the Helsinki Union movement was led by Gamsakhurdia and Merab Kostava. They later formed the Society of St. Ilia the Righteous and attracted popular support, due to his explicit anti-Communist rhetoric and nationalist slogans. In 1988, the most radical leaders decided to break away from the Ilya Chavchavadze Society and Chanturia consolidated National-Democratic Party and Georgia's National Independence Party was founded by Tsereteli.¹²² Also, there were the Liberal-Democratic Party, Union of Georgia's Traditionalists, and the Popular Front. All these dissident groups were elite-led movements, which refused to cooperate with the Georgian Communist Party due to its links with the central authority. On the other hand, the reaction of the Soviet authority against the dissident movements took place in several ways such as the disruption of the public demonstrators, dismissing people from their jobs,

¹²⁰Wheatley, p.42.

¹²¹Wheatley, p.42.

¹²²Ibid

investigating from the secret service, exiling from Moscow and imprisonment.¹²³ Aves claims that “Due to their refusal to co-operate with the GCP, most of these groups lacked access to the resources (material and skill-based) or the political platforms which would allow them to establish viable political organizations and agendas.”¹²⁴ Also, the decisions in the dissident movements were made by the leaders. Demetriou describes the Georgian dissident movements as “Co-operation within the pro-independence movement, moreover, was stymied by a style of political organization that promoted fragmentation and prevented coalition-building, let alone coherent political programs. Most political groups revolved around charismatic leaders whose personal quests for power led to internecine quarrelling and organizational fission.”¹²⁵

The 9th April protests were organized by political organizations such as the National Democratic Party, the National Independence Party and the Society of St. Ilya the Righteous through the Georgian path to the independence. Before the 9th April event, the Abkhazians demanded to be separate SSR and this situation inflamed both the ethnic tensions in Georgia and speedup the dissolution process of Georgia from the Union. During the April events, twenty Georgians, mostly

¹²³To see more: Rubenstein, Joshua. (1985). *Soviet Dissidents: Their Struggle for Human Rights*, 2nd edition, Boston: Beacon Press.

Kowalewski, (1987). "The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics." In *International Handbook of Human Rights*, ed. Jack Donnelly and Rhoda E. Howard. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

¹²⁴Aves, J. (1992) “The Rise and Fall of the Georgian Nationalist Movement, 1987-91” in G. Hosking, J. Aves and P. Duncan (eds) *The Road to Post-Communism: Independent Political Movements in the Soviet Union, 1985-1991*, pp. 157-77, p.166.

¹²⁵Demetriou, p.867.

women and children, were killed in the attack, also, the Soviet military authorities and the central press attempted to blame the demonstrators themselves, and opposition leaders were arrested.¹²⁶ The April events are regarded as one of the major initiators of the independence movement of Georgia because of the radicalized political environment. After the April events, nationalistic sentiment increased and Gamsakhurdia was perceived as a national hero by the Georgian population. Subsequently, a two-round parliamentary election was held in October and November 1990, Gamsakhurdia's Round Table — Free Georgia (*Mrgvali Magida — Tavisupali Sakartvelo*) won 53 percent of the vote and 155 out of 250 seats, while the Georgian Communist Party won 29 percent and 64 seats.¹²⁷ Only the Round Table-Free Georgia bloc and the Georgian Communist Party won seats on the party list, while the Popular Front gained only 1.9 per cent of the vote and failed to win any seats on the party list system, managed to win 12 seats in single-mandate constituencies.¹²⁸

The October-November elections were important because there were almost more than thirty political parties and ten separate electoral blocs running for election and it was the first multi-party election that Georgia ever had. For instance, Parsons and Jones depict the political environment during 1990 election as the turning point for the democratization process and early experience of a multi-

¹²⁶Slider, p.161.

¹²⁷Demetriou, p.868.

¹²⁸Wheatley, p.52.

party system in Georgia.¹²⁹ In addition, the victory of the Round Table Coalition was proof of the national sentiment of Georgian voters because they decided to elect Gamsakhurdia's party with a considerable number of votes. The result of the 1990 elections indicated the clear-cut success of nationalist discourse and eradication of Soviet dominance due to the radicalized Georgian political environment and the weak position of the Georgian Communist Party without the support of Moscow. Almost less than one year after the 1990 elections, in 31 March 1991, Georgia held a referendum to declare its independence and 90.08% of the Georgian people voted in its favor. The Georgian Parliament passed a declaration of independence on April 9, 1991, in effect restoring the 1918–21 Georgian state and a new era began for Georgia, which had won its second period of the independence.

3.2 Political Context of the Post-Independence Period

3.2.1 The Gamsakhurdia Era

After the declaration of independent Georgia, on 26 May 1991, Gamsakhurdia became the President of Georgia, with 86.5% of the votes cast.¹³⁰ Gamsakhurdia played a tremendous role organizing massive pro-independence rallies in Georgia

¹²⁹Jones and Parsons, *Georgia and Georgians' in The Nationalities in Question in the Post-Soviet States*, p.303.

¹³⁰Mouravi, p.14.

between 1987 and 1990 with Merab Kostava. He gained the popular support in the Georgian political environment due to his nationalist and anti-Communist rhetoric built-upon nationalism and his powerful dissident attitude. However, except for his success during the independence struggle of Georgia, his presidency brought about several challenges such as an authoritarianism-oriented one man rule, a general increase in street violence¹³¹ and a civil war. His overemphasis on the nationalist discourse could not maintain national unity in Georgia and it resulted in civil war. Although he built clientelistic relations in order to strengthen his position as the president, it did not suffice to hold power after his strategic mistakes resulting in civil war and a coup directed to Gorbachev. In order to solidify his authority, he refused to work with strong personalities in positions of authority and rejected anyone who had any connection to Soviet rule, including professionals often calling them “occupiers” allegedly.¹³² Instead, he preferred to bring his close friends to the higher posts of the state is evident in the clientelistic base of the Georgian political system. Following this pattern, he appointed Tengiz Kitovani as the head of the National Guard, this was established as the armed force of newly independent Georgia. Later, Tengiz Sigua became prime minister with Gamsakhurdia’s consent. Areshidze explains this situation by denoting “Instead of seeking strong managers, Gamsakhurdia appointed to positions of great responsibility

¹³¹Wheatley, p.53.

¹³²Areshidze, *Democracy and Autocracy in Eurasia: Georgia in Transition*, p.21.

inexperienced and incompetent men who failed in their own careers.”¹³³

Apparently, although he had popular support due to his role in the struggle for independence in Georgia, he decided to establish a one-party era, rather than initiate democratic political system.

Not only did his authoritarian tendencies to build new political system continue, he also continued to develop a nationalistic tone after the independence. Although Gamsakhurdia initially secured the overwhelming support of the ethnic Georgian population, his nationalist rhetoric alienated him from both non-Georgians and the intelligentsia.¹³⁴ Wheatley summarizes the earlier times of independent Georgia and Gamsakhurdia’s emergence as a political leader as follows:

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 circle fragmented and the first non-communist leader was driven from power in a military coup.¹³⁵

Gamsakhurdia’s rhetoric was based on the nationalist elements with emphasizing Georgian ethnicity. His hardliner political discourse of the nationalist sentiments created internal tension towards ethnically non-Georgian people. For instance,

¹³³Ibid

¹³⁴Mouravi, p.15.

¹³⁵Wheatley, p.25.

Suny describes one of his major political mistakes as being his overtone on the national issue as “Gamsakhurdia both reflected the militancy of many of the nationalists and inflamed it by his inflexible response to the non-Georgians, whom he accused of being stooges of Moscow.”¹³⁶ A day after the Georgian Supreme Soviet voted to dissolve South Ossetia’s autonomous status; after a shooting incident in Tskhinvali happened resulting in a state of emergency in South Ossetia declared by the Georgian government.¹³⁷ Then, Georgian forces entered into Tskhinvali and arrested the newly-elected chairman of the South Ossetian Parliament, Tomez Kumbekov and the civil war ensued, which caused hundreds of deaths and the expulsion of thousands of people. As a result, both Abkhazia and South Ossetia declared their independence. Mitchell explains the problem of non-ethnically Georgian people as “The Abkhaz and Ossetian opponents of Georgia were supported by Russia, but their actions can also be partly attributed to Gamsakhurdia’s heated nationalist rhetoric.”¹³⁸ Also, Adjara as a third region declared de facto independence from Tbilisi during the presidency of Gamsakhurdia and it remained semi-autonomous until May 2004.¹³⁹ The presidency of Gamsakhurdia failed to develop a discourse, which covered ethnically non-Georgian people as a part of the country. Instead, the non-Georgians were depicted as “foreigners,” recent arrivals living on authentically

¹³⁶Wheatley, p.54.

¹³⁷Wheatley, p.53.

¹³⁸Mitchell, *Uncertain Democracy*, p.23.

¹³⁹Ibid

Georgian land, and as more loyal to the imperial Russian power than to Georgia.¹⁴⁰ As a result of his failure to build a new rhetoric, which would have embraced all people regardless of ethnic differences, he increased the tension and did not show any vibrant leadership skills to manage the consequence of the civil war afterwards.

Although Gamsakhurdia did not have to face the difficulties led by the parliamentary opposition, which was under his control, he had to deal with the *Mkhedrioni* (horsemen). The *Mkhedrioni* was nationalist and anti-Soviet paramilitary group and led by the former bank robber, Jaba Ioseliani.¹⁴¹ In 1990, Gamsakhurdia began losing his loyal followers. For instance, his prime minister, Tengiz Sigua resigned within a short period of time after his appointment to the office. Anti-Gamsakhurdia demonstrations began in Tbilisi on 2 September by the National Democratic Party, led by Chanturia. Also, the August 1991 coup against Gorbachev in Moscow would be named as a second major turning point after civil war for Gamsakhurdia as well in Georgian politics. After Gamsakhurdia's order for National Guard to turn its weapons, National Guard commander Kitovani withdrew his troops from Tbilisi. Later, the opposition groups decided to join an insecure coalition and demanded Gamsakhurdia to resign and declare a new parliamentary election. Unsurprisingly, he refused to

¹⁴⁰Suny, *Elite Transformation in Late-Soviet and Post-Soviet Transcaucasia, or What Happens When the Ruling Class Can't Rule?*, p.157.

¹⁴¹Wheatley, p.45.

compromise. In order to analyze his leadership position in newly emerged Georgia, Nodia depicts;

Being a tough one for any Georgian leader, this was particularly challenging for Gamsakhurdia. When he came to power, the radical faction of the independence movement dominated political discourse; but he now was the head of state, not an opposition figure. In his new position, he had to make a lot of concessions and compromises. Once he tried to act in this way, however, he came into contradiction with his previous image. He was elected as a hero, as a person who sacrificed a lot for the fight for independence, who had been in jail and suffered for his cause; a politician who had to maneuver and make compromises did not fit in into this image.¹⁴²

Apparently, although he was successful as a nationalist dissident for the independence of Georgia, he was not able to show at similar success as a politician and states-man in the early state building process of Georgia. In this sense, December 22nd became a beginning of a new era in Georgia after an intense clash that took place in central Tbilisi, due to the violence caused by government troops to stop demonstrations against the government. Later, the National Guard and *Mkhedrioni* surrounded Gamsakhurdia and his followers in the parliament. Finally, Gamsakhurdia yielded and after his departure Prime Minister Sigua, Kitovani, who was the head of the National Guard, and *Mkhedrioni* leader Jaba Ioseliani formed a Military Council to take the control. However, within a short period of time, the Political Consultative Council and a larger State Council were established in order to sustain more influential leadership. Consequently,

¹⁴²Nodia, "Dynamics of State-Building in Georgia", Conference Paper, http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/publication/2370/dynamics_of_statebuilding_in_georgia.html?breadcrumb=%2Fpublication%2Fby_type%2Fbook_chapter%3Fpage%3D42

Gamsakhurdia's hard-liner nationalistic policy dragged him into the sudden overthrow as a result of a joint act by the leading politicians coalesced to overthrow the elected president and invite Shevardnadze, seen as a more conciliatory and prestigious figure, to reunify and pacify the fractured nation.¹⁴³ Thus, one may claim that the Georgian political arena was shaped by different people such as Kitovani and Sigua. A clientelist circle created by Gamsakhurdia, did not hesitate to overthrow him due to his non-strategic position as a president who invited both a coup and civil war. His lack of leadership skills as president, his overemphasis on nationalism and eagerness to establish clientelistic circles in order to keep power as well as his insufficient political ground to control the civil war concluded with his removal from the presidency. Then, Georgia witnessed another transformation of power from the nationalist line through a more moderate and mild political leader, whose name was Eduard Shevardnadze.

3.2.2 The Shevardnadze Era

After Gamsakhurdia's forced removal from office, Georgia was about to enter into another phase. As a result of the coup, which overthrew Gamsakhurdia; Kitovani, Ioseliani, Sigua collaborated with Shevardnadze and established a State Council, which carried an influential role in Georgian politics. Shevardnadze did not walk the same path as Gamsakhurdia in terms of presidential skills. Instead of using nationalist discourse and precluding opposition in the Georgian political

¹⁴³Suny, p.161.

arena, he decided to create different power zones by inviting different political leaders in Georgian politics. Therefore, he created a freedom of space for his presidency by compromising and conflicting with different elites at different times. The Georgian political environment managed to have more of a balanced environment in terms of different power poles as compared to Gamsakhurdia.

After the withdrawal of Gamsakhurdia's presidency and just before Shevardnadze's rule, the State Council decided to have a new election without exclusion of Gamsakhurdia and his supporters. Subsequently, Sigua became the Prime Minister, Shevardnadze became the Chairman of the Council, and the other two remained as the heads of their military organizations. The political environment in May 1992 indicated the number of the representatives in the Council increased from 68 to 92, and the representation covered more than 30 political parties and 20 social organizations.¹⁴⁴ The excessive number of political parties and political movements in the Georgian Parliament indicated the fragmented, minor and ineffective features of the Georgian political parties for acting as a joint movement to balance the ruling party. On the 6th November 1992, Shevardnadze became the head of the Georgian state. Moreover, he held the executive and the legislative power to appoint the ministers. It also indicates another powerful president position in the Georgian political arena, which carried similar features with the Gamsakhurida era. Shevardnadze's parliamentary decisions covered various fractions. Shevardnadze pursued another strategy to

¹⁴⁴Wheatley

maintain his power by forming new state elite including the communists, non-communists and even some paramilitary groups in order to build a fragmented political arena. The new cabinet of Shevardnadze was composed of the former circle of *nomenklatura*, who mainly were his former fellows from the Soviet Union. Related to the role of *nomenklatura*, Zurab Chiaberashvili and Gigi Tevzadze claim that “The *nomenklatura* filled executive authority almost entirely, partly via their representation in the legislature provided by the parliamentary faction.”¹⁴⁵ Also, as well as the prominent ex-communist circle, the paramilitary leaders, Kitovani of the National Guard and Khachisvili of the *Mkhedrioni*, were appointed as the Ministers of Internal Affairs and Defense.¹⁴⁶ It indicates that the clientelistic circle within same political elites were still discernible in the presidency of Shevardnadze.

The major difference of the Shevardnadze era was that the power was spread among the different political poles, which extended from the former communist zone through the nationalist facet as compared to the presidency of Gamsakhurdia. However, despite the number of different political leaders that were seen in the Georgian political arena, Shevardnadze did not allow them to challenge his political power. Mouravi depicts Shevardnadze’s leadership as an “Experienced statesman skilled in political intrigue, Shevardnadze gradually

¹⁴⁵Zurab Chiaberashvili and Gigi Tevzadze, *Power Elites in Georgia: Old and New*, p.3.

¹⁴⁶Wheatley

outsmarted his opponents and strengthened his grip on power.”¹⁴⁷ In this sense, Shevardnadze acted as the axis of the different poles in order to strengthen his presidency in the Georgian political system. In other words, he formed a multi-polar political environment in Georgia and positioned himself to balance the different powerful leaders. Therefore, he established a weak government and reinforced the importance of his position in order to control the governmental body and guarantee his individual role as the president.

In the meantime, during the Shevardnadze’s rule, the Georgian political system gained another party, which was the Citizens’ Union of Georgia (CUG) established by Shevardnadze in 1993 so as to create a solid maneuvering zone in the Georgian political system for himself. Most CUG members were former *Komsomol* activists, Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) *apparachiks* and *nomenklatura*, businessmen of all types. Specifically, the CUG was an elite-led, strong leader based party, which Shevardnadze held the central authority in terms of determining its officials and providing necessary resources.¹⁴⁸ To analyze the CUG in detail, Zurab Chiaberashvili and Gigi Tevzadze define the position of the CUG in the Georgian political spectrum as “The Citizens’ Union was ideologically eclectic and, by its structure, loosely articulated. It has been described as a *nomenklatura*-based party, among other things, trying to defend

¹⁴⁷Mouravi, p.15.

¹⁴⁸Wheatley

the interests of big business.”¹⁴⁹ As for the relationship between the party leader and the members of the party, the CUG did not bring any alternative to dissolve the leadership-based party. Wheatley depicts the relationship between the party leaders and the political party members in the Georgian political party system as “democratic centralism”, which indicates “total subordination of ordinary party members to the leadership”.¹⁵⁰ The power of the president was large as compared to the role of the parliament or prime minister. Therefore, the power of the president was easily attributed his party. It was also valid for the CUG, while Shevardnadze was in office and the support of the ruling party grew within the role of state bureaucracy, much of it was inherited from the previous regime.¹⁵¹

Also, between 1996 and 2001, the Georgian political system had nine active parties, which were the Citizens’ Union of Georgia (CUG) led by Shevardnadze, 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). Since its independence, all the Georgian political parties rely on the strong characteristics of their leaders as one of the major dynamics of the Georgian political system. Although there were many parties in the Georgian political spectrum during Shevardnadze era, they

¹⁴⁹Chiaberashvili and Tevzadze,*Power Elites in Georgia: Old and New*, p.12.

¹⁵⁰Wheatley

¹⁵¹Chiaberashvili and Tevzadze,*Power Elites in Georgia: Old and New*, p.2.

were not developed in terms of democratic values. Therefore, the political system in Georgia was not functioning well. Broers depicts the Georgian political parties as “they remained weak political actors, mainly because of differentiation in their capacity to mobilize resources and they were personality based”.¹⁵² Furthermore, Zurab Chiaberashvili and Gigi Tevzadze denote that

The life of Georgia’s parliament and elections has been dominated by blocs and alliances of political parties, of politicians who are not members of any political party, and even members of some political party purportedly being in opposition—but tacitly assisting the ruling group—or as groups coalescing to support the administration.¹⁵³

Explicitly, the Georgian political parties were dominated by the political elites, small groups instead of institutionalized, ideology-based political parties. At this point, Jones defines the position of political elites in Georgia as follows;

In Georgia, many government officials, familiar with Soviet traditions of hierarchy and clientalism, defend ideas of government-directed harmony and restricted participation. On the other, parliamentarians educated abroad (known as the “*Mississipdaleulni*,” or those who have drunk from the Mississippi), and who may also have been formerly active in Georgia’s NGO community, favor pluralist equilibrium and policy intervention by independent associations.¹⁵⁴

Also, the CUG was able to form a democratic zone in the Georgian political environment. However, it caused new political elites to emerge. As well as the devotion of the party leader, the CUG brought about young and western educated political elites to emerge as a young reformer wing inside the party. Zurab

¹⁵²Broers, p.336.

¹⁵³Chiaberashvili and Tevzadze,p.11.

¹⁵⁴Jones, *Democracy from Below? Interest Groups in Georgian Society*, pp. 42-73.

Zhvania, who was the pro-Western secretary general of the CUG, brought some young and Western educated Georgians to the country to strengthen the young reformer wing inside the party. Nodia and Scholtbach claim that “the team of young reformers headed by Zhvania constituted one of the most important centres of power within the Shevardnadze system of balance.”¹⁵⁵ Within a short period, Mikheil Saakashvili first emerged in the Georgian political stage as being included on the CUG’s election lists.¹⁵⁶ The young reformer wing of the CUG found several opportunities in terms of taking democratic steps in Georgia such as their incentive towards having drastic reforms in the judiciary, admission to the Council of Europe as the first country in the South Caucasus in 1999.¹⁵⁷

Shevardnadze’s presidency entered into a process of downfall in the beginning of 2000s. Meanwhile, the reformer wing of the CUG noticed that the party began losing its legitimacy and they began to disassociate themselves from Shevardnadze in order to create a balancing zone, which would counterweight any sudden change in the Georgian presidency. Mitchell defines the political position of Shevardnadze in his last years as “Yet, as conditions in Georgia deteriorated during the last years of his administration, and as his closest protégés became his political opposition, it was increasingly difficult for Shevardnadze to

¹⁵⁵Nodia and Scholtbach, p.13.

¹⁵⁶Wheatley

¹⁵⁷Nodia and Scholtbach, p.14.

maintain any kind of legitimacy or political strength domestically.”¹⁵⁸ At this point, Mikheil Saakashvili, who was one of the promising young politicians, maneuvered wisely during the collapse of Shevardnadze’s ruling. Afterwards, in 2001, Saakashvili established the United National Movement, which was the major opposition movement against the presidency of Shevardnadze. Also, there was another opposition bloc, which was the All-Georgian Union for Revival. The union covered the Union of Georgian Traditionalists, who aimed at the restoration of the Georgian monarchy; the Socialist Party of Georgia; the former Communist Party leader Patiashvili; and the XXI Century, supporters of former President Gamsakhurdia.¹⁵⁹ The main political discourse of the bloc, which was led by Abashidze, was the elimination of the corruption and restoring the public services. However, the major and surprising feature of the Union was its collaboration with Shevardnadze.¹⁶⁰ Meanwhile, Shevardnadze replaced his party, the CUG, with a newly formed party, New Georgia, which reinforced a program that covered independence, Georgia’s integration into Europe, closer relations with the United States and NATO, the liberalization of the economy, and increases in salaries.¹⁶¹ However, the leadership of Shevardnadze did not offer a solid ground to realize all these aims. For instance Muskelishvili and Jorjoliani depict that

¹⁵⁸Lincoln, Georgia’s Rose Revolution, p.343.

¹⁵⁹Chiaberashvili and Tevzadze,p.12.

¹⁶⁰Ibid

¹⁶¹Ibid, p.13.

Starting from the year 2000 the government was on the defensive, providing no real solutions to existing social problems. Shevardnadze was not able to achieve any meaningful progress towards democracy and good governance. Neither was he inclined to promote significant changes in any other area. Democracy promotion and technical assistance activities, aiming at various reforms, had a very limited influence on governance.¹⁶²

In 2001, apart from the All-Georgian Union for Revival, there were four major parties or political movements that opposed the New Georgia in the parliamentary elections. The National Movement, led by Saakashvili, the United Democrats, led by Burjanadze with Zhvania's control, the Labour Party, which had so-called leftist claims, the Industrialists and the New Rights Party, which was established by David Gamkrelidze and Levan Gacechiladze, who were young and influential businessmen, located in the center right. The National Movement gained its momentum within the resignation of Saakashvili from the post as the Minister of Justice and the government of Shevardnadze. Explicitly, the National Movement, the United Democrats and the New Rights Party had their early roots in the Shevardnadze's party, the CUG because most of their leaders were the young and western-educated people, who were brought by Zhvania to the Georgian political arena as the reformer wing of the CUG.

The political environment in Georgia came to a turning point within the parliamentary elections held on November 2, 2003. After the election, the Georgian Election Commission declared that the victory belonged to the parties collaborating with Shevardnadze. However, all the opposition groups believed

¹⁶²Muskelishvili and Jorjoliani, *Georgia's Ongoing Struggle for a Better Future Continued Democracy Promotion through Civil Society Development*, p.691.

that the result was falsified in favor of Shevardnadze. Mitchell underlines the problems during the November 2, 2003 parliamentary election as rampant ballot stuffing, multiple voting, late poll openings, and ballots not being delivered to some polling places, and voter lists that included dead people but excluded thousands of live voters.¹⁶³ According to the Global Strategy Group, which was a US firm for conducting the ongoing elections, the National Movement gained 26.4 percent; For a New Georgia won 19 percent; Labor gained 17.5 percent and the United Democrats led by Burjanadze obtained 10.4 percent; and Revival 9 percent. According to the exit poll, New Rights just cleared the 7 percent threshold. The organization polled over 25,000 voters at 413 polling stations across Georgia.¹⁶⁴ The election results showed that among the opposition parties, the United National Movement led by Saakashvili was the winner, however, the United Democrats led by Burjanadze and Zhvania did not get the major percentage of the votes as well as they expected.¹⁶⁵ On the other hand, the elections were not able to get the international acceptance due to its inefficiencies in terms of free and fair election conditions in a democratic sense. At this point, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Georgia declared that the group's monitoring mission found that the parliamentary elections fell short of a number of international standards. Also, Bruce George, who was a spokesman for the OSCE monitoring mission, claimed that “These elections have regrettably

¹⁶³ Mitchell, *Georgia's Rose Revolution*, p.343.

¹⁶⁴ Sershen, “Chaotic Election Day in Georgia Produces Contradictory Results”, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav110303.shtml>

¹⁶⁵ Mitchell, p.343.

been insufficient to enhance the credibility of either the electoral or the democratic process.”¹⁶⁶ As a result, the opposition parties did not accept the results of the election and they claimed that it was falsified by the supporters of Shevardnadze. They called for a new election and the president’s resignation. Consequently, the Georgian political system entered into a new phase, which dragged the sides to the Rose Revolution within a short period of time.

3.3 The Rose Revolution

In this part of the chapter, the November 2003 elections will be examined within the dynamics towards the Rose Revolution. The Rose Revolution can be identified as one of the major corner stones in the Georgian political party system due to the mobilization of the Georgian people within the leading role of the United National Movement. The major factors that dragged Georgia into the Rose Revolution can be identified as the weaknesses of the Shevardnadze presidency including high levels of corruption, economic difficulties, and lack of democratic political environment. To put the question whether the Rose Revolution brought more democratic political space in Georgia aside, the Rose Revolution can be pictured as a crucial transformation demanded by the Georgian people led by the new Georgian political elite, in order to initiate a new Western oriented state-building process in Georgia.

¹⁶⁶Sershen, “Chaotic Election Day in Georgia Produces Contradictory Results”, <http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav110303.shtml>

Mainly, the November 2003 elections was the final point, which ended the presidency of Shevardnadze and opened a new era in the Georgian political system. While the Central Election Committee counting the votes after the November 2003 general election, the mass protests already began demanding for the government to either accept the victory of the opposition or resign.¹⁶⁷ The Free Democrats and National Movement started street protests ranging in number from approximately 500 to 5,000 people in front of the Georgian Parliament to protest the fraudulent election.¹⁶⁸ The government declared the fraudulent election results on the November 20, 2003. On the November 22nd 2003, the opposition leaders burst into the Georgian Parliament following Saakashvili, while Shevardnadze was delivering the opening speech of the new parliament. After the Russian Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov's effort to maintain negotiations between Shevardnadze and the opposition leaders, Shevardnadze resigned on the 23rd of November, 2003.

Saakashvili was the prominent leader of the opposition movement against Shevardnadze as a former CUG member. Although the opposition movement against the presidency of Shevardnadze included several promising political actors such as Burjanadze and Zhvania; Saakashvili rose as the major figure of the United National Movement. As well as the role of Saakashvili, the United National Movement succeeded to develop an encompassing network in the

¹⁶⁷Nodia and Scholtbach, p.19.

¹⁶⁸Mitchell, p.343.

Georgian society. Wheatley underlines the importance of the organizational success of the UNM by denoting “However, the Rose Revolution would not have worked with Saakashvili’s charisma and rhetorical skills alone, and here the role of the National Movement as an organization proved crucial. The Movement very rapidly developed a well-oiled and efficient organizational structure. Its leaders built up a network of support at grass-roots level like no other political party.”¹⁶⁹ The United National Movement was very successful to mobilize the Georgian people in order to protest against the Shevardnadze regime. The youth movements also constituted great support for the opposition movement as Jakopovic states by claiming “The main, relatively grassroots actor was the *Kmara* (“Enough”) youth civic organization, organized as a rather loose, decentralized network of local and regional cells (making non-indiscriminate repression difficult, yet being highly disciplined and co-ordinated at the same time), which began to crystallise during the campaign against the closure of the main independent TV channel Rustavi-2 (Kandelaki 6).”¹⁷⁰ Also, one should consider that the international actors supported the opposition movements before the Rose Revolution via International Organizations such as the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), International Republican Institute (IRI) and Open Society. The largest demonstration took place on the 24th of November, when more than 20.000 people gathered in the streets around the Georgian

¹⁶⁹Wheatley, p.185.

¹⁷⁰Jakopovic, *The 2003 Rose Revolution in Georgia: A Case Study in High Politics and Rank-and-File Execution*, p.214

Parliament.¹⁷¹ Jakopovic underlines the involvement of the U.S. the Rose Revolution in Georgia by stating

As soon as Washington realises that popular dissent is rising in a country and that regime change is imminent, it immediately begins to seek out new partners among the opposition...The money invested in the opposition by various [non-governmental organisations] is a sort of insurance policy, ensuring that regime change will not result in a change of course, and that if change is inevitable, it will not be radical. (Boris Kagarlitsky, quoted in Escobar)¹⁷²

Although the role of the international actors was undeniable for solving the financial problems of the opposition movement, there were ripe political environment in Georgia due to the public unrest about the presidency of Shevardnadze. For instance, the November protests showed that the Georgian people as the post-Soviet community took powerful steps towards establishing a responsive political community, which was eager to be a part of the political dynamics as one of the major actors. In this sense, Nodia and Scholtbach denote the importance of the gatherings as the Rose Revolution demonstrated the Georgian people's commitment to defend both the values of democracy and their political rights.¹⁷³

While the massive street protests and civic mobilization indicated the clear request of the Georgian people to position their country onto a more democratic

¹⁷¹Mitchell, p.345.

¹⁷²Jakopovic, p.213.

¹⁷³Nodia and Scholtbach, p.20.

path, UNM as the major opposition force, managed to build a new discourse about Georgia's new position as a part of the modern, Western world. Explicitly, a new western-educated political elite of Georgia aimed at establishing a democratic, European-sense of state with restoring the remnants of the Soviet era. Thus, the new western-oriented political elite underlined the connection with the early Georgian intelligentsia, who were the early initiators of the Georgian nation building process under the Russian Empire, as it is analyzed in the previous paragraphs. In order to shed light on the new Georgian political elites' connection with their predecessors, Jones claims that "Their stated goal, like that of their antecedents, is to establish a democratic, economically productive, and 'European' national state. In that sense, they are completing a Georgian nation-building project begun over 150 years ago by a radical group of intelligentsia activists seeking an end to the humiliation of colonial dependence."¹⁷⁴ Furthermore, Jones depicts how Georgia's European heritage was denoted by the UNM on the eve of the Rose Revolution by stating;

Central to polemics of the late 19th century were themes of democracy, self-government, economic growth, relations with Europe and Russia, national education and the creation of national consciousness. Mikheil Saakashvili's speeches consciously echo these themes: greater community between ruler and ruled, the creation of a modern economy, the introduction of European institutions, and national unity based on a newly 'cultured' public. Like the *tergdaleulni*, he talks of a new 'energetic and patriotic generation' which will restore broken bridges (a common metaphor of the *tergdaleulni*) and help Georgia regain its place in Europe.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴Jones, *The Rose Revolution: A Revolution without Revolutionaries*, p.37.

¹⁷⁵Jones, p.37.

The young wing of the CUG was able to mobilize the masses in order to maintain a new route for Georgia in the Western liberal democracies. Also, this new route aimed breaking away from the Soviet system as well as being a part of Europe. Hence, the Rose Revolution symbolizes the restoration of the early Georgian national identity building process with European orientation and detaching the Georgian state and Georgian people from the Soviet experience. Vicken Cheterian defines the Rose Revolution as a symbolic revolt against the legacy of Soviet rule and that of Shevardnadze, not Gorbachev's foreign minister but the Soviet ruler of Georgia, and continuity of the post-Soviet regime.¹⁷⁶ Hence, the attempts of the early intelligentsia towards nation building symbolized an eradication of the remnants of the Soviet ruling and a transformation through European-sense state building process, which was the key aim of the actors of the Rose Revolution before the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2004.

Subsequently, the Georgian presidential and the parliamentary elections were held in January and March 2004. The opposition leaders united around Saakashvili's candidacy for the upcoming presidential contest. Hill underlines the political environment just before the presidential election in 2004 by stating "Acting President and parliamentary speaker Nino Burjanadze announced the choice of Saakashvili today. "We have made a decision that, in the future, presidential elections we will have a single candidate," she said. "We believe that

¹⁷⁶Cheterian, *Georgia's Rose Revolution: Change or Repetition? Tension between State-Building and Modernization Projects*, p.693.

it is crucially important that all differences should be put aside for the sake of unity, for the sake of tomorrow, and this single candidate in the elections will be Mikhail Saakashvili.”¹⁷⁷ Respectively, Saakashvili guaranteed his landslide victory with being elected as the Georgia’s new president. Meanwhile, the National Movement Party of Saakashvili, Zhvania and Burjanadze won a huge majority in the Georgian Parliament.¹⁷⁸ Zhvania was appointed as the prime minister and Burjanadze became the speaker of the Georgian Parliament again.¹⁷⁹ Unlike the previous fraudulent election, both the presidential and parliamentary elections were accepted as generally free and fair.¹⁸⁰

After the Rose Revolution, Georgia entered into a new phase of development in terms of state building within the discourse of fighting with the high level corruption and economic development. On the other hand, democratization was shown as another target by the new political elite gathered around UNM. Lavery explains this new process as “The Saakashvili administration aggressively moved forward in an anticorruption effort to root out some of the most troubling problems of government.”¹⁸¹ Also, he specifies the development as “The

¹⁷⁷Hill, “Georgia: Opposition Unites Behind Saakashvili for Top Post”, *RFE/RL*, (<http://www.rferl.org/features/2003/11/26112003163828.asp>)

¹⁷⁸Mitchell, p.345.

¹⁷⁹Ibid

¹⁸⁰Ibid

¹⁸¹Lavery, *The Problem of Lasting Change: Civil Society and the Colored Revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine*, p.66

economy rebounded impressively, yielding annual growth of around 7–8 percent between 2004–06, state revenue increased as the administration began to reform governmental structures, the state police force was completely refashioned (beginning with the layoff of the previous force), and the legislature began to move Georgian law closer to the EU standards in the hope that one day EU accession would become a real possibility.”¹⁸² On the other hand, Jones underlines the rapid initiative of the new Georgian elites to take steps to fight with the corruption due to the public demand by claiming “The anti-corruption campaign – the most public and appealing part of the opposition’s program – was the best mechanism for promoting these goals. An end to corruption implied a new morality centred on government institutions that would respond to citizen demands and transparency.”¹⁸³ Although the new government with the leadership of Saakashvili took substantial steps to fight with the corruption and there was an initial progress in terms of economic development in the country, UNM locates itself at the center of the political spectrum without clear ideological differentiation such as right or left wing. In this sense, O’Beachain defines the position of the United National Movement as “Saakashvili’s innovation did not lie in introducing new policies or taking a position on the left–right spectrum, for his National Movement was established as a catch-all party encompassing all classes and creeds.”¹⁸⁴ As O’Beachain denotes, the achievement of UNM as an

¹⁸²Ibid

¹⁸³Jones

¹⁸⁴O’Beachain, *Roses and Tulips: Dynamics of Regime Change in Georgia and Kyrgyzstan*, p.217.

opposition movement was to encompass the masses within its leadership and organization structure. Hence, after the Rose Revolution in spite of the transformation of UNM from an opposition movement to the ruling party, its encompassing characteristics emerged as a catch-all party structure.

No doubt, the Rose Revolution indicated two major revolutionary attempts in the Georgian political system. The first one is that the Rose Revolution indicated the Georgian people and the opposition movement, UNM, were the major actors to change the presidency of Shevardnadze. UNM gave hope to the Georgian people to have more democratic and European-sense state building process while detaching from the Soviet past. Secondly, within Saakashvili's presidency Georgia entered into a new state building process, which was pretty troublesome for all the post-Soviet countries. The Rose Revolution revealed the democratic sentiments supported by a substantial majority of Georgians.¹⁸⁵ Shortly after the Rose Revolution, almost all high ranking officials in the state apparatus were replaced by the people, who were active during the opposition movement against Shevardnadze. Apparently, the political environment in Georgia led by the political elite groups, which sometimes act together and split into different minor parts in case of any disagreement or/and the clash of interest. Lastly, the Rose Revolution was an evidence of transformation of political elites, instead of revolution in Georgia. Also, it re-defined the political course of the country

¹⁸⁵Mitchell, p.345.

following a new European-oriented path with the new political elites, who would affect the fate of the country.

Since the beginning, the formation of the political movements in Georgia collided with the social movements, which had nationalistic sentiments. Before independence, these social and political groupings aimed at national awakening and tried to build a newly emerged Georgian national identity. During the first independence period between the collapse of the Russian Tsardom and the Soviet conquer of Caucasus; both the Georgian people and the embryonic Georgian political parties had a chance to experience independent statehood. After the challenging era of the Soviet rule, the Georgian political elites developed a new state structure, which leaned its roots on the nationalist sentiments. The first president of the independent Georgia, Gamsakhurdia, followed a very nationalist discourse, which harmed the national unity of Georgia by provoking the ethnically non-Georgian communities such as the Abkhazians and Ossetians. Later, the presidency of Shevardnadze offered a more balanced political rhetoric first, then, he failed to complete the Georgian transition from the nation-building to the state building. In addition, the presidency of Gamsakhurdia and Shevardnadze's leadership indicated very different characteristics, which extended from their rhetoric to their strategy to build their close political circle. Georgia had gone through very dominant nationalist enthusiasm during the independence struggle, which was led by Gamsakhurdia. However, the main expectation from Shevardnadze was much more different due to the political

environment created during the leadership of Gamsakhurdia. Restoring political stability and sustaining national unity were the major expectancies from Shevardnadze, who held the presidency after the forced step down of Gamsakhurdia. For instance, before Shevardnadze there was no central authority and the power was fragmented among the different political poles, even the paramilitary groups. After Shevardnadze centralized the power around himself as well as his party, the CUG, the other political shareholders lost their importance in the Georgian political arena. However, this condition made the Georgian opposition weaker towards the ruling party, the CUG, and again a check and balance in the Georgian political system could not be established as the next major step towards democracy. In short, the Georgian political party development has always been built around the strong leaders and their close political circle, which included different elites and power holders that shape the Georgia political system. Therefore, currently, the political parties in Georgia lack the ideological basis, institutional capabilities even popular support. In the next chapter, I will try to examine to what extent the Georgian political parties and the political system internalize democratic values by analyzing the findings that I gathered from my field research in Georgia in 2009 and 2010.

CHAPTER IV

POLITICAL PARTIES IN GEORGIA

The aim of this chapter is to analyze the role of the political elites and the political parties for the process of democratization in Georgia in accordance with the elite-led approach, which defines the cooperation and/or conflict between the political elites as the major determinant in the post-Soviet democratization process. The major parameter of this study is the political elite relations under the circumstances of the cooperation and/or conflicts and their impact on the democratization process. The analysis is based on the fieldwork, which was held in Georgia in September 2009, November and December 2010. The respondents include the high officials from the Georgian political parties, distinguished academicians and the members of the civil society organizations, which have had a substantial role in the Georgian democratization process since the Rose Revolution. This chapter consists of six sections, which are aimed to reflect the different dynamics of the Georgian political party system and the democratization process. The sections are intended to present the impact of the Georgian political elites in order to examine how the elite cooperation and/or conflict between the political actors would affect the democratization process in Georgia. The first section offers a general framework about the Georgian political party system after the Rose Revolution, which is considered the direct attempt towards the democratization in order to be part of the Western world. Also, the impact of

presidentialism will be analyzed as well as its interrelation with the dominant political party system in Georgia. In this sense, the role of the ruling party in Georgia will be discussed within the large sphere of its influence provided by the presidential system. On the other hand, the characteristics of the Georgian opposition parties will be analyzed as the major determinants of democratization in any country. In order to examine the political elites' cooperation towards democratization, the relationship between the opposition parties and the ruling party were asked to the respondents in order to question the obstacles, which may hamper the process of the democratization in the country. Afterwards, the impact of the international organizations during the democratization process will be analyzed. Lastly, the respondents mentioned about their positive and negative criticisms depending on the general route of the country towards democratization.

4.1 An Overview of the Multi-Party System

Before focusing on the analysis of the interviewees about the Georgian political system, it is important to overview the Georgian political party system. Georgia has a presidential system, in which the president is the head of state. Also, the executive power is exercised by the government. The Rose Revolution brought about a new phase to the Georgian political arena in terms of following the Western-oriented democratization path. After the Rose Revolution, the Georgian political party system is dominated by the United National Movement, which

continues to rule the country since 2003. In this sense, the major actor of the Rose Revolution was the United National Movement, as the fundamental opposition force against the rule of Shevardnadze in order to enter into a new state-building process within new and Western-educated political elites. Although the new Georgian political elite was able to defeat the former political elites concluding the era of Shevardnadze, the political elite fragmentation appeared inside the UNM due to the political elite struggle based on the different personal gains of the political actors. In this sense, the Georgian opposition parties should be analyzed as the former participants of the United National Movement in order to end the remnants of the Soviet era. Therefore, the current political party structure of Georgia emerged as a result of the elite fragmentation inside the United National Movement.

The Georgian political party system has a number of political parties. The substantial ones are the United National Movement as the ruling party and the New Rights Party, the Conservative Party, the Christian Democratic Movement, the Labour Party, Alasania Movement, the Democratic Movement-United Georgia, the Republican Party. Only the Republican Party founded during the popular front movement in the late period of the Soviet ruling. All the other parties listed above emerged after the Rose Revolution. As the ruling party, the United National Movement (UNM) was established in 2001 by Mikheil Saakashvili, as the former member of Shevardnadze's party, the CUG. The UNM

symbolized the reformist political path favoring ties with NATO and the European Union within democratization discourse in Western sense. The UNM names itself as a center-right party with liberal-conservative understanding. The UNM declare its primary goals such as defending freedom, strengthening democracy and facilitating the development of society.¹⁸⁶ As one of the fundamental discourses of the UNM during the Rose Revolution process was its basis on democratization and fighting with the corruption symbolized by the Soviet leadership. Hence, the democratization attempt has been expected by the Georgian population as a part of the new political path, which has been attained by the new Georgian political elite with applying Western democratic values. However, after the UNM held the power within the Rose Revolution, it was not able to indicate such determinism in order to create a democratic political atmosphere for all the Georgian parties. Rather, Saakashvili preferred to centralize the governmental and presidential power as the major characteristics of the dominant political party system, which allows very limited space for the Georgian opposition parties to have a role on the political decision making mechanism in the Georgian Parliament. In this sense, although Georgia has a multi-party system due to number of political parties registered in the Interior Ministry of Georgia, their sphere of influence is not very effective in the Georgian political party system.

¹⁸⁶To see more:
“The United National Movement: Guiding Principles”
http://unm.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=19

The Georgian opposition parties, which are active in the political scene, are the Christian Democratic Movement, the New Rights Party, the Republican Party, the Conservative Party, Alasania Movement, the Democratic Movement-United Georgia and the Labour Party. Except for these opposition parties, there are number of minor opposition parties, which either represent a very small population or newly established after the 2008 parliamentary elections such as the Women's Party and the Social Democratic Movement. As the main opposition party, the Christian Democratic Movement was founded just before the 2008 parliamentary elections by Giorgi Targamadze, who was the anchor of an influential TV station during the Rose Revolution, Imedi TV. The Christian Democratic Movement identifies itself as a center-right party, which underlines the importance of Orthodox Christianity in the politics. The Christian Democratic Movement constitutes the parliamentary opposition since the parliamentary elections in 2008, as the only opposition party that did not refuse to take seats in the Georgian Parliament after alleged elections. Hence, the Christian Democratic Movement is the main opposition party, which is referred by the UNM as the "parliamentary opposition". On the other hand, the Conservative Party, the New Rights Party, the Democratic Movement-United Georgia, the Republican Party and the Labour Party are defined as the "radical opposition" by the ruling party due to their protest not to enter into the parliament after 2008 parliamentary elections. The Conservative Party, the New Rights Party and the Democratic Movement-United Georgia emerged as a result of the political elite fragmentation inside the ruling party, UNM. They all identify themselves as center and center-

right parties ideologically. For instance, the establishment of the Democratic Movement-United Georgia appeared after a political struggle between Saakashvili and Nino Burjanadze, who worked together during the Rose Revolution in order to overthrow Shevardnadze. Also, the Republican Party was established before the Rose Revolution different from the active political parties in the Georgian political party system. The Republican Party established in 1978 with aiming at the independence of Georgia through several illegal resistance groups under the Soviet rule in cities such as Tbilisi, Batumi, Sokhumi and Chiatura.¹⁸⁷ As the only leftist party in the Georgian political party system, the Labour Party positions itself to support the free public services, education and more state initiative on economy. Also, the Labour Party underlines the importance of membership to the European Union.¹⁸⁸

For their foreign policy direction, all the opposition parties support the idea that Georgia should become a part of the Western world; therefore, they support the Georgian membership to NATO in order to have a direct connection with the Euro-Atlantic zone. Although some of the opposition parties denote the role of the EU as not powerful as the U.S., their attitude towards the EU is quite positive in order to maintain further democratization in the country. The major role of the United State is accepted by the all opposition parties. Furthermore, they perceive

¹⁸⁷To see more:

<http://republicans.ge/index.php?module=Pages&func=display&pageid=101>

¹⁸⁸To see more:

<http://www.labour.ge/en/party/programm.html>

the involvement of U.S. as a positive dynamics toward Russia except the Labour Party. At this point, it is highly crucial to notice that almost all the opposition parties except the Labour Party have similar political aims and positions with the ruling party, the UNM. Also, they consider the democratization process as an inevitable route for Georgia and all the opposition parties accuse the ruling party of being authoritarian and not take any steps towards democratization of the country.

After the 21st May 2008 parliamentary elections, 150 seats of the Georgian Parliament composed of 119 seats taken by the UNM with 59.18% of the votes. The remaining seats were divided between the parliamentary opposition parties, including an opposition bloc, called The Joint Opposition, which acquired 17.73% of the votes with 17 seats. The Joint Opposition was established as an electoral bloc in order to prevent the division of the votes. The second opposition party was the Christian Democratic Movement with 8.66% of the votes and it was able to access 6 seats in the parliament. Also, the third opposition party was the Labour Party, as the only leftist party in the Georgian political party system, had 7.44% of the votes and 6 seats in the parliament. The other opposition parties such as the Republican Party did not have a chance to enter into the parliament. As it is discernible in the results of the 2008 parliamentary elections, the position of the ruling party is all encompassing in the Georgian political framework as a result of the dominant political party system. Although the Georgian political

party system is a multi-party one, the space remaining to the Georgian opposition parties is very limited. Hence, the opposition parties apply different methods by using non-parliamentary activities such as organizing street protests in order to voice their views to the Georgian public. On the other hand, both the opposition parties and the ruling party do not indicate major differentiation in terms of their ideological stand as well as their closeness to the target of the Rose Revolution as becoming a part of the Western system.

4.2 The Role of Political Parties in Democratization

In this section of the chapter, the Georgian political party system and the nature of the multi-party system were asked to the respondents. The Georgian political party system has 180 political parties registered in the Interior Ministry of Georgia. Also, Georgia has a presidential system, which promotes ‘the winner catch all’ process for the ruling parties. This situation may hamper the possibility of the pluralistic parliament, which the executive power shared with the different political parties. Hence, in order to analyze the Georgian democratization process, the presidential system will be considered as a major framework. Many respondents define Georgia as a multi-party system in accordance with the number of political parties that the Georgian political party system has. However, the peculiarities of the multi-party system is defined in the following terms such as presidentialism, the dominant political party system, the ruling party’s political

discourse and the influence of the powerful leadership in the Georgian political arena.

The role of presidentialism constitute a major importance in the post-Soviet democratization process because after the collapse of the Soviet Union, newly emerged post-Soviet states obtained presidential system to complete their national and/or state building processes. Regarding this, Georgia does not indicate any exception. Therefore, before analyzing the responses of the interviewees about the Georgian political party system, it is vital to draw attention to the impact of presidentialism to the democratization process. Linz analyzes the presidential system and underlines the less-advantageous position of the presidential system for democracies by stating;

Presidentialism is ineluctably problematic because it operates according to the rule of “winner-take-all” an arrangement that tends to make democratic politics a zero-sum game, with all the potential for conflict such games portend. Although parliamentary elections can produce an absolute majority for a single party, they more often give representation to a number of parties. Power-sharing and coalition-forming are fairly common, and incumbents are accordingly attentive to the demands and interests of even the smaller parties.¹⁸⁹

In this sense, the dominant political party system and the presidential system are connected with each other in order to implement the less democratic practices as compared to the parliamentary system because in accordance with this system the winners and losers are sharply defined due to the emergence of zero-sum

¹⁸⁹Linz, p.56.

presidential elections.¹⁹⁰ Horowitz analyzes Linz's argument about the relationship between the presidential system and democracy by stating "Linz argues that the presidential office introduces an undesirable element of winner-take-all politics into societies that need mechanisms of conciliation instead. A presidential candidate is either elected or not, whereas in parliamentary systems many shades of outcome are possible."¹⁹¹ However, in Georgia, Saakashvili enjoys all the power that is sustained by the presidential system. In order to shed light his influence as a president in the Georgian political environment, Mitchell claims that;

The constitutional reforms which occurred shortly after President Saakashvili was elected in January 2004 resulted in a great deal of power being concentrated in the president. The president appoints the prime minister and the cabinet, as well as several mayors and numerous lower ranking officials, including positions like university provosts. He can disband parliament if it rejects his budget twice, and he exercises control over an executive branch of government that dominates the weaker legislative branch. Saakashvili enjoys more formal power than Shevardnadze ever did.¹⁹²

As is depicted by Mitchell, the Georgian political party system is exposed to two major restricting realities, which are the over-powering position of the president and the dominant political party system. Hence, these features of the Georgian political system bring about an increase to the possibility of authoritarian tendencies of people to seek presidential power.

¹⁹⁰Linz

¹⁹¹Horowitz, *Comparing Democratic Systems*, pp. 73-79.

¹⁹²Mitchell, p.672.

Also, it is important to bring up the dominant political party system and its impact on the ongoing political process. Bogaards defines the dominant political party system within four frameworks, which are the threshold for dominance; the inclusion or exclusion of opposition features; in presidential systems of government: the presence or absence of divided government; and the time-span.¹⁹³ Also, when the ruling party is able to control both the parliament and presidency, the impact of its dominance over the political system becomes more discernible. For instance, in Georgia, the ruling parties are inclined to win the parliamentary majority and the presidential elections with land-slide victories.¹⁹⁴

As it is depicted in Chapter III, the emergence of the political and/or social movements emerged as elite-initiated bodies. As well as the impact of presidentialism in the political arena, it is important to note that the post-Soviet transition towards democracy is connected with the elite compromise in the political decision making mechanism because the attempt towards democratization can be indicated as ‘top to down’ movement instead of any grassroots mobilization in Georgia. In order to emphasize the importance of the elite collaboration for democratization, Gill unfolds the importance of the different political elites and their relationships as “The balance between hardliners and reformers in the regime and between moderates and radicals in the

¹⁹³Bogaards, *Parties and Party Systems in Africa*, pp.174-175.

¹⁹⁴To see more about Georgian elections:“Georgia”
http://www.ipu.org/parline/reports/2119_arc.htm

opposition, the ability of the reformers and the moderates to come together in agreement and thereby to manage a measured shift towards democracy.”¹⁹⁵ However, as a result of the presidentialism and the dominant political party system, the division between the “winners” and the “losers” of the elections are explicitly decisive in the executive power.

In the words of an expert from the Netherlands Institute for Multi-Party Democracy depicts the difference between the legal condition of the multi-party system and its implication on the current political system in Georgia as “You can speak about two dimensions about multi-party system in Georgia, one is legal, and the other one is practical or real. Formally or legally we have very open multi-party system, registration is very easy. There is no prohibitive impediment during the registration process as well as there are no impediments about women or any other group, ethnic etc. legislation would benefit from further amendments to be closer to Council of Europe. In this regard, Georgia has very vibrant system.”¹⁹⁶

Although Georgia has a multi-party system in principle, the political parties do not offer a pluralistic environment in order to constitute a political framework to have a fully functioning multi-party system. In this sense, a respondent from the

¹⁹⁵Gill, p.80.

¹⁹⁶Interview conducted with the Netherlands Institute for Multi-Party Democracy, 2 December 2010

Tbilisi State University states that “It is officially a multi-party system but in reality it is not a multi-party system. It is sometimes can be called as a dominant party system like sometimes you can compare Georgia with Japan and Mexico”¹⁹⁷ Also, another respondent from the Liberty Institute shared his perspective in terms of the number of weakly developed political parties by claiming “There are many parties but are they strong, no. Are they influential, no. They decided to control the Tbilisi only. There are many districts that they are control easily. I think their vision and financial resources and internal party structure matter. If you are not successful at the elections, so you need something inside your party structure”¹⁹⁸As the respondent from the Liberty Institute highlights, except the ruling party, UNM, the Georgian political parties do not develop in the regions in order to reach the Georgian people. Although they have capacity-building problems in order to settle in the regions, Tbilisi is seen as the key element in order to win the elections because the capital city has almost 1.500.000 populations, which compose a quarter of the whole Georgian population.

According to the perspectives of the respondents, the dominant political party system limits the possible elite consensus on several issues and it does not allow the Georgian political parties to be more active in the Georgian political environment. For instance, Linz explains the lack of alliances between the

¹⁹⁷Interview conducted with an academician from Tbilisi State University, 1 December 2010

¹⁹⁸Interview conducted with the Liberty Institute, 30 November 2010

political elites in presidential systems as “There is no hope for shifts in alliances, expansion of the government's base of support through national-unity or emergency grand coalitions, new elections in response to major new events, and so on. Instead, the losers must wait at least four or five years without any access to executive power and patronage. The zero-sum game in presidential regimes raises the stakes of presidential elections and inevitably exacerbates their attendant tension and polarization.”¹⁹⁹ In order to highlight the dominant position of the ruling party in the Georgian political system, one of the interviewees from the Policy Association for an Open Society (PASOS) claims that “If you mean that many parties have influence on the political development, then, it is not a multi-party system in that sense. We have a political establishment, which is dominated by a single political party, we have parliament which is dominated by the single political party.”²⁰⁰ Again, another official from the Social Democratic Movement denotes the number of political parties in the Georgian political arena, however, their inefficiencies to impact on the political sphere due to dominant political party system in Georgia by claiming

There are lots of parties but one ruling party, there is a multi-party elections yes but it does not mean that we have multi-party system... I would say that this is the dominant party system, not a multi-party system and dominant party is somehow following from the legacy of the Soviet-party state rule. It is very merged with the state. And these parties dissolve immediately, when they lose their power. This is very common for the dominant party systems. When they go to opposition, they disappear. They do not sustain their power.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹Linz

²⁰⁰Interview conducted with the PASOS, 13 December 2010

²⁰¹Interview conducted with the Social Democratic Movement, 30 November 2010

In this sense, one might claim that there is no connection between the number of the parties in Georgia, and their efficient role to build more democratic political environment because the ruling party has the all encompassing role in the Georgian political arena. Also, the ruling party has access to use state resources during the pre-election process to organize campaigns, however, opposition parties do not have such resources to promote their policies and explain themselves to the Georgian people compared to the ruling party. Therefore, the election process easily becomes a vicious circle in terms of having equal conditions before getting into the electoral contest.

As another characteristic of the dominant political party system in Georgia, due to the threshold for entering into the parliament and the proportional-majoritarian system, the number of seats taken by the ruling party is high compared to the opposition parties. Hence, although the Georgian political party system has high numbers of registered political parties, their reflection in the political representation in the Georgian Parliament is not vibrant. In this sense, a director from the Women's Party denotes this dilemma by stating that

Yes, there is multi-party system because there are around 100 parties registered. In reality, an objective challenge to develop a multi-party system, first one is the mentality of the ruling party. It was first Gamsakhurdia's party, Shevardnadze's period or Saakashvili, the governmental parties do not like alternative opinions. They are like closed system, and also inside the party they don't like somebody's opposition they are like communist party... All the parties, especially governmental party is much closed. According to our constitution,

only the parties that get 5% can go to parliament or local administration.²⁰²

Also, another interviewee from the Tbilisi State University comments about the existence of the multi-party system in Georgia and the political plurality depending on the threshold in the Georgian Parliament by denoting that

Yes we have multi-party system. The participation to the parliament since the 90s decreased, totally decreased. It depends on the margin, what is the margin, threshold. During the Shevardnadze period it transformed into 7 %. Between 1992 and 1998, the party representative was huge. After this, party representation decreased. In 2007, there was a huge opposition against Saakashvili, and one of the claims was to decrease the threshold. Now, it is 5 %. So we have multiple version but... one party system because non-formal version of one party.²⁰³

Apparently, although the threshold was decreased during the Saakashvili's presidency, it does not enable a ripe environment for the political parties to have more vibrant and sounder political arena in the Georgian Parliament. Also, due to the overwhelming majority of the ruling party in the Georgian Parliament, the opposition parties could not find enough space in order to maintain a proper check and balance inside the parliament as one of the respondents explicitly indicates as "It is quite difficult to call it multi-party system. In the parliament the ruling party got officially 80% of the seats then there are some opposition groups."²⁰⁴ Another respondent from the Liberty Institute indicates the negative attribution of the excessive number of seats in the Georgian Parliament taken by

²⁰²Interview conducted with the Women's Party, 2 December 2010

²⁰³Interview conducted with an academician from Tbilisi State University, 5 December 2010

²⁰⁴Interview conducted with the Socialist Youth Movement, 1 December 2010

the ruling party as “80.6 of the parliament are under the control of the government. The ruling party got 75 or 72 seats in whole country, in proportional representation. They got 65% of the all the seats. The result is they controlled 80 of the whole seats. We adopted European political system, without having European society. Building constitutional republic, the result is and produced absolutely non-European results.”²⁰⁵ When one compares the number of seats taken by the ruling parties, the numbers indicate the over-powering position of the ruling parties. For instance, after the 2008 Georgian Parliamentary elections, the UNM had 59.18 % of the votes and it was able to get 119 seats in the Georgian Parliament. Although the major opposition bloc, The Joint Opposition, got 17.73% of the votes, they only acquired to have 17 seats in the parliament. On the other hand, the Christian Democrats, as an opposition party won 8.66 % of the electorates and had only 6 seats like the Labour Party. In the former 2004 Parliamentary elections, again, the UNM succeeded to get 67% of the Georgian votes and this victory brought them 135 seats out of 150 seats in the Georgian Parliament. Also, the major opposition bloc, called as Rightist Opposition got 7.6% of the votes and only 15 seats. Although another opposition party, Democratic Union for Revival took 6%, they were not able to enter into the Georgian Parliament dues to high threshold, which was 7%.²⁰⁶ When one compares the number of the seats taken by the ruling party and the opposition

²⁰⁵Interview conducted with the Liberty Institute, 9 December 2010

²⁰⁶To see more about elections: Central Election Commission in Georgia
<http://www.cec.gov.ge/>

parties, the substantial difference in terms of representation level is obvious between the ruling party and the opposition parties.²⁰⁷

Except for the difficulties, which are motivated by the presidentialism and the dominant political party structure, the ruling party maintained a political discourse in order to divide the opposition parties in Georgia. The government classifies the opposition as “parliamentary opposition and non-parliamentary opposition” due to some of the opposition parties’ decision not to enter into the parliament after the 2008 Parliamentary Election. The Joint Opposition and the Labour Party refused to enter into the Georgian Parliament by boycotting the elections.²⁰⁸ Only the Christian Democratic Movement remained as the main opposition party in the parliament, in spite of its new establishment as a political party in 2008. The other opposition parties, which refused their seats, organized numerous street protests and declared the rule of Saakashvili as an illegitimate one. For instance, a respondent from the Conservative Party explains the classification between the parliamentary opposition and the non-parliamentary opposition as “There is a division like parliamentary opposition and non-parliamentary opposition. Parliamentary opposition is considered by the Georgian

²⁰⁷To see more, International Election Observation Mission, “Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions”
<http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/georgia/32017>

²⁰⁸To see more: “Georgia: Opposition to Boycott Parliament”
<http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1117542.html>

society as the satellite of the ruling party.”²⁰⁹ Also, an official from Article 42 summarizes the impact of the ruling party’s discourse in order to divide the opposition parties by claiming “We have a lot of political parties even we do not know the names. That we have so called street opposition and parliamentary opposition.”²¹⁰ As it is seen previous analysis of the respondent, the “non-parliamentary” opposition is called as the street opposition as a result of the protests gathered by the non-parliamentary opposition. For instance, a respondent from the Conservative Party explains the street activities of the “non-parliamentary opposition” as “If you saw yesterday they had gathering in Rustaveli Avenue, yesterday there were some people, 14.000 attended their organization. Their strategy is they exclude election from the political way because they think that Saakashvili would not allow us for the free and fair elections...In 2007-2008 there were 100.000 people in the streets but we could not use this situation to finish the authorities. 15.000 people are not enough to change something.”²¹¹ The major controversial strategy of the opposition parties in Georgia is their effort to overthrow the rule of Saakashvili with mass-protest instead of managing any electoral change.²¹² Therefore, they organized street protest in order to catch the voters’ attention about the policies of the ruling party.

²⁰⁹Interview conducted with the Conservative Party, 28 November 2010

²¹⁰Interview conducted with the Article 42, 16 December 2010

²¹¹Interview conducted with the Conservative Party, 28 November 2010

²¹²To see more about The Georgian Opposition Parties’ Protests

“Opposition Rallies Outside the Parliament”
<http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22895>

In order to shed light on the exclusion of the opposition parties from the Georgian political arena, a respondent from Alasania Movement claims that

The government is not giving enough space for other political parties. Eight parties, totally different ideologies, priorities we have sit down and accept the realities what should be changed in the election code. We can have multi-party system. 3-5 parties effectively represented in the parliament but it depends on the political will of the ruling party.²¹³

Also, an interviewee from the Democratic Movement-United Georgia underlines the government's attempt to isolate the opposition parties within allegedly democratic attitude as "Georgian government, trying to enhance effects to show Western society look we are democrats. Main reason is that single political party, except few, are controlled by the government. You can hardly find minor businessmen support opposition party because of their fears. Another issue is government try to isolate opposition parties."²¹⁴ At this point, again, the impact of presidential system matters. The ruling party takes its strength from the large influence of the presidential system in the Georgian politics. Hale summarizes the presidency of Saakashvili with referencing Fairbanks' words as follows;

Fairbanks (2004) reports that Saakashvili has effectively replaced "super-presidential" institutions with even more highly concentrated

"Rally Against Violence"
<http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=23548>

"Christian Democrats Against Parliament Boycott"
<http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=18479>

²¹³Interview conducted with the Alasania Movement, 15 December 2010

²¹⁴Interview conducted with the United Democrats-Free Georgia, 30 November 2010

“hyper-presidential” ones. For example, one reform gave the president the right to name all nine Constitutional Court justices, whereas previous Parliament and the Supreme Court had the right to appoint three each, with the president also appointing three. In his 2005 state of-the-nation address, he even went so far as to suggest that parties opposing his pro-Western stance should be banned.²¹⁵

Explicitly, Saakashvili benefits from the favors of the presidential system in order to address his presidential might for implementing his governing style in every level of the decision mechanism in the Georgian political arena. Therefore, the ruling party applies a political discourse in order to dismantle the Georgian opposition parties to indicate its dominance to the Georgian electorates to ensure its future electoral victory.

Another characteristic of the Georgian political party system is the powerful role of the political party leaders, the role of leadership. The powerful leadership causes several obstacles to appear such as lack of institutional ground, democratic decision making mechanism inside the parties, which results with the downfall of the political parties after the leaders’ departure. Mainly, the Georgian political parties revolve around their leaders, whether they are opposition parties or the ruling party. The charismatic leadership is the foremost factor in order to attract voters’ attention, instead of the party programs and the parties’ ideological positions. No doubt, this condition hampers the permanence of the political parties as the institutional and powerful bodies for sustaining a democratic

²¹⁵Hale, *Democracy or Autocracy on the March? The Colored Revolutions as Normal Dynamics of Patronal Presidentialism*, p.312.

political environment. For instance, as it is also seen in Chapter III, the former ruling parties in Georgia, which were the Round Table of Gamsakhurdia and the CUG of Shevardnadze, collapsed after their leaders left the presidency. Instead, the new ruling party emerged due to opposition wing inside the same party structure. Hence, as long as the Georgian political leaders' influence strongly continues to affect their parties, it is very difficult to prevent the high level of downfall of the political parties in Georgia.

So as to denote the domination of the political leaders in the Georgian political system, a respondent from the Tbilisi State University claims that "There is always a new party emerging around a political leader, after the leader resigns or leaves, that party will disappear."²¹⁶ Also, in order to highlight the importance of the charismatic leadership for the political parties, one of the top officials of the ruling party, UNM, focuses on the issue by claiming "Some parties led by charismatic leaders, and they are very much individually driven organizations, leader would rule everything, except that nothing matters or counts. Some intellectual clubs, very democratic internal environment without reaching out people."²¹⁷ Another respondent from the Tbilisi State University underlines that "The political parties in here are depended to the political leaders. Those political leaders are the owners of the material worlds, they have financing. The political parties have lack of ideas and agendas. The political leaders in here are thinking

²¹⁶Interview conducted with an academician from Tbilisi State University, 7 December 2010

²¹⁷Interview conducted with the UNM, 9 December 2010

that I have some finances, I have some certain support, I can construct a political party if I come power.”²¹⁸ In order to highlight the relationship between the personality-based political parties, an interviewee from PASOS depicts that

Political parties in general institutionally very weak. First as it happens in many countries, parties are individual centric that means persons leave politics, parties are abolished as well. Parties do not survive after the change of leadership, change of power. There are really few parties, who lead the oppositional power. Then, in that regard we had a lot of challenges. So, parties lack institutionalization. Many parties do not have clear cut ideologies. It is very often to switch from left to right or center to far right, which makes it very difficult for voters to identify the political parties.²¹⁹

One of the members of the Socialist Youth Movements draws attention to the features of the Georgian political parties as “They don’t base on the ideology, movements, people or membership. It is a group of people lead by a leader and people are around a leader. This is very common in post-Soviet area. Parties are for the leader, parties are not creating the leaders but leaders create parties, it is called as party but actually it is not.”²²⁰ At this point, it is important to specify that both the opposition parties and the ruling parties have the similar position in terms of dependency on their leaders so that intra-party decisions and appointments are dominated by the party leaders instead of a democratic decision making mechanism. The impact of the dependency on the charismatic leaders is discernible in the Georgian political system as the volatility of the political parties as well as their versatile ideological positions related to their leaders’ discourse

²¹⁸Interview conducted with an academician from Tbilisi State University, 11 December 2010

²¹⁹Interview conducted with the PASOS, 13 December 2010

²²⁰Interview conducted with the Socialist Youth Movement, 1 December 2010

instead of a solid political party tradition. A respondent from Georgian Foundation for Strategic and International Studies (GFSIS) openly underlines the relationship between the role of the leaders inside the party structure and the lack of institutionalization by highlighting

The leader of the party is decisive in defining the party profile, in defining party strategy, in defining party prestige in this society. So this is normal. Of course leaders always matter and they play a significant role, but as institution party also needs to be, needs to be enough developed so that to sustain and to play more effective role in political life.²²¹

Hence, the impact of powerful leadership reflects in the Georgian political party system as one of the many reasons of lack of institutional ground of the Georgian political parties, undemocratic decision making mechanism inside the party structure and the high level of disappearance of Georgian political parties after the downfall of their leaders. All these conditions result with the instable political party system in Georgia, which repeatedly reproduces the same inefficient party structures for the Georgian electorates and in order to have functioning democratization process.

The respondents define the existence of the weak political parties as one of the major obstacles of the Georgian political party system. One of the respondents from GFSIS defines the Georgian political party system as a weak one with criticizing the ruling party as “Unfortunately, it is weak but our parties are developing. They can become stronger. Even ruling party is not a party, but

²²¹Interview conducted with the GFSIS, 22 November 2010

movement. I would not say that it is a classical party. Unfortunately it takes time. Strong parties, they have to be promoted, less authoritarianism. (Saakashvili) He is semi-authoritarian. He has to conduct everything, push everything.”²²² However, one of the officials of the ruling party agrees that Georgia lacks tradition of political parties and political system depends on the leadership, while she refuses the idea that the ruling party’s dependency on its leader, Saakashvili by stating;

This is a common problem for all the country lack of tradition of political parties, we had just one communist party. And, because parties are built on the leader, when the leader leaves, party is vanished so we still have this kind of problem. I hope that UNM, because our president even he leaves, we are sure the party will not collapse because there are other people. Even there is a disagreement inside the party, it does not come out. This is what makes the party stronger and make it team.²²³

Explicitly, the weak political parties and the strong leadership figures correlate in the Georgian political arena as an important characteristic of the Georgian political party system. Also, another respondent from PASOS denotes the weak political parties as an obstacle for Georgia by indicating the weak political parties are the key issue as well as highlighting Georgian populations’ disappointment about the ruling party and the opposition parties in terms of democratization.²²⁴

An interviewee from the ruling party combines the existence of the weak political culture with lack of professionalism inside the political parties’ inner decision

²²²Interview conducted with the GFSIS, 22 November 2010

²²³Interview conducted with the UNM, 15 December 2010

²²⁴Interview conducted with the PASOS, 13 December 2010

making mechanism and organizational structure. He underlines the major obstacle of the Georgian political parties as “Probably professionalism and culture. You might think that these are very broad concepts, but the political culture by and large how to approach membership issue, how to approach issue of social basis, what should be the internal decision making mechanisms all these issues require professionalism.”²²⁵

Consequently, due to the number of the political parties registered in the Georgian Interior Ministry, one may claim that the Georgian political system can be called as a multi-party system. However, when the efficiency and the role of the political parties on the decision making mechanism are considered, the Georgian political party system could not be named as a multi-party democracy because the opposition parties do not hold a crucial position in the Georgian political party system. Also, the Georgian political party system does not maintain democratic political environment more or less shared by the all political parties in order to carry their representative function. Rather, due to the presidential system and the dominant party system, the political space of the Georgian opposition parties remains limited. Mainly, the respondents classify the major obstacle that the Georgian political system indicates such as the dominance of the ruling party, dependency on leadership in the ruling party and the opposition parties and the ruling party’s pressure on the opposition parties with its political discourse to divide the opposition as the parliamentary and non-

²²⁵Interview conducted with the UNM, 09 December 2010

parliamentary one. In this sense, the Georgian political party system can be named as dominant political party system due to centralized and encompassing role of the ruling party, UNM. Therefore, Georgia does not have a functioning multi-party system, which all the political parties position themselves in a minor or/and major space in order to have active role in the Georgian political system in order achieve the democratization process.

4.3 The Role of the Opposition Parties in Democratization

In this section, the respondents are asked to analyze the role of the opposition parties in Georgia for the democratization process. Before analyzing the role of the opposition parties for the democratization in Georgia, it is important to note that the Georgian opposition parties were the substantial actors of the United National Movement during the Rose Revolution. They acted as one unified bloc against the rule of Shevardnadze in order to design a new path for Georgia. After the early years of the post-Rose Revolution political environment, the initial disengagements started inside the United National Movements. Afterwards, new opposition parties led by the different political actors emerged in the Georgian political system. In this sense, the major characteristic of the Georgian opposition is the political elite fragmentation instead of any collaboration motivated by the personal calculations due to the power struggle between the political elites. Apparently, the opposition parties are prone not to cooperate on certain issues

related to the democratization in Georgia. Instead, they prefer following a path of their leaders instead of maintaining a unified opposition position demanding more attempts towards democratization from the government. Hence, the respondents focused on the relationship between the political elites, the opposition parties' inability to build a new political discourse, institutional weaknesses derived from fragile social basis, non-parliamentary activities such as street protests, institutional problems.

Before examining the respondents' analysis about the opposition parties, one should have a closer look to the Georgian opposition parties. No doubt, in the order to have an efficient democratic political party system, the role of the opposition parties is vital to balance the ruling party's sphere of influence because democratization necessitates preventing any authoritarian tendencies towards one party control over the political arena. Although Georgia has more than 180 political parties as registered²²⁶, there are few active political parties in the Georgian political landscape. Also, the parliamentary division between the opposition parties and the ruling party is quite imbalanced in favor of the ruling party due to proportional-majoritarian election system. Therefore, the representation of the opposition parties in the Georgian Parliament is very limited as compared to the ruling party.

²²⁶Nodia and Scholtbach

In the Georgian case, as well as the political parties, the role of the political elites has the principal role due to the evolution of the political movements, which was started by the Georgian elites since the early nation building process in the late 19th century. Moreover, as well as the role of the elite cooperation, the possible elite fragmentation is crucial in order to examine the democratization process in Georgia. For instance, Gallina analyzes the political elite fragmentation, which hamper the possibility of the democratic attempts by stating;

Elite fragmentation is a situation in which there are strong differences apparent within the governing elite and serious problems between the governing and the oppositional elites. This includes trench-mentality and the positioning of elites into “enemy-categories”. In an atmosphere of elite fragmentation, oppositional elite lack serious political oppositional power and instead focus on extra-political activities to generate power... On an institutional level, elite fragmentation signifies the discord of the political elite over the requirements for building a democratic system.²²⁷

Actually, the emergence of the new political elite took its roots from the idea of eradicating the remnants of the Soviet era and building a new political structure oriented with European democratic values. It also symbolizes a radical change in Georgia’s political course towards West. For instance, Mitchell depicts the democratization notion of the Rose Revolution as follows;

The Rose Revolution was the first breakthrough of its kind in the former Soviet Union outside of the Baltic States, and it was immediately and visibly recognized in the West as a major democratic advance. Since the revolution, the United States has continued to hail democratization there as a success even as concerns have begun to be raised by some observers regarding the pace and direction of this effort.²²⁸

²²⁷Nicole Gallina, *Puzzles of State Transformation: The Case of Armenia and Georgia*, p.23.

²²⁸Mitchell, *Democracy in Georgia since the Rose Revolution, East European Democratization*, p. 670

Therefore, when one considers the obstacles between the opposition parties and the ruling party after the Rose Revolution towards democratization, one should keep in mind that the very fundamental political discourse of the UNM was built on the democratization target. Although the UNM gained its massive support from the Georgian people with declaring eradicating the corrupted system and bringing democratic values, the UNM only managed to deal with bribery in public services by initiating drastic reforms in areas such as police, education and infrastructure. For instance, Kvelashvili unfolds the initiated reforms related to the Georgian police after the Rose Revolution as a part of the “de-Sovietization” process of Georgia, he announces that “Instead of a Soviet-styled force having almost no public support and deeply marred in corruption some six years ago, now Georgia has a police trusted by 81% of the public, according to the opinion poll conducted by the International Republican Institute (IRI) nearly one month ago.”²²⁹ The most of the leaders of the opposition parties were the active participants of the United National Movement (UNM) during the Rose Revolution. Also, their establishment appeared after the Rose Revolution as a result of the disagreements inside the United National Movement, which was the major opposition movement against the rule of Shevardnadze. As it is depicted in the Chapter III, the UNM included Western-educated political elites, who aimed at initiating Western-oriented state building process in Georgia within the democratization discourse. The main agenda of the UNM leaders, who were

²²⁹To see more:

“Success of Georgia’s Police Reform is a Function of Sovereignty” by Giorgi Kvelashvili
http://georgiandaily.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=18300&Itemid=72

Saakashvili and Burjanadze under the guidance of Zhvania, was implementing democratic state structure as well as ending the corruption and bribery because these were the major deficiencies of Shevardnadze's presidency. Although Shevardnadze followed a different political discourse in terms of leaving hard-liner nationalism, he did not indicate major success for the state building process of Georgia. Instead, he built his own presidential circle within managing among different political elites, which covered old members of *nomenklatura*, and young, Western-oriented wing, later appeared as his main rival inside his party, the CUG.

Firstly, the Georgian democratization process is directly dependent on the elite initiative as a part of the post-Soviet democratization pattern because the political attempts of the Georgian people have been shaped by the Georgian political elites rather than a massive popular movement. After the independence from the Soviet Union, the major victory of the Georgian political elite to mobilize the Georgian people in order to bring about a radical change resulted with the Rose Revolution. In other words, the Rose Revolution could be depicted as an elite-initiated success because of changing the political course of the country from the Soviet past to Western-oriented, democratic path. During the Rose Revolution, the Georgian political elites were unified under the United National Movement in order to overthrow the presidency of Shevardnadze. After the overthrow of Shevardnadze, Saakashvili and the leaders in the UNM obtained various political positions such as Interior Ministry, the Ministry of Defense in the Saakashvili's

cabinet. However, within a short period of time, the internal elite struggle caused some of the UNM leaders to decide breaking up from the UNM and established their own parties. The main reason of this divergence within the UNM was led by personal disagreements between the political elites due to pragmatic motives based on the personal power struggle. Gallina unfolds the reasons of the elite fragmentation as “Elite fragmentation as such is based on the overall principles of informality and power proximity and focuses on personalized relationships which stand diametrically opposite to the requirements for a democratic system, but which function well within autocratic political frameworks.”²³⁰ As it is seen in Gallina’s analysis, in the Georgian case, the elite relations are the foremost factor for emerging new political parties in the Georgian political environment. For instance, Democratic Movement-United Georgia was established by Nino Burjanadze, who was the speaker of the Georgian Parliament and she was the close ally of Saakashvili during the Rose Revolution. On the other hand, the general secretary of the Conservative Party, Kakha Kukava, was the lawyer of Saakashvili before joining the Conservative Party. Also, former exiled defense minister Irakli Okruashvili and the former opposition presidential candidate Levan Gacheciladze established a political party called the Georgian Party in 2010.²³¹ This situation unfolds how the Georgian opposition parties revolve

²³⁰Nicole Gallina, *Puzzles of State Transformation: The Case of Armenia and Georgia*, p.23.

²³¹To see more, “New Opposition Party Launched”
<http://civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22747&search=Okruashvili>

around the same political elites and how former allies transform into new rivals in the Georgian political party system.

In this sense, respondents reinforce that the current opposition elites took their roots from the early structure of the UNM. A respondent analyzes the former ties of the opposition parties with Saakashvili and denotes that this situation decreases the political plausibility of the opposition parties by stating;

Most of the opposition parties are the former unsuccessful groups of the ruling party. For example, Burjanadze's party, she was the one of the leader of the Rose Revolution. She left national movement and established her own party, because of very pragmatic reasons not ideological difference. If Saakashvili is responsible for something she is also responsible.²³²

Also, another respondent from the Liberty Institute claims that “Those, who are in opposition hate each other and fight with each other than hate the government. Unlike this government ruins itself, nobody in the opposition would challenge it.”²³³ Unfortunately, the personal relations between the Georgian political elites have very decisive role on the Georgian political party system because due to the disagreement between the political elites, especially between the opposition parties, one joint opposition bloc could not appear easily in order to maintain further reforms towards democratization. A respondent from the New Rights Party explains why the Georgian opposition parties are not able to have a

²³²Interview conducted with the Socialist Youth Movement, 1 December 2010

²³³Interview conducted with the Liberty Institute, 30 November 2010

common strategy by stating that “So far we did not manage to do it. I do not think this would happen. Well, everything is possible, we are talking now and maybe tomorrow we will have another government. Everything can change suddenly... Coming back to this united leader, it is very hard because there are so many different parties, different ideologies, different views, policy makings, different type of leaders, and ambitions.”²³⁴ However, the relationships between the political elites during the Rose Revolution inside the UNM affected the current fragmented structure of the opposition parties and it does not lead any opposition parties to form a long term coalition to become an alternative to the ruling party. Moreover, respondent from the Labour Party explains why the other opposition parties could not be seen as an alternative to the ruling party by stating that

Our opposition colleagues, in my view, did not plan the strategy and the tactics very well. Because all these people who were the organizers of April manifestations are Saakashvili’s former allies. They are their Prime Minister Novaideli, Speaker of the Parliament Nino Burjanadze, former ministers: Goga Khaindrava, former minister of Conflicts, Salome Zurabishvili, former minister of Foreign Affairs, former ambassadors – Irakli Alasania, former deputies – including Republicans, Conservatives and so on. They used to be in one National Movement. So except us all of them are Saakashvili’s friends, party or government colleagues. They used to work in one government. If you suggest to the people that Saakashvili is bad, and we, his former friends will give you a good life, the people will not believe you. Because the people are looking for an alternative.²³⁵

Secondly, building a new political discourse is crucial in order to challenge the position of the ruling party in order to engender more vibrant, pluralistic democratic environment. Unfortunately, the Georgian opposition parties are not

²³⁴Interview conducted with the New Rights Party, September 2009

²³⁵Interview conducted with the Labour Party, September 2009

very successful at maintaining new political discourse in order to challenge the ruling party's policies. An academician from the Tbilisi State University highlights the importance of the engendering new political perspectives and the opposition parties' inability to attract the voters' attention by stating "Because opposition parties do not have enough power to transform their ideas to real policy making. Ideology is not a big problem here because we have catch-all parties here. If you take thousand activities, the expectation is these opposition parties could not change. They mobilize only small and very limited number of people because people lost their trust for any change in this society."²³⁶ The opposition parties' inability to maintain a different political discourse can be derived from two major decisions, which are protesting the 2008 Parliamentary Election with refusing their seats in the Georgian Parliament and the organizing the street protests against the government as a substitute of their representation function in the parliament. Mainly, after refusing going to the Georgian Parliament, the opposition parties made up their strategy in accordance with organizing street protests to mobilize anti-government Georgian population with more democracy and anti-corruption discourse, which worked during the pre-Rose Revolution period to overthrow Shevardnadze regime. The Georgian opposition parties except Christian Democratic Movement refused enter into the parliament after 2008 Parliamentary Elections. No doubt, this situation avoids the Georgian opposition parties to raise their voice in the parliament. In this sense, a

²³⁶ Interview conducted with an academician from Tbilisi State University, 15 December 2010

respondent from the ruling party explains the situation of the opposition parties in order to challenge the policies of the ruling party by stating;

Here in Georgia, we have, I call it Rustaveli Avenue geopolitics. Who blocks the avenue, he is the winner. That is how the government was changed three times in Georgia. And this government I hope irreversibly change this kind of governmental changes because in 2007, opposition blocked the Rustaveli, in 2009 it blocked it again and the day before yesterday, they tried to block it again but it does not work. People start losing interest to go out. People start analyzing that first the government more or less consolidated and Rustaveli geopolitics does not really play an important role anymore. If we change the government for the Rustaveli geopolitics it would be disastrous for the country.²³⁷

The major motivation of the opposition parties to organize public rallies can be defined as after the success of the Rose Revolution, the opposition parties believed that massive public protests would ensure to overthrow the rule of Saakashvili. A respondent from the Tbilisi State University asserts that

Revolutions happened here in that way. They rejected to go to the parliament and just organized coup d'état they acted in the same way because opposition claim that the results of the presidential elections were falsified. I think yes, when it comes to the presidential election. 15 -17 people refused to go to the parliament. Then, they participated the local elections, they now in Tbilisi city council. If you have a principle to not to recognize the falsified elections, you should not go either into the parliament and the city council as well. They lack, they do not keep the principle that is why opposition is not trusted much by the people. One day they say we do not go to the parliament but other day they say we go to the city council. What kind of determination is that?²³⁸

In 2010, the mayoral elections were held for Tbilisi. Afterwards, the opposition parties accepted the results of the election and decided to go to the Tbilisi City

²³⁷Interview conducted with the UNM, 9 December 2010

²³⁸Interview conducted with an academician from Tbilisi State University, 15 December 2010

Council, *Sakrebulo*. Apparently, after the opposition parties' decision not to attend the Georgian Parliament, they understood that they lost very importance opportunity to declare their political ideas to the public. However, it also exhibits how opposition parties are not able to follow a stable path against the ruling party in order to become an alternative for the Georgian voters.

Also, it should be noted that the opposition parties continue organizing mass protests, although the participation of the Georgian people dramatically dropped due to the decreasing popularity of the opposition parties. Some of these protests witnessed severe counter-action from the government. For instance, the Georgian people, who were around 50.000 to 100.000, gathered in Tbilisi on the 2nd November 2007 in order to protest the rule of Saakashvili due to his government alleged corruption. The protest was maintained by the opposition leaders primarily. This protests lasted several days, finally, on the 6th of November 2007, the Georgian police used violence against the Georgian people in order to dismiss the protesters.²³⁹ Also, Saakashvili accused the opposition parties of collaborating with Russia in his speech about the November protests.²⁴⁰ By putting the accusations about the Georgian opposition parties aside, the Georgian opposition parties are prone to show their reactions on streets instead of taking seats in the

²³⁹To see more: "Tear Gas used on Georgia Protests"
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7082317.stm>

²⁴⁰To see more: "Georgia: Government Uses Force to Restore Order, Pulls Plug on TV Broadcaster"
<http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/eav110707.shtml>

Georgian Parliament. In this sense, their role on the democratization process of Georgia remained limited, even, not an influential one.

Moreover, the lack of institutionalization can be named as another major obstacle that the Georgian opposition parties have. The institutional problems of the opposition parties are derived from several reasons such as their inability for offering a solid party program and lack of strong social basis as well as having limited financial resources in order to challenge Saakashvili and his party, the UNM. A respondent from the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED) emphasizes the lack of institutional development of the opposition parties and combines this problem with other factors by stating “they can do more, but they do not do anything. I think it is because the lack of the resources, about capacity, knowledge, programs, they do not have good programs, they are not doing anything after electing. This is a real weakness of the political parties.”²⁴¹ At this point, it is important to state that the lack of institutional background is not derived from the financial inabilities of the Georgian opposition parties only, also, their fragmented structure as well as instable political course should be seen as other weaknesses that present a weak structure to be elected by the Georgian people. A respondent from the Social Democratic Movement analyzes the institutionalization problem of the opposition parties by stating

²⁴¹Interview conducted with ISFED, 14 December 2010

Opposition parties are weak they are not stable, they do not have strong social basis, and they do not have democratic internal structure... If you have more or less competitive elections, more or less institutionalized political environment etc. In this situation I do not see any difference between any political party and social movement just to change the situation for better. I can't say that we can ever have a chance as political parties until we have better political environment. I don't think that political parties make any sense in a non-democratic state.²⁴²

An interviewee from the Liberty Institute highlights that the opposition parties do not have social basis, popular support. He denotes that

Working with grassroots is a problem for opposition. You can go and speak to them. Maybe they can split and have common strategy. But they can't have common strategy about anything. Of course they could not have enough money to cover every area but they can split and reach places. But the problem is there is split opposition and except to make this government out, they don't have anything in common.²⁴³

As it is analyzed in the historical background chapter, the Georgian political parties emerged as a result of social and political movements, which had dissident political elites as a driving force instead of any grassroots movement. Therefore, the social basis of the political parties could not be defined as strong. This situation also affects the developments of the opposition parties negatively. Another respondent from PASOS classifies the difficulties that the opposition parties have to face with by stating,

First, they lack membership, they don't have good network, members and supporters. Second, they have difficulties to offer a vision. They criticize the government but not offer alternative vision. Third many of them are populist, which is good but populism does not last long if

²⁴²Interview conducted with the Social Democratic Movement, 30 November 2010

²⁴³Interview conducted with the Liberty Institute, 30 November 2010

you promise something and then you don't achieve and you lose your authority. Many cases, they don't have internal democracy.²⁴⁴

Also, a respondent emphasizes the lack of public trust towards the opposition parties by stating "Opposition parties are not creative, but young promising people do not want to go the opposition parties. People do not see them as option. People do not believe them."²⁴⁵ The lack of public trust about opposition concludes with the human resources as a part of the institutional gap of the opposition parties. Also, it indirectly affects the ruling party to have landslide victories in the elections, which leads an imbalanced parliament to appear in terms of check and balance.

The respondents agree with the idea that weak ideological basis as a result of the weak political culture is a substantial problem, which hampers the democratic environment in Georgia. A respondent from GFSIS states that the ideological gap and lack of trust about the political parties in Georgia as an obstacle for the political system by stating "People joining parties not for their ideologies but their benefits. It is the wrong culture. The age of ideologies are at the end, communism, fascism, socialism and people are cynical because of that they are materialist now. Interest groups practically the foundations of any party. Interest groups based on interests. That is why populism and nationalisms are so popular.

²⁴⁴Interview conducted with PASOS, 13 December 2010

²⁴⁵Interview conducted with CRRC, 30 November 2010

Parties are something strange for many people.”²⁴⁶ On the other hand, one of the officials of the ruling party also agrees that weak ideological position is one of the characteristics of the Georgian political party system by denoting “They are very far from ideological stand point. I am not sure that they are aware of the title of the party means.”²⁴⁷ In this sense, the membership to any political party could not be considered due to an ideological closeness; instead, membership to any political party is based on personal gains in Georgia. A respondent from the Democratic Movement-United Georgia identifies the most important obstacle of the Georgian political party system as lack of participation from the people.²⁴⁸ In accordance with the analysis of the interviewees, Georgian population might not be named as responsive enough about the politics. However, one should keep in mind that the political development in Georgia has never been a grassroots movement. Instead, the general political environment is shaped under the influence of the small political elites, which also causes a considerable gap to appear between the political parties and the society.

In order to examine the financial part of the institutionalization problem of the Georgian opposition parties, one should examine the legal status of the political parties in terms of having funds from the state budget. The Georgian political parties are entitled to have financial support from the state budget according to

²⁴⁶Interview conducted with the GFSIS, 22 November 2010

²⁴⁷Interview conducted with the UNM, 9 December 2010

²⁴⁸Interview conducted with the Democratic Movement-United Georgia, 30 November 2010

the amended Article 30 of the Georgian Organic Law. Briefly, the Georgian political parties that are able to get 4% of the vote in the most recent parliamentary elections are entitled to state financial support. According to the report of Transparency International Georgia,

The amount is determined with respect to the number of votes received: a party that received less than 200,000 votes will be awarded two GEL per vote; 200,000 – 500,000 votes – an additional 1.5 GEL per vote; more than 500,000 votes –one additional GEL per vote. In addition, parties are again entitled to 200 GEL per month per proportionally elected MP.²⁴⁹

When one considers the table²⁵⁰ below, which shows the amount of financial support that the political parties were given after the 2006 general election in Georgia, the difference between the amount of the financial support that the ruling party got and the total amount of the money that the all opposition parties are given indicate the major financial contrast between the ruling party and the opposition parties. The financial inabilities of the opposition parties prevent them from having an equal chance with the ruling party during the pre-elections campaigns. Also, due to the financial inabilities, most of the opposition parties may not have the chance to access the various regions in Georgia; therefore, they remain limited with the capital city, Tbilisi, in order to initiate their policies.

²⁴⁹To see more,
<http://transparency.ge/sites/default/files/Political%20Parties%20in%20Georgia,%20Issue%20of%20Party%20Financing.pdf>

²⁵⁰Source: State funding (in georgian laries) to be received by political parties in 2006, Nodia and Scholtbach, p.147.

Table 1. State funding in Georgian Laries to be received by political parties in 2006

Party	According to votes received in the last elections	According to seats in the parliament	Total
UNM	1 203 076	300 000	1 503 076
Conservative Party	79 542	9 600	89 142
Republican Party	59 657	9 600	69 257
Industry Will Save Georgia	113 313	14 400	127 713
New Conservative Party	113 313	19 200	132 513
Labour Party of Georgia	179 962	2 400	182 362
Freedom Party	131 313	---	131 313

A respondent from Alasania Movement indicates two major obstacles of the Georgian political party system as fund raising and human resources due to the pressure from the government. He depicts that

The political pressure coming from the government. The political pressure from the government creates other problems like financial resources and human resources problem. You could not recruit people because of that. We have a lot of supporters; we have party members up to 10.000. but all these supporters at least another 10.000 saying that we are supporting your party but we could not join the party because my son is having small enterprise, my husband is working for government and she or he is definitely approached by the local authorities and will be forced to leave the office. Political pressure coming from the ruling party is the issue number one for the political development of the country.²⁵¹

Although the ruling party does not directly restrict the membership to any opposition parties, its large sphere of influence may be deterrent for the Georgian

²⁵¹Interview conducted with the Alasania Movement, 15 December 201

people not to involve in the opposition parties directly. In this sense, in order to define the power zone of the ruling party in Georgia, one of the respondent from ISFED claims that “The ruling party is not working for democratization really. They just want to have the power, keep the power.”²⁵² As the relationship between the ruling party and the opposition parties are highly concentrated in the 3rd section of this chapter, the ruling parties’ attempts to keep its power in a very centralized way is described as destructive not only for the development of the opposition parties but also as a major obstacle that the Georgian political party system has to face with.

As another financial resource for the opposition parties, the political parties are free to have financial support from the business sector. However, in reality, the Georgian ruling party puts indirect pressure to businessmen, who may plan to support the opposition parties. The government uses several state instruments to deter the businessmen with tax fines per se. A respondent from the Christian Democratic Movement unfolds the financial problems of the opposition parties and how this situation brings unequal opportunity to the opposition parties to compete with the ruling party during the elections by stating that

I can tell you two key problems that the opposition parties face with. The first is financial resources. Georgian constitution gives state funding depending on the rating. If you look at the data, it is minimum. It simply keeps political parties surviving. As for the private and cooperation funding, the situation is disaster in the

²⁵²Interview conducted with the Open Society, 30 November 2010

Georgian political landscape because you can find hardly any business financial institution strong and businesses help only the ruling party. The reason is very simple. The Government put very strong pressure on businesses that decide to support opposition parties. Then, they face with tax office, analyzing their documents, violation on their tax claims. So any business risks their business. It is very difficult to fight with the ruling party during the election which abandons the human resources and financial resources of the opposition parties. So it puts a question mark on the free and fair elections. Sometimes, people say that the election is relatively free and fair because they are observed, but if you compare the expenses the government spends during the election campaign and the opposition parties, together, you will see huge difference.²⁵³

A respondent from the Social Democratic Movement indicates the influence of the ruling party about the funding of the opposition parties by stating that “They do not have financing, transparent finances. Because business is very much under the control of government. And today to finance the opposition seem in danger.”²⁵⁴

Hence, the financial problems of the opposition parties bring about three major problems for the democratization process in Georgia. First, it is very hard to expect from the Georgian opposition parties to develop their institutional framework and their branches in the region in order to reach the Georgian people more effectively under these financial circumstances. Second, it hampers the opportunity of an equal contest between the ruling party and the opposition parties in terms of free and fair elections because the resources between the opposition parties and the ruling party are incomparably different. Third, this

²⁵³Interview conducted with the Christian Democratic Movement, 08 December 2010

²⁵⁴Interview conducted with the Social Democratic Movement, 30 November 2010

situation leads the ruling party more dominant and centralizes the power in its hands, which is overwhelmingly threatening for the democratization process.

Consequently, the Georgian opposition parties should not be seen as separate bodies, which emerged as a result of different political path. Instead, the current opposition parties were derived from the United National Movement due to the political elite fragmentation during the post-Rose Revolution process. In this sense, their role on the democratization process in Georgia remains very limited for bringing any alternative option as different political parties. Rather, they build their main political discourse on criticizing the actions of the government. The respondents highlighted their fragmented structure as well as their inability to offer a solid political program on certain issues such as fighting with the poverty, solving the security problem etc. Especially, after their refusal to enter into the parliament in 2008 parliamentary elections, their action resulted with losing very solid ground to present their criticism about the ruling parties' policies. Also, they lost their credibility in the public space because the refusal of attending the parliamentary sessions has been interpreted as their unprofessionalism unlike the ruling party. Hence, their major opposition activities became limited to organize street protests in order to mobilize the Georgian government. Also, as a result of their institutionalization problems, they do not have regional basis in the places except the capital city, Tbilisi. As a result, it is very hard to claim that the Georgian opposition parties offer an efficient contribution to the democratization process in Georgia. Rather, their main activities are shaped in accordance with

maintaining another revolution to realize the second Rose Revolution for the transformation of power from one political elite group to another one controlled by themselves.

4.4 The Relationship between the Opposition Parties and the Ruling Party

In this part of the chapter, the relationship between the opposition parties and the ruling party is examined in order to analyze the democratization process in Georgia. The interviewees are asked to define the relationships between the ruling party and the opposition parties in regard to steps taken by the both sides for the democratization process. The respondents indicate that both the Georgian government and the opposition parties are prone to act in accordance with the political elite confrontation instead of cooperation in order to develop the Georgian political party system by initiating democratic norms, as it was mentioned before. Also, the weak and non-institutionalized structure of the opposition parties and the impact of the dominant political party system avoid the both sides from reaching a consensus because the very exact relationship between the opposition parties and the ruling party could not be named as equal. Hence, by depending on the constitutional majority in the Georgian Parliament, the Georgian government does not constitute a democratic political environment to have a vivid political system. Instead, the ruling party, the United National Movement (UNM) prefers to create a limited political zone for the opposition

parties to continue its dominance in the Georgian political sphere, as it is very common in dominant party systems, as Carothers depicts by stating “Dominant-power politics also often achieves a kind of stasis, with the ruling group able to keep political opposition on the ropes while permitting enough political openness to alleviate pressure from the public.”²⁵⁵ In this sense, there are two major cases, which are the constitutional amendment process and the round table meetings for changing the electoral code, carry substantial importance in order to analyze to what extent the Georgian opposition parties and the ruling party could collaborate on certain issues for the democratization.

The post-Soviet democratization process is interlinked with the political elites’ decisions, therefore, possible consensus or/and conflicts between the political elites constitute a vital importance to carry out functioning democratization process. In this sense, the cooperation between the ruling parties and the opposition parties has inevitable role to develop the political system further towards democracy. In the Georgian case, the interviewees have the similar position about the lack of cooperation between the ruling party and the opposition parties as well as underlining the domination of the ruling party in order to shape the relationship between the opposition and the government.

²⁵⁵Thomas Carothers, *The End of the Transition Paradigm*, p.14.

A respondent from the Conservative Party summarizes the relations between the ruling party and the opposition parties by stating;

In Georgia we have probably 20 party system because we have one strong ruling party, which controls central authorities, institutions, regional authorities, local municipal authorities, controls judicial branch, legislative branch, all media etc... For opposition parties, 10-12 political parties, which aim mainly same support, same rating, same number of supporters and members. Support of all these parties maximum 6-7 percent. There is no after the ruling party, no second party who could be served as the main rival of the ruling party. This of course is the result of the political system and political environment in Georgia.²⁵⁶

Also, an interviewee from the Women's Party claims about the diminished role of the opposition parties in the decision making process in the Georgian political arena by underlining that "They never listen opposition. The real opposition is outside of the parliament. But I don't think there is actual cooperation. But the government does not like compromise. Opposition parties are not so strong, very different kind of people, lot of mistakes, no coordination, different goals sometimes. Even in all opposition parties, they control the activities."²⁵⁷ As it is defined by one of the respondent from the opposition party, the secondary role of the opposition parties brings about a one-sided political scene dominated by the ruling party. A respondent from ISFED denotes that "Even opposition parties say something, it does not affect the decision making mechanism because decisions are made by the ruling party."²⁵⁸ Therefore, the respondents agree with the idea

²⁵⁶Interview conducted with the Conservative Party, 28 November 2010

²⁵⁷Interview conducted with the Women's Party, 2 December 2010

²⁵⁸Interview conducted with ISFED, 14 December 2010

that the relationship between the ruling party and the opposition parties is a non-cooperative and unconstructive one in order to take further attempts toward democratization. An interviewee from GFSIS considers the possibility of cooperation may appear in case of an external threat by underlining that

The relationship is always strained and non-cooperative. In very few cases constructive, only in those cases when an apparent external threat is there. For example, in the wake of the last August events the opposition parties they pronounced the moratorium on the criticism of the ruling party and it was only until after Russian withdrew from the so-called buffer zones that the opposition began again to criticize the authorities.²⁵⁹

Also, the relationship between the opposition parties and the ruling party is not shaped in accordance with maintaining proper check and balance in order to strengthen the political system. Instead, both the opposition parties and the ruling party aim at gaining more power in the political system rather than completing each other. In this regard, a respondent analyzes this “power-game” between the political parties are derived from the struggle between the political elites by stating;

There is, well, as I said, the primary goal of the political forces is to grab power or to retain power, and because of this whoever is already in power, they don't want a healthy and genuine opposition... So always they try to weaken the opposition, constrain the opposition, to limit the opposition in its criticism by different means, it would be a political debate or some financial disincentives or other things. And this is something which also lacks in understanding, general understanding in the elite, in the political elite, because whoever comes to the power already starts weakening opposition, not to bother with alternative ideas, not to compromise, so this is the general attitude which needs to be overcome. Otherwise we will not have really healthy constructive division of labor between ruling and

²⁵⁹Interview conducted with the GFSIS, September 2009

opposition parties so that they together rule the country ahead, forward. So, I would say in two words, that the relationship has always been strained and uncooperative, only in few exceptional cases you could observe some coincidence of the interests.²⁶⁰

As the respondent clearly states that the lack of cooperation between the ruling party and the opposition parties hamper the possibility of democratic environment to push the country forward. However, in 2010, Georgia started discussing the new constitutional amendments, which will be in force in 2013, when the next general election will be held. These amendments require a systemic change, which will transform the Georgian political system from the presidential to parliamentary one.²⁶¹ Also, it can be named as an invaluable chance both for the opposition parties and the ruling party to cooperate and reach a consensus about an important decision for the further democratization in Georgia. In this sense, an academician claims that the relationship has improved, as well as underlining the attempts initiated by the ruling party in order to marginalize the opposition by stating that

Now it is better but two and three years ago, it was quite controversial. The political parties are not mature in Georgia. One of the mistakes of the ruling party is that two and three years ago they tried to marginalize the opposition. And I don't think it is good for

²⁶⁰Interview conducted with the GFSIS, September 2009

²⁶¹To see more,
Saakashvili on New Constitution,
<http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22713>

Saakashvili on New Constitutional Model
<http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22625>

Georgia: Saakashvili Push for New Constitution Generates Controversy:
<http://www.eurasianet.org/node/62098>

Georgia because whether you like it or not you need to have a balance in the society. Also, from the opposition they wanted to change the government but the Georgian society did not support it. Now they are trying to compromise. There are still opposition parties that are confrontational and radical. I think next two or three years important for Georgian democratization because we will see how parties react to the new constitution.²⁶²

No doubt, the transformation from the presidential system to the parliamentary system indicates a democratic attempt, however, the constitutional amendment process brought about many questions afterwards because Saakashvili continues his 2nd term as a president. Also, it is prohibited by the constitution to continue as a president for the 3rd run. As well as his dubious position whether he will be the country's first prime minister, the constitutional amendment procedure did not provide a cooperative environment neither to convince and cover the all opposition parties into the decision-making process, nor to guarantee more democratic, law-based political future towards democratization.

Also, in order to analyze the constitutional amendment process as a source of the relationship between the ruling elite and the opposition elite, a respondent from the Social Democratic Movement points out the problems by stating that

First of all, constitution makes sense in a constitutional state, if the state is not constitutional and there is no limited government, there is no decentralization, no distribution of powers, power is concentrated on their hand. It is vertical power centralization, this happened also in previous period. Power has concentrated in one hand...There is no discussion about the reason. Nobody seriously participated. Constitutional change is for Saakashvili to be prime minister after his

²⁶²Interview conducted with an academician from Tbilisi State University, 15 December 2010

presidency. And the constitutional change from the point of view of society is understood that Saakashvili wants to stay in power.²⁶³

Also, an academician shares her concerns about the implementation of the parliamentary model by pointing out that “It depends, it would be on paper. How the governmental bodies use this possibility. Saakashvili would transform as a prime minister that is why it would be real need for the governmental bodies. There is an implementation problem for democratization from the government.”²⁶⁴ Also, another respondent clearly states that it is not a step towards democracy but another trick to stay in power.²⁶⁵ A respondent from the Democratic Movement-United Georgia underlines that “Constitution was adopted without opposition. They met certain opposition parties. The main idea of the ruling party is to divide opposition parties like good opposition and bad opposition. Like radical opposition.”²⁶⁶ Also, as another indicator of the lack of cooperation between the opposition parties and the ruling party during the constitutional amendment process, a respondent from Alasania Movement claims that “They established a state commission for the constitutional change, they invited the opposition parties but finally they did it what they wanted to do. Very little of important issues were considered suggested by the opposition.”²⁶⁷

²⁶³Interview conducted with the Social Democratic Movement, 30 November 2010

²⁶⁴Interview conducted with an academician from Tbilisi State University, 7 December 2010

²⁶⁵Interview conducted with the CRRC, Interview, 30 November 2010

²⁶⁶Interview conducted with the Democratic Movement-United Georgia, 30 November 2010

²⁶⁷Interview conducted with the Alasania Movement, 15 December 2010

Apparently, the ruling party and the opposition parties had a real opportunity in 2010 during the constitutional amendment process, in order to build a cooperative relationship to take steps towards more democratic and pluralistic political environment. However, as almost all the respondents indicate above, both missed the chance to reach a consensus in order to shape the political future of Georgia. In this sense, one can argue that both the opposition parties and the ruling party failed to work together as two major constitute parts of a democratic country.

As another aspects of the relationship between the ruling party and the opposition parties, not all the opposition parties have the same position in terms of building a relationship with the ruling party, as some respondents highlight. For instance, a respondent from the Netherlands Institution for Multi-Party Democracy claims that “The opposition is diverse. Some opposition parties are very radical, very radically positioned to government. Others are in common sense to cooperate in certain matters with the ruling party. But there are some other political forces from time to time given in the environment with a common interest, they can have a room for mutual dialogue.”²⁶⁸ For instance, during the last parliamentary elections in 2008, the Joint Opposition Bloc in Georgia boycotted the results of the elections and 12 seats in the Georgian parliament remained empty due to their protest.²⁶⁹ This joint decision of the opposition can be illuminating the position of

²⁶⁸Interview conducted with the Netherlands Institute for Multi-Party Democracy, 2 December 2010

the “radical” opposition with offering uneasy path for collaboration with the ruling party. In addition, the decision that rejecting entering into the parliament for boycotting the ruling party also created a representation problem for the elected opposition parties to reflect their voters’ political interests in the Georgian Parliament. In order to highlight the tense relation between the ruling party and some of the opposition parties, which named as “radicals” by the ruling party, one of the respondents from the ruling party denotes that

Since we are in a transitional period, currently it is a transition from non-democracy to democracy. Of course we face with a lot of economic and social pain; it radicalizes the political class also. And it makes this confrontation more radical. There could be other instruments other than the political parties, other than normal-ordinary debates in the parliament, or somewhere else in order to win hearts and minds of the electorate. Some other mechanisms could also exist but unfortunately, here in Georgia, only one mechanism is like one pre-feudal democracy, if one could claim it’s democracy. Archaic society, if crowd gather somewhere in front of the important building, then, crowd shouting to change the government. Here in Georgia, we have, I call it Rustaveli Avenue geopolitics. Who blocks the avenue, he is the winner. That is how the government was changed three times in Georgia.²⁷⁰

After some of the opposition parties’ decision about not to attend the Georgian Parliament, they chose to organize street protests by blocking the main avenue in Tbilisi called Rustaveli Avenue, as it is also mentioned in the previous section. Although they managed to gather thousands of people in order to protest the actions and the policies of the government, they had to face with severe response

²⁶⁹To see more:

Analysis: Is Georgian Opposition Still Force to Be Reckoned With
<http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1347811.html>

²⁷⁰Interview conducted with the UNM, 9 December 2010

from the Georgian police to stop the demonstrations. In order to analyze the Georgian public support towards the “radical” opposition parties, one of the respondent claim that

The public support is strange as well. One government friendly with the Christian Democrats, they got around 10% and the Republicans, which have some kind of program, ideology, decent political organization. Free Democrats, they also have some support. Many of them are fake parties and they do not exist. Labour party has 7-8% whatever happens. 3-4 percent is something they think. They are not serious political power, and Burjanadze’s party. She has personal disagreements, everybody knows. People do understand.²⁷¹

An academician attracts attention to the street protests as the continuation of Saakashvili’s former opposition strategy against Shevardnadze in order to overthrow Shevardze’s presidency. He depicts that “Opposition parties are radical... they calculated, they just wanted to repeat the Rose Revolution. They are all students of Saaksahvili, some of them were together with Saakashvili during the Rose Revolution, one part of the opposition and another part of the opposition were also in opposition. So they decided this is the only way, Saakashvili is crazy, that he will does strange things, and he is weak now and we can do another revolution.”²⁷²

Also, as another indicator of the possible cooperation towards the democratization between the ruling party and the opposition parties, the change in the election code is crucial. The Georgian political parties started considering

²⁷¹Interview conducted with the CRRC, Interview, 30 November 2010

²⁷²Interview conducted with CIPDD, September 2009

about an electoral reform in order to have well-functioning, free and fair elections in 2010. The opposition parties unified under the name of Group of Eight,²⁷³ which included the New Rights Party, the Christian Democratic Movement, National Forum, the Conservative Party, the Republican Party, People's Party, and Our Georgia Free Democrats, in order to declare their common position on the electoral process in Georgia. The electoral reform covered increasing the number of seats in the Georgian Parliament from 150 to 190, which 107 of them will be elected by a party list proportional system and the remaining 83 seats will be taken by majoritarians.²⁷⁴ Also, it aims at enhancing the institutional obstacles of the Georgian political parties because the all political parties that are able to Access the 5 percent of the Georgian votes will be provided 1 million Georgian Lari by the state budget. No doubt, new electoral code provides better conditions for the Georgian political parties in terms of solving their representation problem in the parliament as well as developing their capacity building in order to organize not only in Tbilisi but also in the regions. An academician unfolds the cooperation initiative taken by the ruling party and the opposition parties by unfolding

Lastly they [the political parties] came together for the elections issues; they created a special commission to reform our election system. Not every opposition parties contributed to this commission,

²⁷³“Oppositional Group of Eight Conducted a Number of Concessions on Changing Electoral Environment in Georgia”
<http://www.georgiatimes.info/en/news/54393.html>

²⁷⁴To see more : “Contentious Agreement On Electoral Reform Reached in Georgia” by Maka Gurgenidze,
<http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5596>

mostly the opposition parties came who are in parliament. For certain issues, these negotiations are important for the future consolidation of democracy. But, the products of the negotiations in the future are important. They may have problems in concrete issues like the election code.²⁷⁵

Also, an interviewee from the Conservative Party examines the Group of Eight as follows;

The Group of Eight, we also belong, this is a group of eight parties but not coalition about the electoral code. We initiated dialogue with the government to reform the electoral environment in Georgia. Our strategy means that we should use this support of international community to reform the electoral code after show some for pragmatic result in next parliamentary election in 2012... We know that free and fair elections will not happen under Saakashvili's authority but we don't have any other choice to protest in streets it would not have final result. We think that step by step, election after election and with using international pressure... We have this agreement about electoral code, we have joint proposal about it.²⁷⁶

A respondent from the Christian Democratic Movement describes the opposition parties' joint movement for contributing the process of the electoral reform by claiming "The Christian Democrats, the New Rights Party, the Republicans, Alasania Movement, the Conservative Party and National Democrats. These eight parties have proposal for the government. This is the reflection of the new demand because the new election code is important for the election of 2012. There is pressure from the West. We can say that this is a success of the opposition parties and the international actors for pressuring the ruling party."²⁷⁷

²⁷⁵Interview conducted with an academician from Tbilisi State University, 7 December 2010

²⁷⁶Interview conducted with the Conservative Party, 28 November 2010

²⁷⁷Interview conducted with the Christian Democratic Movement, 08 December 2010

The ruling party and the opposition parties held several meeting from November 2010 to March 2011. However, due to the ongoing elite struggle between the ruling elite and the opposition group, the negotiation talks for the electoral reform entered into a deadlock. Therefore, in May 2011, the Group of Eight announced a declaration, which claims that they will continue to struggle for free and fair elections in Georgia regardless of the ruling party's recklessness to act. In this sense, Mamuka Katsitadze from the New Rights Party unfolds the demand of the Group of Eight related to the ruling party's non-cooperative position during the negotiation talks by stating "When we receive a response [from the ruling party] by the end of May – no to everything or maybe yes on some proposals and no to others – that would define what the result of talks have been. If by the end of May there will be a zero result – meaning that there is no common ground, naturally there will be no continuation of talks."²⁷⁸ Moreover, another member of the Group of Eight from Our Georgia-Free Democrats claims that "If the sides failed to agree on major principles before the end of May it would mean that "the authorities have no political will" to improve the electoral environment in the country."²⁷⁹ On the other hand, Akaki Minashvili from the ruling party claims that "The group of eight opposition parties' May 12 statement is more an ultimatum, which does not contribute to a negotiating process on electoral system

²⁷⁸To see More:

"Opposition Wants Ruling Party's Response by End-May"
<http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=23435>

²⁷⁹Ibid

reform.”²⁸⁰ Later, the ruling party announced that it will negotiate the process with the opposition parties separately instead of collaborating with one-joint opposition bloc. Simply, one can scrutinize the electoral reform process as one of the major examples of the non-cooperative relationship between the ruling elite and the opposition parties for the democratization process in Georgia. The ruling party held its superior position during the negotiation process, therefore, despite a cooperative environment might emerge; the initial result could not be reached by both sides via compromise. In this sense, the Georgian political party system fell into another obstacle due to the over-powering position of the ruling party, which does not lessen its sphere of influence during both the constitutional amendment and the electoral reform process.

Consequently, the constructive relationship between the opposition parties and the ruling party constitutes great importance for the democratization in Georgia. In order to maintain a democratic political system, the opposition parties are as crucial as the ruling parties in the decision-making mechanism because they enable pluralistic political environment with offering alternative perspectives and challenges to the ruling party. However, the Georgian opposition parties have structural problems as they are analyzed in the previous section. These obstacles of the opposition parties indirectly strengthen the ruling party in the Georgian political arena. Moreover, the dominant political party system prevents possible

²⁸⁰To see more:
“Ruling Party MP on Opposition’s Electoral Talks Statement”
<http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=23437>

democratic environment to appear between the ruling party and the opposition parties to reach a consensus because in the political system, the position of the ruling party is considerably prominent as compared to the opposition parties. This political imbalance between the opposition parties and the ruling party hampers the possibility of equal conditions for both sides to compromise on certain issues for democratization.

4.5 The Role of the International Actors in Democratization

This section will focus on the respondents' views on the role of international actors for the democratization process in Georgia. Before analyzing the perspectives of the interviewees, it is important to identify the international actors, which collaborate with Georgia during its democratization process.

There are three major international actors involved in the Georgian democratization. These international actors are the U.S., the EU and UN. There are other major international organizations, which have direct relationship with the U.S., the EU and UN such as North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), National Democratic Institute (NDI), International Republican Institute (IRI), National Endowment for Democracy (NED), Council of Europe (CoE), Open Society Foundation, International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), German Foundations, Netherlands Institute for Multi-party Democracy, United National Development Program (UNDP). As well as these international actors,

their embassies in Georgia also constitute important position with offering capacity building programs and financial support to the Georgian political parties in the democratization process.

Many interviewees agree that they have positive role on the further democratization in Georgia. While some respondents share the similar perspectives for the financial and ideological support of the international actors to form the Georgian political party institutionalization, some of them consider that the democratization process should develop as a result of the grass-roots movements. The respondents, who reinforce the importance of the internal development for the democratization process, do not support the idea that the contribution of the international organizations would ensure the Georgian democratization in the long term. Also, according to some respondents, the international organizations have an important role with adopting a mediator role between the opposition parties and the ruling party. Lastly, the respondents agree that the international actors have substantial role for Georgia to solve its security dilemma with the Russian aggressive position towards Georgia.

Firstly, the respondents claim that the role of international actors is important to form democratic environment for the developing political parties by motivating the ruling party to take steps toward further democratization in Georgia. A

respondent from Christian Democratic Movement identifies the role of the international actors by stating that

Democratic development of Georgia, international role is crucial. Look at the situation in Georgia, civil society puts pressure, opposition parties influence the process in the parliament but the government has the majority and the third factor is international society. So, the role of international actors, the international organization is enormous for Georgia's democratic development. If opposition is strong in Georgia or enough power to put real pressure on government, then, the role of international community would be less. They put pressure on government to push direct democratic development and reforms.²⁸¹

Also, the international actors are very active to build a bridge between the opposition parties and the ruling party. As it is indicated in the previous sections, the relationship between the ruling party and the opposition parties is not very stable and productive for building democratic environment. In this sense, a respondent from the Netherlands Institute for Multi-Party Democracy agrees that the position of the international actors is very substantial for building dialogue between political parties as well as the development of the political parties by denoting;

They have activities to force the political parties to dialogue and political party development; there are many programs for building capacity for political parties. We also support political parties to strategic planning and policy analysis as well as help their dialogue. In terms of party building, international actors are very very important and instrumental as well as very general democratization of Georgia. Because without international supporters, Georgia is in the darkest hour, and to find it very difficult to survive to maintain its political system and maintain its institutions and maintain its statehood. I think the international community is still a key for Georgia's development, as well as its stability. Because in terms of crisis, the international

²⁸¹Interview conducted with the Christian Democratic Movement, 08 December 2010

diplomacy plays a big role. You cannot underestimate the role of international community.²⁸²

The international actors have mediator role between the opposition parties and the ruling party, when they enter into a deadlock related to the certain issue such as the constitutional amendment process, the negotiation talks on changing the electoral code. For instance, International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) organized several meetings in order to contribute to the Georgian democratization process with having more transparent election process.²⁸³ Also, the EU and UNDP collaborated on a report, which aims at promoting dialogue and capacity for effective national electoral process.²⁸⁴ While this situation indicates the immature position of the Georgian political parties in order to build dialogue between themselves, it also pushes the international actors to an intermediary position in the Georgian political system. In this sense, a respondent from a think tank analyzes the position of the international actors and how their statements are used by the ruling party and the opposition parties in the political environment by stating as;

²⁸²Interview conducted with the Netherlands Institute for Multi-Party Democracy, 2 December 2010

²⁸³To see more:

“IFES Organizes Conference to Address the Accuracy of Georgia’s Voter List”

<http://www.ifes.org/Content/Publications/News-in-Brief/2011/Dec/IFES-Organizes-Conference-to-Address-the-Accuracy-of-Georgias-Voter-List.aspx>

“IFES Holds Discussion with Political Parties and CSOs on the Abuse of State Resources”

<http://www.ifes.org/Content/Publications/News-in-Brief/2011/August/IFES-Holds-Discussion-with-Political-Parties-and-CSOs-on-the-Abuse-of-State-Resources.aspx>

²⁸⁴http://www.undp.org.ge/files/project_files/elections-narrative-report-2010.pdf

When the political actors cannot talk to each other, they go to Western ambassadors. You will see everybody goes to Marriott, with an EU representative. When the Western actors say something beneficial to the government, and government start saying, this and this. When the Western actors say something critical about Georgia, then, the opposition begins you see etc. the international actors are kind of legitimization force and the moderating force as well.²⁸⁵

Also, an academician emphasizes the mediator role of the international actors by denoting

They have a kind of a mediator role. They are trying to be a mediator between opposition parties and the ruling party, in certain cases they succeeded. But anyhow, they are not like the local organizations that they do everything. At least they are doing some training for both opposition parties and the ruling party. They are trying to gather them together for common training for them for how to consolidate democracy, so they can work in certain issues together as a result. They have big role, at least they can play this role. More or less they are mediating for both sides.²⁸⁶

Although the international actors sustain a common ground for the opposition parties and the ruling party to negotiate, it may constitute challenging results for both the opposition parties and the ruling party in Georgia because they need to compromise without any third party involvement, which indicates one of the substantial obstacles of the Georgian democratization process.

Some of the respondents do not agree with the idea that the international actors could pave the way for further democratization in Georgia because they believe

²⁸⁵Interview conducted with the CIPDD, September 2009

²⁸⁶Interview conducted with an academician from Tbilisi State University, 1 December 2010

that democracy should be promoted by the Georgian institutions. Also, they think that the major aim of the international actors is not sustaining democracy but stabilizing the Georgian political system, whether it is democratic or not. A respondent from Liberty Institute claims that

Democracy could not be cultivated. Democracy should grow from the bottom to up. They, the international actors, they can offer their expertise etc. But we have this cultivation problem. I do not think that any of these attempts can achieve anything unless you are Saddam, who needs to be physically removed. That can be done from outside. In order to do that change we need institutions and institutions should grow up from bottom. As I see these problems with the donors, they cannot be building player in this process because they do not know the local conditions and the society is not mature.²⁸⁷

At this point, there are two major issues, which may be seen as direct and indirect stimulators of the Georgian democratization. No doubt, the Georgian political parties are responsible for the Georgian democratization because they are primary actors to take initiative for democratization process in the first hand. Secondly, the role of international actors can be seen as the indirect actors of the Georgian democratization because they enable international assistance to the Georgian political parties, including the ruling party and the opposition parties to take further attempts towards democratization. For instance, the Venice Commission, which is the Council of Europe's advisory body for legal affairs, offered its recommendations during the constitutional amendment process in Georgia in

²⁸⁷Interview conducted with the Liberty Institute, 30 November 2010

2010 in order to have more democratic constitution.²⁸⁸ Hence, despite the political parties have direct impact on the democratization process; the role of the international actors is undeniable as an indirect contributor to the democratization process in Georgia.

The international actors are identified as Western organizations by the previous respondents; also, the neighboring countries can be added to the international actors definition as well. In this sense, an academician emphasizes the importance of the neighboring countries for democratization as well as the role of the Georgian institutions by stating that

We should not underestimate because they support. Process that foster this or that direction but they are not in the position to build up democracy and institutions. Georgia has to deal with that. However, what is very important is that regional conditions. For instance, Turkey as a neighbor is more democratic than Georgia... For instance, Armenia is partially, Azerbaijan is worse and Russia is the same. So why would we need democracy. So neighboring countries are important for democratization.²⁸⁹

When one considers the democratization process in the post-Soviet space, those countries have proximity to the Western countries went through fast democratization process such as Baltic countries as compared to the Central Asian countries per se. They were able to develop their institutionalization process in accordance with the European democratic norms to be a member of the

²⁸⁸In order to see more, “Venice Commission on Revised Draft of Constitution”
<http://www.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=22738>

²⁸⁹Interview conducted with an academician from Ilia Chavchavadze University, 19 November 2010

European Union. This situation brought about to imply democratic values in the Baltic countries in a sudden and organized way to meet the membership criteria. However, in the Georgian case, the democratization process does not embrace such a sudden transformation due to its geographical distance from the EU countries. Hence, Georgia does not have such an external catalyst like membership to EU for the rapid democratization. Rather, Georgia is surrounded by Russia, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Turkey, which none of them is a source of inspiration for Georgia in its democratization process.

Although the role of the EU and neighboring countries of Georgia can be questioned for Georgia, the U.S. still carries very strategic importance for Georgia because it is the major financial resource of Georgian economy and the anchor of the Georgian membership to NATO. In 2008, at the Bucharest Summit, NATO allies decided that Georgia's accession to NATO will be initiated.²⁹⁰ The accession to NATO constitutes very crucial position for Georgia in order to be a part of the Euro-Atlantic zone.²⁹¹ A respondent from a think tank analyzes the relationship between the U.S. and Georgia with comparing the role of the EU by stating that,

United States has been much more influential not because they gave more money but because it has greater political interest and it can say anything clear. For Europeans, it is more difficult to say anything

²⁹⁰To see more: "Nato's Relations with Georgia"
http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_38988.htm

²⁹¹"Georgia's NATO Membership on track, says Miliband"
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/aug/20/georgia.nato>

clearly. And I think it seems that United States is an actor, you understand what it is. But Europe is difficult to understand, it is not a real actor. That is why Americans have more influence. Also, I think in this government NATO accession became a real project, American influence became greater because they understood that American are key for the accession.²⁹²

The United States Department of State, Office of the Coordinator of U.S. Assistance to Europe and Eurasia named its concentration area about Georgia as “peace and security”, “governing justly and democratically”, “investing in people”, “economic growth” and “humanitarian assistance” in its Foreign Operation Assistance Fact Sheet, published in April 2011.²⁹³ For instance, it is stated that “In June 2009, the USG fulfilled its pledge of a \$1 billion economic support package for Georgia to assist internally displaced persons, rebuild damaged infrastructure, and help restore investor confidence in the Georgian economy following the August 2008 conflict with Russia.”²⁹⁴ Hence, the role of the U.S. financial support for Georgia is incomparable with the other international actors. However, these resources are not being used for the democratization process; instead, it is being benefited as a governmental resource by the UNM.

Also, another respondent draws attention that the main concern of the international organization is not democracy promotion in Georgia due to its position not to obstruct international economy. He states that

²⁹²Interview conducted with the CIPDD, September 2009

²⁹³To see more:
<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/167515.pdf>

²⁹⁴<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/167515.pdf>

It is not realistic to say that our partners are democrats and they push us to democratize. They create some sectors in society more and more independent from the government. A leader might be more stable and reliable in foreign affairs; I think democratic alliance would tolerate that person. Ultimately countries like Georgia, Azerbaijan, no danger spots to put world economy in danger, who cares you have right election or not.²⁹⁵

On the other hand, an academician highlights the importance of the cultural impact and the financial support of the international actors for the civil society organizations in Georgia by stating “They play very serious role because first of all, EU especially U.S., many many Georgian children have their education in the west and they return to Georgia. Democracy and human rights such Western values, it is very important financial support from the U.S. and EU. All the NGOs in Georgia are dependent on the Western countries. The problem is all economic links we have with the EU and the U.S. and Turkey. No economic link with Russia. We are the partner of the Western countries, the U.S. and Middle East states. That is why I think the role of the Western organizations is very very high without these help the civil society in Georgia could exist.”²⁹⁶

The civil society organizations constituted important position as an oppositional force during the Rose Revolution and this process concluded with the overthrow of Shevardnadze presidency. Another important point is that Saakashvili’s party, the United National Movement emerged as a political organization, which had

²⁹⁵Interview conducted with the CRRC, Interview, 30 November 2010

²⁹⁶Interview conducted with an academician from Tbilisi State University, 7 December 2010

similar features with a civil society organization. Later, he became president and his political movement transformed itself to a political party with a very steady institutionalization process. Although the role of the civil society organizations reduced after the Rose Revolution as a result of the donors' financial resources were directed to the state building process and the prominent leaders of the civil society organizations entered into the political arena, the impact of the international organizations for the civil society development is still discernible in Georgian democratization process.

In addition, some of the respondents claim that as a result of the authoritarian tendencies of the Georgian government, the international actors' initiatives remain ineffective, almost remote and under the control of the government. A respondent from Conservative Party claims that

There are some international organizations but even they are under huge pressure of the Georgian government. For example, I said that democratic institutions are very active in Georgia, but as for Republican Institution (IRI), maybe because of the politics of White House during the period of George Bush, very pro-Saakashvili, director of Republican Institution of Georgia was appointed few months ago as the minister of government and it became huge scandal... So we see how it is difficult any political activity in the autocratic country. There are some institutions like NDI, and there are some German institutions, but they are also under government control.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁷Interview conducted with the Conservative Party, 28 November 2010

Another interviewee from Social Democratic Movement reinforces how authoritarian tendencies of the government affect the role of the international actors negatively by stating that

They don't know what to say, what to do, when they see strong concentration of power in the sense of leadership, elections that are more or less violated, rule of law is more or less violated, constitutionalism is lessened, what can do international actors or local population to change the population, nobody knows. They are typical in countries such as Georgia, in this regard we are not an exception maybe we are their key for Russia because we are small to guarantee something may have done.²⁹⁸

Also, she depicts that the democratization studies do not suffice to solve the democratization problems in countries like Georgia because all the democratization attempts overlaps with authoritarian tendencies of the leaders and very centralized power of the ruling party. Therefore, she denotes that

The change may start in paradigmatic shift from these 30 years of democratization to a new stage which will be based on a different paradigm. This paradigm should develop globally. This would come as a new way of democratization, but this would come globally not locally. So the decline of 3rd wave of democratization will continue, until the new paradigm will be promoted worldwide for the countries like ours for the development of democracy. Maybe it will come from internet, maybe from new ideas and institutions.²⁹⁹

Consequently, for examining the democratization process of Georgia, the role of international actors constitutes a major position due to their internal and external impacts in the Georgian politics. In addition, the role of the international actors should be analyzed within two aspects. The first one is related to the position of

²⁹⁸Interview conducted with the Social Democratic Movement, 30 November 2010

²⁹⁹Interview conducted with the Social Democratic Movement, 30 November 2010

the international actors in the Georgian democratization process by sustaining financial and ideological support as well as their mediator role for the Georgian political parties. The international actors involve in the Georgian political system via their international organizations' attempts such as National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the International Republican Institute (IRI), and Open Society Formation collaborate with Georgian political parties in order to maintain capacity building and democratic values inside the Georgian political party structure in the new political environment after the Rose Revolution. Secondly, the external role of the international actors is based on the Georgian membership to NATO and the European Union as a part of the Euro-Atlantic zone. Although the impact of the international actors are substantial for the Georgian political parties, still, the democratization problem exists in the country due to the lack of democratic dynamics in the inner mechanism of the Georgian political arena derived from the conflicts between the opposition parties and the ruling party.

4.6 The Future Prospects

In this section, the prospects of the political party system in Georgia will be elaborated. Almost all the respondents are optimistic about the future of the country except few, who are not very positive about the future of Georgia and the Georgian political parties in the short term. The respondents from the opposition parties highlight their concerns about the ruling party's attempts, which may endanger the democratization process. The interviewees from the ruling party

underline their stable position to maintain the reforms and the state building process as the major element of the democratization process from their perspective. Academicians and the civil society members denote the importance of both the opposition parties and the ruling party for having more democratic political system in Georgia in the future. Lastly, almost all the respondents perceive the role of the international actors and their relations with the ruling party as very decisive for Georgia's future in terms of democratization process and security problems.

Accordingly, at this point, I will try to clarify the security problem of Georgia before elaborating the respondents' aspects. The security problem of Georgia is dated back to the independence of Georgia from the Soviet Union in 1991. The new Georgian political elites during the presidency of Gamsakhurdia tried to maintain a nationalist political discourse for Georgia in order to consolidate the independence of the country. This political discourse necessitated building a new political framework, which was motivated with an anti-Russian rhetoric and it led Georgia to face with its minority problem. For instance, after the declaration of independence, the South Ossetian and Abkhazian population started resisting against the Georgian government with the Russian support. The conflict became a civil war between South Ossetia and Georgia in 1992. As the first president of Georgia, Gamsakhurdia was not able to solve the South Ossetian conflict due to his overemphasis on the Georgian nationalism in the internal politics. Later, his

failure about not to prevent the civil war concluded with his overthrow by the National Guard and *Mkhedrioni*, as it is analyzed in the Chapter III in detail. As the successor of Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze tried to balance Russia and Georgia. Therefore, in order to ease the tension between sides, Shevardnadze decided to sign Dagomys Accords, which necessitates Georgian, Ossetian and Russian peacekeeping forces to maintain ceasefire.³⁰⁰ Within the Rose Revolution, the Georgian political elites emphasized the political path of Georgia as a part of the Western world, which includes the EU and NATO as a security and political partner. This situation underlines the pro-Western political stance of the country as a new foreign policy orientation. Also, within the presidency of Saakashvili, the attempts towards restoration of South Ossetia and Abkhazia started constituting a real importance within a new nationalistic discourse. This situation increased the tension between Georgia and South Ossetia and it concluded with a military confrontation between Georgia and Russia in 2008.³⁰¹ For instance, Nodia underlines the reason of this military conflict between Russia and Georgia as “the Georgian-Russian war as an attempt by Russia to change the political direction in Georgia, from a Western-style democracy to a satellite of Russia. The war was planned and initiated by Russia with the broader objective of putting the South Caucasus and Central Asia region under control.”³⁰²

³⁰⁰To see more: “Abkhazia and South Ossetia: Heart of Conflict, Key to Solution”
<http://www.opendemocracy.net/article/abkhazia-and-south-ossetia-heart-of-conflict-key-to-solution>

³⁰¹To see more: “Abkhazia and South Ossetia: Heart of Conflict, Key to Solution”
<http://www.ceps.eu/content/august-war-georgia-views-tbilisi-and-europe>

³⁰²Ibid

Apparently, this military confrontation unveiled the security problem of Georgia directed by Russia, as Georgia clearly emphasizing its political path towards West within the Rose Revolution.

Firstly, many respondents share similar perspective about the ruling party as the key determinant of the Georgian democratization process. As well as the ruling party's position, the new constitutional amendments, which will be in force in 2013, is seen another factor for Georgia in order to pave its way for further democratization. An academician emphasizes that Georgia has two ways, which are either democracy or authoritarian system. He unfolds his opinion by saying "I hope because of the Georgian past and because of the lessons taken from 1990s, I hope the only possibility for Georgia would be democracy. However, I would say that in the nearest future, transformation, democracy would be very challenging, I hope that we will arrive that, but it is not an easy way."³⁰³ The years 2012 and 2013 will be very important for Georgia because in 2012, it will be parliamentary election and the following year 2013, the presidential election will be held with the new constitutional amendments. Another academician depicts the future of Georgia as dependent on the Georgian people and the initiatives taken by the international actors by claiming "It is up to our people, if they push the government to do some changes. Also it is the matter of international players and some western countries to be more active for democracy building. Now they are

³⁰³Interview conducted with an academician from Ilia Chavchavadze University, Interview, 19 November 2010

less active than Shevardnadze's period. Saakashvili has really big support outside of Georgia, in EU, U.S., I don't think the situation will be changed in 2013, when the next election will be held. The ruling party will win easily, quite easily."³⁰⁴

The role of the ruling party and the president are very important for Georgia's democratic future because the political power is overly centralized in the hands of the ruling party and the president. At this point, the constitutional amendment related to the transformation from the presidential system to the parliamentary one will be one of the corner stone of Georgian democratization process in order to analyze it as a successful or failed one. In this sense, another academician states that

In Georgia, you cannot predict anything, especially, political parties. The important thing is who will be the president of Georgia. I don't think that he will copy Putin model and I don't think Georgian people support Russian model. He's clever enough not to do that. At the same time, Georgian people want same foreign policy, and political course of politics towards Euro-Atlantic aspirations. We don't know, everything would be clear after the parliamentary and local elections. And it would be effective for next presidential election as well.³⁰⁵

Moreover, a respondent from Christian Democratic Movement emphasizes the importance of the presidential election, which will be held in 2013 by stating that

I think 2012-2013 will be the crossroad for Georgia, if we get up as opposition parties, government, international community, civil society and media. Georgia will be in the right way eventually as a democratic state, and survive as a young democracy, and genuine and

³⁰⁴Interview conducted with an academician from Tbilisi State University, 11 December 2010

³⁰⁵Interview conducted with an academician from Tbilisi State University, 15 December 2010

real democracy. If we fail, I see Georgia as half-authoritarian and half democracy in the backyard of Russia as it has been for many years.³⁰⁶

Secondly, some interviewees share similar expectation from the opposition parties in the coming parliamentary election in 2012. Hence, the 2012 constitutes very crucial role for Georgia's political parties and the country's future. Some of the respondents are hopeful to see strong opposition parties in the parliament after the parliamentary elections in 2012. For instance, an interviewee from the Socialist Youth Movement depicts that

In 2012, there can be strong opposition groups in the parliament. And small ones would disappear. Strong opposition group would be one step. In 2013, presidential election, there can be fair election and opposition would have stronger role. But it is very difficult to there would be real change in the authorities. I am sure that Saakashvili will change something. My hope and expectation is about opposition, stronger opposition.³⁰⁷

Another respondent from the Open Society combines the Georgian democratization process with the possibility of stronger opposition in order to balance the overpowering role of the ruling party. She states that "Without strong opposition I do not believe that any process will be developed. I do not know more funding should be available; more support is needed, for developing their human and financial issues. They have to acknowledge more their commitment and protect the interest of the public. They themselves should be more accountable."³⁰⁸ In order to lead more democratic political environment in

³⁰⁶Interview conducted with the Christian Democratic Movement, 08 December 2010

³⁰⁷Interview conducted with the Socialist Youth Movement, 1 December 2010

³⁰⁸Interview conducted with ISFED, 14 December 2010

Georgia, the opposition parties have to develop their institutional structure as well as solving their ideological problems and manage to access the Georgian people more effectively.

Thirdly, the respondents from the opposition parties believe that a new government would bring more democratization in Georgia and it is one of the top priorities for the country to have better future. An interviewee from the Conservative Party claims that

I think the first priority is the change in our government, replace it with legitimate one, they are such a position that if they do the right thing, they are criticized by the society, even all those cases even for the human right issues. Nobody trusts them, they cannot make any risks and new projects because this huge curse about new policies. We need unity and legitimate government to do new reforms and new negotiations.³⁰⁹

Also, another respondent from the Democratic Movement-United Georgia emphasizes the negative role of the ruling party for the further democratization and he suggests that UNM will also disappear after Saakashvili lost his power by stating “I am optimist. I believe that the society will understand that you should come up for your rights. Right now we had three presidents elected. When they disappear and party disappeared. So, same situation will happen for this ruling party as well.”³¹⁰ Also, a respondent from the Women’s Party adds that “I think

³⁰⁹Interview conducted with the Conservative Party, 28 November 2010

³¹⁰Interview conducted with the Democratic Movement-United Georgia, 30 November 2010

democracy because we have democracy or nothing.”³¹¹ Although many respondents are optimistic about a democratic change within the short term, an interviewee from PASOS disagrees with the idea of democratization in the short term. He unfolds his challenging perspective by denoting “within two or three years, it would not be democratic development much, in ten-fifteen years there would be much progress, I am optimistic about that and also in the long term.”³¹²

Fourthly, the role of the international actors and the Georgian neighbors are depicted as key factor for the Georgian democratization in the future. Some of the respondents underline the role of the international actors and the Georgian membership to the international organization such as NATO and the supranational organizations i.e. the EU. The Georgian membership to NATO is seen as inevitable in order to be under the protection of Euro-Atlantic zone in case of the Russian aggression by some of the respondents. Also, the respondents highlight that to become a part of the Western-oriented international organization is necessary not only for maintain Georgian security, but also the respondents point out that it is also inevitable for the further democratization attempt in the country. For instance, a respondent from the Netherlands Institute for Multi-Party Democracy underlines the role of the international actors and the neighboring countries of Georgia by denoting “Stable course for democratization further links in European institutions, regional policy, the South Caucasus, Turkey as well. We

³¹¹Interview conducted with the Women’s Party, 2 December 2010

³¹²Interview conducted with the PASOS, 13 December 2010

should think about our neighbors. And for democratization, you have this notion of democracy, and Russian sovereign democracy.”³¹³ At this point, Russia is defined as a democratic threat for Georgia for taking further steps towards democratization. Hence, to be the member of the Western world does not only indicate the security need of Georgia, also, it is vital for the country’s democratic development. A respondent from the GFSIS defines the future of Georgia as

Part of Europe, democratic and inclusive democratic country, normal, join to NATO and not national security problems. More stable and strong statehood. It is ideal, but in reality what will happen in the neighborhood, Turkey, Russia, Iran and EU. If Turkey joins EU, it would be great for Georgia because we will be neighbor with an EU country. We have to be a part of something; we don’t want to be part of Russia. Not because we hate Russia because they could not help us to become normal nation.³¹⁴

An academician claims that he is optimistic about the future of Georgia because it will become a democratic and a European country and it will become a member of NATO in order to be protected from Russia.³¹⁵ On the other hand, another respondent, who is an academician and from the Social Democratic Party, states to expect a new type of democracy except classical liberal democracy as a result of the change in the democratization studies in the international level. She claims that “I am more optimistic about democracy, I am not sure that it will be classical liberal democracy because we are changing. What kind of political structure will

³¹³Interview conducted with the Netherlands Institute for Multi-Party Democracy, 2 December 2010

³¹⁴Interview conducted with the GFSIS, 22 November 2010

³¹⁵Interview conducted with an academician from Tbilisi State University, 5 December 2010

develop in Europe? You know these wikileaks scandal. I don't think democracy could sustain these change.”³¹⁶

In addition, the membership of the post-Soviet and post-communist countries to the EU inflames the Georgian demand to become a part of the Europe to complete the post-Soviet democratization process. At this point, the role of the external factors are overwhelmingly underlined for the democratization process, although the inner dynamics such as the initiatives of the ruling party, the position of the opposition parties seem to have secondary role for maintaining further democratization. For instance, a respondent from the Republican Party denotes the “Georgia’s European identity” by stating “To demonstrate to Europeans that we are Europeans. They have to believe that Georgia is part of Europe. The way they believe that Bulgaria is, Romania is, the way, I hope they will believe that Turkey is. They have to believe. They have, they should have not only impression but deep believe, that this is remote but part of Europe. This is how I see the future.”³¹⁷

Finally, some respondents claim that the stability and initiating further reforms would guarantee the democratization process in Georgia in the future. Also, they

³¹⁶Interview conducted with the Social Democratic Movement, 30 November 2010

³¹⁷Interview conducted with the Republican Party, September 2009

state that the modernization is also decisive for Georgia's future development. A respondent from the ruling party (UNM), claims that

I see the future of Georgia in an optimistic terms. There are many problems to face; the major problem is still Russia, but not only. We need extra effort to emancipate minds to make difference between pre-modern system values and modern system values although modernism comes. I believe that sooner or later Russians will realize that it is not their interest to have terrible relations with small but still its neighbor. I believe in the future many things will change.³¹⁸

Also, some of the respondents from the ruling party argue that stability is necessary for democratization in Georgia. Also, the ruling parties' officials try to answer the accusations related to over-centralization of power with the stability problem of the Georgian political system. In this sense, a respondent from a think tank indicates his perspective about the future of Georgia within the combination of stability and freedom in the same time. He denotes that

I am more optimistic than pessimistic. We progressed all together, I am not saying that we are now stable, always. But I think we have now better ground for stability, but also for democracy. The problem in countries like this, to combine stability and freedom. Easy you are free but unstable or you are stable but unfree. So the secret is to combine both. And I think we are moving. We have made some steps, in the direction of combining those things. And I think we develop the capacity.³¹⁹

In conclusion, most of the respondents are optimistic about the future of Georgia and positions the country as a part of the NATO and the EU in order to maintain the democratization. In this sense, to be involved in the Western world is perceived as the most crucial key for the democratization. In addition, the

³¹⁸Interview conducted with the UNM, 9 December 2010

³¹⁹Interview conducted with the CIPDD, September 2009

upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections in 2012 and 2013 constitute very decisive role on further democratization as a result of the constitutional amendments, which necessitates transformation from the presidential system to the parliamentary one. Although many respondents are doubtful about the result of the elections, they share the same perspective that the more pluralist parliament in terms of the political party representations, the democratic space will appear in the Georgian political scene.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In this study, the role of the political parties in Georgia during the democratization process is aimed to be examined in accordance with the elite-led approach. As a part of the post-Soviet democratization, the Georgian democratization process reinforces the importance of the political elites to take initiatives towards maintaining democratic values in the political system. In Georgia, the early attempts towards democratization were taken within the Rose Revolution. The major discourse of the political elites during the Rose Revolution was to attain a new path for Georgia in accordance with the Western democratic structure. However, after the former opposition elites were able to get the power, the democratization discourse was hampered due to the dominant political party system as well as the over-powering impact of presidentialism.

According to the data obtained during the field research in Georgia, a major obstacle of the political party system is the domination of the ruling party as a source of the overly centralized power. The presidential system can be named as the major reason for the over-centralization of power because it leads the presidents have an influential role on executive branch, especially, when the parliament is also ruled by the same political party. For the Georgian case,

Saakashvili holds very strong position as a president and his party, the UNM has the majority to control over the Georgian Parliament. As compared to the impact of the ruling party in the decision-making mechanism, the Georgian opposition parties seem very weak, fragmented and non-influential one in order to affect the executive power. Hence, the Georgian political party system does not offer a pluralistic ground for the democratization process to take root.

The relationship between the ruling party and the opposition parties is vital for maintaining further democratization in Georgia. Generally, the Georgian opposition elite was the former members of the UNM during the unified opposition movement against the rule of Shevardnadze. When the UNM acquired the executive power, the internal elite struggle appeared inside the party. As a result, different political actors decided to break up from the party structure and preferred establishing their own parties in order to challenge the rule of Saakashvili. This situation presents the same dynamics during the pre-Rose Revolution process, as an attained target of transformation of power between different political elites instead of any steps toward a real change. Hence, the Georgian opposition parties follow a political path to criticize the rule of Saakashvili instead of bringing new political discourse to bring an alternative in the political system. Also, in accordance with the respondents' analysis, their institutional problems derived from the lack of social basis, ideological ground, lack of public trust and financial problems prevent them from engendering a real balancing zone vis-à-vis the ruling party. On the other hand, the ruling party fails

to offer a common ground for the opposition parties in the political decision making mechanism for obtaining important decisions about the country as a part of the political elite cooperation towards democratization. For instance, this problematic attitude of the ruling party can be observable during the constitutional amendment process, which has taken place in 2010, as it was indicated by the interviewees in the Chapter IV. Mainly, the approach of the ruling party towards the opposition parties is not an encompassing one in order to reach a consensus on the basic issues related to the democratization. Instead, the ruling party decided to build a political discourse by dividing the opposition parties as the parliamentary and non-parliamentary one. This division cause non-parliamentary opposition to marginalize and exclude them from the political arena by naming counter-productive for reform initiation process attained by the ruling party.

As a result of the lack of cooperation and consensus between the ruling party and the opposition parties, the international actors are seen as the major intermediary force, which maintain a balance between both. Surprisingly, the international actors, for instance, embassies of the Western countries are depicted as the key negotiator for the opposition parties and the ruling party in order to offer a common ground for both sides to discuss about the policies, which are crucial for the fate of the country. Also, the international actors are the substantial

contributors for the capacity building, ideological basis for the political parties as well as financial supports.

Another obstacle of the Georgian political party system is its lack of grass-roots movement resulted with ‘apathy’ and ‘mistrust’ from the Georgian society about the politics. As it is indicated in the Chapter III, the historical background of the Georgian political parties depends on the political and/or dissidents movement highly influenced by the major Georgian political elites. Therefore, the role of the political elites is always discernible in the political mobilizations, which did not emerge as a result of a bottom-up mobilization. Instead, almost all the political uprisings in the pre-independence and/or post-independence period in Georgia emerged due to top to bottom activities. Basically, as an outcome of this elite and/or leadership based political party structure the permanence of the political parties does not last long and it is dependent on the success or/and failure of the leaders as a decisive factor.

Finally, although the Georgian political party system has numerous parties, which seem active in the political arena, their efficiency and the active role in the decision making mechanism is questionable. No doubt, it is not a one-sided failure, which is needed to lay to the ruling party only. The opposition parties are very fragmented and weak in order to compete with the ruling party. Also, they are not able to form vital policies in order to attract the attention of the voters.

However, the ruling party, itself, has the discourse of democratization as the anchor of the Rose Revolution. At this point, Saakashvili's commitment to democratic change is a critical element for the Georgian political system because the sphere of influence of his party is incomparable with the opposition parties, which some of them are almost deprived of political participation. Hence, the convergence towards semi-authoritarian tendencies of Saakashvili is a crucial problem of the Georgian political system. Still, although the Georgian political parties present a blurred picture for present democratic environment, the Georgian political party system carries tendencies towards democratization. The constitutional amendment, which will be in force in 2013, may offer more pluralistic ground for the Georgian political parties with increasing the power of the Georgian parliament.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

INTERVIEW LIST

The UNM, 9 December 2010, 15 December 2010

The Christian Democratic Movement, 08 December 2010

The Conservative Party, 28 November 2010

Women's Party, 2 December 2010

Alasania Movement, 15 December 2010

The Democratic Movement, United Georgia, 30 November 2010

The New Rights Party, September 2009

The Labour Party, September 2009

The Social Democratic Movement, 30 November 2010

The Socialist Youth Movement, 1 December 2010

The Netherlands Institute for Multi-Party Democracy, 2 December 2010

Tbilisi State University, 1-5-7-11-15 December 2010

Ilia Chavchavadze University, 19 November 2010

Liberty Institute, 30 November 2010, 9 December 2010

PASOS, 13 December 2010

Article 42, 16 December 2010

GFSIS, 22 November 2010

ISFED, 14 December 2010

The Open Society Foundation, 30 November 2010

CRRC, 30 November 2010

Eurasia Partnership Foundation, 10 December 2010

GYLA, 16 December 2010

Appendix B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How do you evaluate the Georgian multi-party system?
2. How would you analyze the role of the opposition parties for democratization?
3. How do you see the relationship between the ruling party and the opposition parties for democratization in Georgia?
4. How would you describe the role of international actors for democratization in the country?
5. How would you analyze the civil rights and liberties?
6. What lacks the Georgian political party system most?
7. What lacks the Georgian democratization?
8. How would you analyze the constitutional amendment and electoral code reform for democratization?
9. Are there any steps taken by the government to democratize the country?
10. How do you see the future of Georgia?

Appendix C

TEZ FOTOKOPİSİ İZİN FORMU

ENSTİTÜ

Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü

Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü

Uygulamalı Matematik Enstitüsü

Enformatik Enstitüsü

Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü

YAZARIN

Soyadı : KARADAĞ

Adı : YELDA

Bölümü : AVRASYA ÇALIŞMALARI

TEZİN ADI (İngilizce) : POLITICAL PARTIES AND DEMOCRATIZATION
IN GEORGIA

TEZİN TÜRÜ : Yüksek Lisans

Doktora

1. Tezimin tamamından kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir.
2. Tezimin içindekiler sayfası, özet, indeks sayfalarından ve/veya bir bölümünden kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla fotokopi alınabilir.
3. Tezimden bir (1) yıl süreyle fotokopi alınamaz.

TEZİN KÜTÜPHANEYE TESLİM TARİHİ: