

# **Prioritizing the National Question in Post-Communist Democratic Transitions: the Case of Croatia and Armenia**

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## **Abstract**

The thesis studies the democratization process of countries in conflict based on the cases of Armenia and Croatia. It argues that the prioritization of the national question during the transition period brings to the emergence of non-democratic regime, which can be removed only with the strong cooperation of the united opposition and the civil society.

I developed this argument through a detailed historical analysis of the political developments of the two countries applying the method of process tracing, finding evidence of path dependence during the transition phase until the second presidential elections, and looked for ‘critical junctures’ for the later stage exploring the major events that ensured the successful consolidation of the Croatian democracy. Notably the critical juncture did not coincide with the end of the conflict, but much later.

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## Introduction

When in 1974 the Portuguese Armed Forces revolted against the government overthrowing the fascist dictatorship, no one could imagine that this liberalization process, currently known as the third wave of democratization would spread first of all to Spain then to other countries of Southern Europe as well as Latin America. This wave continued with new power at the end of the 1980s, when Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of glasnost and the perestroika democratic reforms led to the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War. As a result several Central and Eastern European States declared a change of the regime from totalitarianism to democracy. Among them Hungary experienced the smoothest transition through negotiations between the communist and democratic elites, Czechoslovakia achieved a change of regime through pro-democracy demonstrations, while in Poland the Solidarity movement, which was the first non-communist party that emerged in 1981 forced the communist elites to organize parliamentary elections.

In the two largest multiethnic states – Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, democratization occurred due to the rise of national movements in most of their constituent republics, which brought to their demand for independence. In Yugoslavia, the leader of the communist party Slobodan Milosevic, attempting to strengthen the federal center, tried to overturn the 1974 Yugoslav Constitutional order, according to which the republics enjoyed autonomy within the federation. Two western republics Slovenia and Croatia, opposing it, declared free elections, which brought to victory of anti-communist pro-independence elites. In Croatia, the victorious party – the Croatian Democratic Union, made amendments to the existing constitution, according to which the large Serbian population was proclaimed a minority within the Croatian state, abolishing their status as a constituent nation of Croatia. This resulted in the armed conflict

between the two ethnic groups which was not to be resolved until 1995. Before that, from 1992-1995 Croatia also got involved in the devastating war in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In the Soviet Union, the liberalization contributed to the reemergence of national questions throughout the Union, the strongest of which was expressed in one of its smallest republics – Armenia. In February 1988 mass demonstrations started both in Armenia and the Armenian populated Nagorno Karabakh Autonomous Region of Azerbaijan for unification with Armenia. As the Soviet authorities refused to transfer the enclave to Armenia, Armenia announced its decision to secede from the Soviet Union by proclaiming independence and paving her way towards democratization. Soon after the independence and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, a war started in Nagorno Karabakh between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces, that was stopped with the ceasefire agreement signed in 1994.

As seen from the cases of Armenia and Croatia, both countries started their transition to democracy through experiencing violent conflicts. Although there was a difference in the character of the conflicts, in the case of Croatia it being internal and in the case of Armenia – external, they influenced the democratization path of both countries in a similar way in the sense that the making of democratic institutions in both countries had only a formal role, as the ruling elites had an ultimate goal to manage the conflicts, rather than to make democratic reforms in domestic politics. In this respect it is crucial to study how the presence of conflict influences the democratizing countries and analyze the political discourse and the transition politics in those countries. Thus, the aim of this thesis is to study the democratization process of countries in conflict based on the cases of Armenia and Croatia.

The anti-communist leaders that were elected in the first democratic elections in Armenia and Croatia in 1990, were supposed to lead the countries towards democracy. However, those elites taking advantage of the ongoing conflict, strengthened their power over the countries' politics, oppressed the opposition and the free democratic media. Moreover, the subsequent

elections that held soon after the conflicts were over were declared by OSCE observers to have had a number of breaches of electoral law; the opposition candidates in their turn announced the results to be unfair. Therefore, the end of the conflict did not lead to imminent progress in democratization and both countries failed in consolidating democracy during and after the conflict. Despite not reaching change of power in 1997, Croatia was able to develop a consolidated democracy at later stage through defeating the nationalist elites, while Armenia is still on her way towards democratic consolidation. Thus, the research question that this thesis will try to address to is “What are the factors ensuring successful democratization in the circumstances of ethnic conflict and after its termination?” To answer this question I will test the following hypotheses:

H<sub>1</sub>: The prioritization of the national question over democratization in consensus-based transitions results in the failure of the elites to consolidate democracy.

H<sub>2</sub>: The state of emergency, resulting from ethnic conflict creates opportunities for political elites to strengthen their power over the country's politics, while also oppressing opposition forces.

H<sub>3</sub>: Consolidation of democracy is more likely with strong unification of opposition forces and civil society.

The comparative case study of the two aforementioned countries is productive for a number of reasons. First of all, both countries found themselves in ethnic war while experiencing the first electoral democracy. Second, there has been paid little attention to the problem of democratization in the circumstances of ethnic conflict, concentrating more on the causes of the conflicts and the decisions of the ruling elites about how to manage the conflict. Stepan and Linz address the so-called problem of ‘stateness’ in democratization, however they fail to provide a detailed explanation related to the interaction between conflicts and stateness. Another scholar Rustow argues that national unity is the “background” condition in all democratizing states, but does not provide any explanation as how this national unity must be

achieved. Thus, this thesis may propose a new approach towards a study of democratic transformations in the circumstances of war, where an external and internal conflict between two ethnic groups plays a crucial role in the democratic regime outcome even if the state itself is a mono-ethnic one, in the case of Armenia, and multiethnic in the case of Croatia.

And last, but not least, the topic is directly connected with the current events in North Africa and the Middle East. While due to mass mobilization the dictatorial regimes collapsed, these countries are facing very serious challenge for democratic consolidation. Thus this research may propose the most important conditions for democratic consolidation and an alternative path of sequencing events, from the making of the Constitution to establishing electoral democracy, contributing to the explanation of the fourth wave of democratization.

## **Methodology and Research Design**

The primary methodology of the thesis is configurative case study comparison applying the tools of comparative historical analysis and process tracing. As the research will examine the two stages of development of Croatia and Armenia – a) from the declaration of independence to the second presidential elections; and b) from the second presidential elections to today's different qualities of democracy established in those countries, a detailed comparative historical analysis will be conducted. Particularly, for the purpose of this case study I will focus on sequence of events on the path towards democratization providing evidence of path dependence in both countries for the first stage of the democratization process. My empirical work reveals that the main independent variable limiting democratization at this stage in both countries was the prioritization of the national question over democratization by the state elites, affecting the outcome of the second presidential elections. For the second stage I will study how the same outcome of the first stage shifted Croatia's direction towards a consolidated democracy (path departure), while Armenia is still in the making of democratic consolidation (path dependence).



Within this stage I will look for critical “junctures” that is, exploring only the major events that shifted the democratization path. The independent variables that explain the divergence of outcomes between the two countries are the unification of opposition and the civil society forces leading to my main dependent variable, that is – the consolidation of democracy.

Despite the effectiveness of this method applied to my research, there may be some limitations as concerned the gathering of the detailed historical evidence, the lack of which may at some point disrupt the causal chain of the events. However, I will try to fulfill this gap through such primary sources as politicians’ speeches, interviews, and published documents.

This method of path dependence is discussed by Pierson, when he states that “even ‘small’ events of the early stage may lead to a huge impact, while the ‘large’ events at the later stage may be less consequential”.<sup>1</sup> Derived from this my main finding is that because the Armenian movement gave greater priority to national unification and not democratization, as a result all the political parties placed national question above democratization, while in Croatia, the movement was initially for independence and democratization, and therefore, there were parties which considered democracy above national question, that on later stage contributed to the consolidation. Therefore, my framework explains both the divergence of the two countries and the timing of the democratic consolidation in Croatia.

In order to test my hypotheses and answer my research question, my thesis is structured in the following way. The first chapter provides a theoretical framework of democratization during conflict.

The second chapter provides a detailed historical analysis of Croatia and Armenia until 1998 in a comparative perspective, exploring both differences and similarities of the early phase

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Pierson, “Not Just what, but When: Timing and Sequence in Political Processes”, *Studies in American Political Development*, 14 (Spring 2000), 75.

of democratization which detects elements of path dependence and lack of democratic consolidation.

The third chapter, focusing on critical junctures, studies the empowerment the opposition forces and civil society organizations in Croatia, as well as discusses the features of path-dependence in Armenia, suggesting some prospects for democratic consolidation. In this chapter, I outline how the theoretical framework explains both the change in the Croatian case and the continuity (i.e. lack of democratic consolidation) in the Armenian case.

The conclusion discusses the main findings derived from the hypotheses, as well as summarizes the main arguments of the thesis.

## Chapter 1 - Theoretical Considerations on Democratization in Post-Communist Europe

After the first democratic elections in the 1990s in almost all Central Eastern European countries, Ekiert predicted three possible outcomes of the political transition in those countries: (1) a one-party state with a centrally-controlled economy; (2) the anarchization of the polity and the economy, with the long period of instability due to ethnic or religious cleavages; and (3) the formation of non-democratic regimes.<sup>2</sup> Later Ekiert asserts that the transition to non-democratic regimes is more plausible to the genuine democratization, due to the complex nature of the current economic and political crisis in the region.<sup>3</sup> However, surprisingly, the majority of Central Eastern European states underwent serious political transformations and by the time of the second democratic elections most of them experienced change of power, or in Samuel Huntington's term "two turnover test"<sup>4</sup>, was successfully passed leading to the consolidation of those newly established democracies. This meant that the current political elites were willing to leave their power in order to keep the sustainable development of genuine democratic transition. Among them are Poland, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, to some extent Slovenia. Interestingly, those countries which did not experience change of power after the second decisive democratic elections, among them Croatia, Serbia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, experienced harsh inter-ethnic conflicts before the second elections and those conflicts therefore had their impact on the consolidation of democracies in those countries. In this respect Ekiert's second and the third possible predictions intertwined, i.e. ethnic conflicts brought the formation of non-democratic regimes.

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<sup>2</sup> Grzegorz Ekiert, "Democratization Processes in East Central Europe: A Theoretical Reconsideration", *British Journal of Political Science* 21, no.3 (July 1991), 287-288

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 288

<sup>4</sup> This is a measure of democratic consolidation which becomes observable "if the party or group that takes power in the initial election at the time of the transition loses a subsequent elections and turns over power to those election winners, and if those election winners then peacefully turn over power to winners of a later election", see Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the late Twentieth Century* (Norman: the University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 266-267.

Those non-democratic regimes are often characterized as competitive-authoritarianism. In those regimes formal democratic institutions serve as a tool to obtain and exercise political authority. Elections are generally free of massive fraud, however the incumbents manipulate electoral results, abusing state resources. The opposition candidates in their turn are denied adequate media coverage, sometimes harassed, or even jailed.<sup>5</sup> Linz characterizes this type of regime as “diminished form of authoritarianism”<sup>6</sup>, while Freedom House labels them as “partly free”.<sup>7</sup> Why do those countries often turn towards competitive authoritarianism? The reason is that during transition and consolidation period the democratizing countries face several challenges and not all of them manage to overcome them. The discussion of those challenges follows.

### 1.1. Challenges for Democratic Transition

The study of the third wave of democratization implies that the regime change happens in two phases: regime transition and democratic consolidation. Democratic transition is the deconstruction and disintegration of the old regime, and the shift from old governing structures to new.<sup>8</sup> As O'Donnell and Schmitter point out, the transition is ‘an interval between one political regime and another’.<sup>9</sup> To ensure the smooth interval between transition and consolidation, there are considerable challenges that the old regime faces, before passing on to the stage of consolidation. A considerable part of literature emphasizes the importance of the

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<sup>5</sup> Steven Levitsky and Lucan A. Way, “Elections without Democracy: The Rise of Competitive Authoritarianism,” *Journal of Democracy* 13, no. 2 (April 2002), 52-53.

<sup>6</sup> Juan Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* (London: Lynne Rienner, 2000), 34.

<sup>7</sup> See the official website of Freedom House, <http://www.freedomhouse.org>

See the search results for the respective country

<sup>8</sup> Graem Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization: Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process* (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 2000), 8.

<sup>9</sup> Guillermo O'Donnell and Phillip Shmitter, *Transitions from Democracy: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 6.

elites in the transition phase.<sup>10</sup> This is expressed in the strong commitment of the old and new elites to establish the rules of the democratic game, which must not be challenged by either of them. Hagopian defines this cooperation as ‘negotiated agreements that remove from the political agenda sources of potentially destabilizing conflict, which are viewed favorably to bring about and consolidate democracy’.<sup>11</sup> She distinguishes between three kinds of political agreements: one of them occurs, when the participants, mainly party leaders are willing to compromise for political reasons.<sup>12</sup> Karl and Schmitter emphasize several essential components of these agreements. First, they are comprehensive and inclusive of virtually all politically significant actors. Second, they include an agreement between political parties to compete under the new rules of governance and a social contract between state agencies. Third, they emphasize rule-making as being the most important stage in the process of compromise.<sup>13</sup> Stepan and Linz, assert that those agreements can be considered successful when regime soft-liners finding alliances within moderate opposition sponsor the liberalization at the same time strengthening their positions within their hard-liners. The moderate opposition then fulfills the democratization rules with the mechanisms of transition.<sup>14</sup> Logically this successful cooperation between the elites can bring the nomination of the collective candidate or a party to come to power through popular elections. They are therefore effective if there is a mutual agreement that the democracy is above the other ideological backgrounds of the elites and consensus over the rules of the democratic game. The cooperation can be considered to be failed, when the rules of the

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<sup>10</sup> See Linz, Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America and Post-Communist Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), Guillermo O'Donnell, et al. *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives ; Transitions from Democracy: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986).

<sup>11</sup> Frances Hagopian, “Democracy by Undemocratic Means? Elites, Political Pacts and Regime Transition in Brazil,” *Comparative Political Studies* 23, no. 2 (July 1990), 149.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 149-150.

The second type of the pact uses politics for the resolution of non-political conflict; the third type puts the emphasis on the socio-economic reform in order to consolidate democracy.

<sup>13</sup> Terry Lynn Karl and Philippe Schmitter, “Modes of transition in Latin America, Southern and Eastern Europe” in Geoffrey Pridham, ed., *Transitions to Democracy: Comparative Perspectives from Southern Europe, Latin America and Eastern Europe* (Aldershot, Dartmouth, 1995), 165.

<sup>14</sup> Linz, Stepan, 296.

democratic game are constantly changed by the incumbent to ensure their secure re-election, or if there is no agreement among the elites about the constitutional structure of the state.

In the majority of post-communist Central and Eastern European States, the democratic transition occurred with the start of nationalist movements, which brought to the demand of those states' independence. Zaslavsky defines nationalism as “a political doctrine and social movement which ‘strives to make culture and polity congruent’ and has the principle aim of creating a modern nation state possessing sovereignty over a given territory”.<sup>15</sup> If we accept Nodia’s argument that “the idea of nationalism is impossible without the idea of democracy and that democracy never exists without nationalism”<sup>16</sup>, then those movements marked the beginning of the democratization process in those countries. However, those movements differed from country to country: some of them were for independence (Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia), others expressed irredentist claims (Armenia, Serbia),<sup>17</sup> the third group started with the independence movement later turning to irredentist one (Croatia).

Those nationalist movements brought another challenge for the transition to democracy - the so-called problem of “stateness”. Linz and Stepan define it as follows: “if there are profound differences about the territorial boundaries of the political community’s state and profound differences as to who has the right to citizenship in that state, there is what we call a ‘stateness’ problem”.<sup>18</sup> According to them, democratization can be successful when “there is no significant irredenta outside the state boundaries, if there is only one nation existing in the state, and if there is low cultural diversity within state”<sup>19</sup>. Of course, if there is a homogeneity between the ‘demos’ and the ‘polity’, it is much easier for the polity to facilitate the consensus-led

<sup>15</sup> Victor Zaslavsky, “Nationalism and Democratic Transition in Post-Communist Societies,” *Daedalus* 137, no. 1 (Spring, 1992), 106.

<sup>16</sup> Gia Nodia, “Nationalism and Democracy”, in Larry Diamond and Marc Plattner, eds., *Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict and Democracy* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 4.

<sup>17</sup> “Irredentism is described as a territorial claim of one state towards the other in order to unite the lost kin, residing in that state. See Stephen Saideman and William Ayres, *For Kin or Country: Xenophobia, Nationalism and War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 1.

<sup>18</sup> Linz, Stepan, 16.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 25.

transition and combine nation building with democratization. However, the cultural diversity within a state does not imply that democratic transition cannot be fulfilled. As Valerie Bunce notes, while discussing the issue of national homogeneity, “that does not mean, that national homogeneity guarantees democracy or that heterogeneity necessarily undermines it”.<sup>20</sup>

Rustow’s with three ‘phases’ and ‘the background condition’ necessary in the regime transition. The background condition is the ‘national unity’ – which implies that there is an understanding among the citizens that they will live in the common political community. The background condition, according to him, is best fulfilled when ‘national unity is accepted unthinkingly, is silently taken for granted and any vocal consensus about the national unity should make us wary’.<sup>21</sup> Rustow’s argument implies that before the actual start of democratization the issue of national unity has to be solved. The problem here is more about the methods of seeking this national unity. In order to seek national unity, people may have demands for the external population to unite with the inner one, or impose unity to people, who do not identify themselves as members of the territorial boundaries of the given state. The third method depends much on the degree to which elites politicize the urgency of national unity, prioritizing that over democratization. Alternatively, elites may accept the given territory of the state the way it is, either homogeneous or heterogeneous without disturbing the process of democratization. This is one of the most important problems that hinder the development of democracy. There must be an agreement on the territories as well as the composition of the nation, and this consensus “links the state project with the liberal project... Where the nation is a continuing source of contestation, and especially where statehood is disconnected from a liberal mission, therefore, is where democracy is least likely to materialize, and if materializing, to endure”.<sup>22</sup> With

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<sup>20</sup> Valerie Bunce, “Comparative Democratization: Big and Bounded Generalizations,” *Comparative Political Studies* 33, no. 700 (August-September, 2000), 712.

<sup>21</sup> Dankwart Rustow, “Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model,” in Anderson, ed., *Transitions to Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 25-26.

<sup>22</sup> Bunce, 712.

the absence of the national consensus to prioritize democracy over national contestation, all the other phases described by Rustow would have little, if any, effect.

In Rustow's model, with the background condition of national unity present, there is a 'preparatory phase', when elites find themselves in a 'prolonged and inconclusive political struggle', followed by 'decision phase', which implies that there should be a consensus among the elites on pluralism and they hurry to 'institutionalize the crucial aspect of democratic procedure'.

<sup>23</sup> If they themselves in the interface of the political parties do not have the above mentioned consensus on the prioritizing democracy over national contestation, but rather reach consensus on the methods of how to reach the background condition of national unity, the process will be disturbed and will be likely to threaten transition. In the presence of this kind of events, as O'Donnell and Schmitter explicitly point out, the agreements among the elites cannot be effective.<sup>24</sup>

Despite all of those disadvantages during the first period of democratization, the transition takes place in the sense that the elites 'institutionalize the democratic procedure', in forms of the clear separation of powers, establishment of different political parties, etc. However, those institutions are controlled by incumbent elites, oppressing the activities of the opposition, with the strong presidency controlling both the parliament and the judiciary. This is mainly due to failure in reaching the consensus about the prioritization of the rules of the democratic game before the actual transition, which gives opportunity for incumbent government to abuse those rules, bringing to the aforementioned competitive authoritarian regime. And as Cular would interpret Di Palma's argument, "democracy can be crafted almost entirely in the transitional phase if the main players achieve a sufficiently strong consensus on the

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<sup>23</sup> Rustow, 27.

<sup>24</sup> O'Donnell, Schmitter, *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule*, 37



basic rules of the game”.<sup>25</sup> The presence of conflict creates a state of emergency that amplifies the elites' ability to justify the concentration of power and lack of progress in democratic transition.

## 1.2. Challenges for Democratic Consolidation

As far as the transition phase is completed, the next step is the consolidation phase. Democracy can be considered consolidated when “the new structures and processes obtained from transition have become stabilized and so embodied in the collective consciousness of the society that they gain normative authority”<sup>26</sup>. Thus, consolidation is a political regime which with its complex system of institutions and rules has become ‘the only game in town’.<sup>27</sup> Rustow terms it as a ‘habituation phase’, which implies that the political elites trust the new rules, and the newly accepted elites from outside had to accept those already well-established rules as an undisputable precondition for realizing their goals.<sup>28</sup> This however occurs when the background condition of national unity and preparatory phase are fulfilled.

It is during this phase, when the role of the civil society becomes evident. This does not imply that civil society does not play a considerable role in the transitional period even if democracy is being introduced from above. At some point, different movements and associations should come together, identifying themselves as “the people” demanding democracy and removal of authoritarian elites.<sup>29</sup> As Gill asserts although people can participate through involvement in ‘founding elections’, ‘popular mobilization is short-lived and the populace becomes demobilized as democratization proceeds’.<sup>30</sup> In the Eastern European communist context, there were considerable differences of the level of development of the civil society prior

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<sup>25</sup> Goran Cular, “Political Development in Croatia: Fast Transition – Postponed Consolidation”, *Politička Misao* 37, no. 5 (2000), 34.

<sup>26</sup> Gill, 8.

<sup>27</sup> Linz, Stepan, 5.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 32-33

<sup>29</sup> Shmitter, O'Donnell, *Transition from Authoritarian Rule*, 54.

<sup>30</sup> Gill, 45.

to the start of democratization. Yugoslavia, the control of civil society was considerably looser, while in the Soviet republics, being controlled by the hegemonic center – Moscow, all aspects of people's life in those republics were linked with the state apparatus, the communist elites within the republics also being dependent on the center. Therefore, the popular organization on the eve of the democratization there included all of the 'people' – 'us' struggling against the apparatus – 'them'.<sup>31</sup> In Yugoslavia, Gill argues, that when the federal unity disappeared, ethnic elites using their position in the state power, attracted masses using the disintegrative ethnic nationalism, at the same time silencing the-motivated-for change civil society, while in Soviet Union, the central elites were pressured after democratic and nationalist opposition in the societies of the republics united with ethnic elites demanding that democracy could be achieved through destruction of the Union.<sup>32</sup> A clear example of the Yugoslav case was Croatia, while in the Soviet Union – Armenia.

During the consolidation phase, however, the civil society's role becomes even more important, as it turns into a “watchdog” of those democratic institutions, created during the transition period ensuring the accountability and transparency of their actions. A considerable part of literature argues about the great impact of the civil society on the consolidation of democracy. Linz and Stepan define civil as “the arena of the polity where self-organizing and relatively autonomous groups, movements, and individuals attempt to articulate values, to create associations and solidarities, and to advance their interests, including manifold social movements (women's groups, neighborhood associations, religious groupings, and intellectual organizations), as well as associations from all social strata (such as trade unions, entrepreneurial groups, and professional associations)”.<sup>33</sup> Their definition seems plausible in the case of Western democracies, where there are long established traditions of political culture, and people do not

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<sup>31</sup> Georg Sorensen, *Democracy and Democratization: Processes and Prospects in a Changing World*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), 59.

<sup>32</sup> Gill, 232-233.

<sup>33</sup> Linz and Stepan, “Toward Consolidated Democracies,” *Journal of Democracy* 7, no. 2 (1996), 17.

struggle for the electoral justice, but rather introduce their interests to the democratically elected governments. In Eastern European post-communist context, however, where the consolidation is not completely reached, the civil society has much broader meaning: the primary goal of those groups is to establish electoral justice and to defeat semi-authoritarian leaders paving way to the consolidation of democracy.

The demands of civil society are channeled through non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which with their activity can ensure constant flow of information to the masses, showing the governmental insufficiency publicly, at the same time articulating their demands promoting political reforms especially in transitional states that do not have well-established ideological party-systems.<sup>34</sup> Taking this into account, Tusalem states, “A state with low levels of civic associationalism is more prone to having institutions with substandard performance in terms of bureaucratic effectiveness, while states with an abundance of vibrant autonomous groups are more likely to experience effective governance”.<sup>35</sup>

Schmitter identifies several processes of the civil society, contributing to the consolidation of democracy, including governing the behavior of its members ensuring collective commitments; providing self expression for individual demands, without trying to remove elites from the political system; and most importantly, “civil society provides important reservoirs of potential resistance to arbitrary or tyrannical action by rulers, whether they be illegitimate usurpers or intolerant majorities”.<sup>36</sup> Demes and Forbrig discussing the civic action in defeating semi-authoritarian governments in post-communist Europe, state that although those regimes can rely on the support of a considerable part of the population, being able to rig the elections, those elections represent vulnerable moment for the regime, providing opportunity for pro-

<sup>34</sup> Rollin Tusalem, “A Boon or a Bane? The Role of the civil society in Third and Fourth Wave democracies”, *International Political Science Review* 28, no. 3 (2007), 364-365.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 365.

<sup>36</sup> Schmitter, “Civil Society East and West”, in Larry Diamond, et al., *Consolidating the Third Wave Democracies: Themes and Perspectives* (London: the Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 247.

democracy forces as well as civic groups “to appeal to the population for support and to contest the legitimacy of the government”. According to them, “pressure is exerted by the democratic opposition and the citizens, activated through nation-wide information and mobilization campaigns launched by civil society in elections”.<sup>37</sup> According to this logic this implies a strong cooperation between democratically oriented opposition and civil society forces, even if that would mean that civil society together with the economic interests pursues political ones as well. However, the primary goal of those groups is to reach change of power, by forcing the authoritarian elites to give up. As the empirical evidence will show in the consequent chapters, those groups have a strong impact for the defeat of competitive authoritarian regimes.

Taking into consideration the challenges facing both for transition and consolidation of democracy I argue that the prioritization of the national question during the transition period brings to the emergence of non-democratic regime, which can be removed only with the strong cooperation of the united opposition and the civil society.

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<sup>37</sup> Pavol Demes and Joerg Forbrig, “Civic Action and Democratic Power Shifts: on Strategies and Resources” in Pavol Demes and Joerg Forbrig, eds., *Reclaiming Democracy: Civil Society and Electoral Change in Central and Eastern Europe* (Washington, D. C.: ERSTE Foundation, 2007), 178-179.

## Chapter 2 - Armenia and Croatia: from Nationalist Movements to the Failure of the “Two-Turnover Test”

This chapter deals with the nationalist movements started both in Armenia and Croatia affected by the democratization process in Eastern Europe at the end of the 1980s. To discover both the similarities and differences of those movements I will apply the process tracing method, doing a comparative historical analysis of those countries until 1997 in Croatia, and 1996 in Armenia. These were the years, when the second presidential elections in both countries failed to bring about the change of power, while this did occur in the other post-communist countries of Eastern Europe. Additionally, the OSCE and other international observers announced the results of both of the elections to be unfair. Before that those two countries experienced harsh inter-ethnic conflicts, Croatia being involved in war, first in its own territory with the Serbs, and later in Bosnia and Herzegovina, while Armenia was fighting over the Armenian-populated enclave of Nagorno Karabakh, which was at that time an autonomous region within the Republic of Azerbaijan. My aim here is not to discuss the reasons and the process of those wars, but rather analyze those political developments in Croatia and Armenia, affected by those wars, as well as the political discourse and the transition politics in the aforementioned countries. I will focus on sequence of events on the path towards democratization looking for evidence of path dependence, which will allow me to explore if the chain of events in the early stage can explain the reasons why Croatia managed to defeat the nationalist leaders later, paving its way towards democratic consolidation.

Within the chapter I will test the following two hypotheses:

*H<sub>1</sub>: The prioritization of the national question over democratization in consensus-based transitions results in the failure of the elites to consolidate democracy.*

*H<sub>2</sub>: The state of emergency, resulting from ethnic conflict creates opportunities for political elites to strengthen their power over the country's politics, while also oppressing opposition forces.*

## 2.1. Armenia and Croatia: the problem of ‘stateness’ and the Search of National Unity

This subchapter explores the emergence of the problem of ‘stateness’ both in Croatia and Armenia, which according to Linz and Stepan’s argument discussed in the first chapter, creates additional difficulties for the transition towards democracy. In the case of Croatia, the problem emerged because of the inner population opposing independence of the state. In the case of Armenia, the external kin demanded unification with the internal one.

The emergence of the nationalist movements in Croatia started in 1989 mainly in response to growing Serbian radicalism under the leadership of Slobodan Milosevic, who soon after gaining the leadership of the Yugoslav Communist Party, tried to strengthen the federal center by overturning the Yugoslav Constitutional order, according to which all republics enjoyed considerable autonomy and equality within the Federation.<sup>38</sup> Slovenia and Croatia strongly opposed this policy and in January, 1990, the delegates of both countries left the Congress of the League of Communists, ‘marking the end of a unified Yugoslav political leadership’.<sup>39</sup> Due to this, the Croatian communist party, which was at that time represented by the League of Communists of Croatia (SKH), divided into two conservative wings - hardliners, who supported Milosevic, and reformers, who saw Milosevic as a threat.<sup>40</sup> The reformed communists adopted a new name - SKH-SDP, adding the suffix the Party of Democratic Change, and decided to hold multiparty elections, which was for them largely an attempt to get out of a conflicting situation at

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<sup>38</sup> Marko Attila Hoare, “The War of Yugoslav Succession,” in *Central and Southeast European Politics Since 1989*, ed. Sabrina Ramet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 116.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Sharon Fisher, *Political Change in Post-Communist Slovakia and Croatia: From Nationalist to Europeanist* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 29.

the level of Federal Communist Party of Yugoslavia rather than a preferred democratic solution.<sup>41</sup>

SKH-SDP's electoral position and program were contradictory, on the one hand convincing the voters that they will have a truly Western-type of social-democratic party, on the other hand trying to mobilize their own members, some of them opposing political pluralism. However, insisting on the preservation of the federal structure of Yugoslavia, it opposed the program of national parties that were in favor of federal reorganization of Yugoslavia, as a prerequisite for their independence.<sup>42</sup> However, this party attracted non-Croatian voters, such as Serbs and Yugoslavs. Importantly in those elections the party presented itself as a moderate leftist party ready to join other center parties who aimed at solving social and economic problems.<sup>43</sup> In opposition to the Communist Party the first three political organizations which were founded in Croatia in February and March 1989 were the Association for a Yugoslav Democratic Initiative (UJDI), the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), and the Croatian Social-Liberal Alliance, which later became the Croatian Social-Liberal Party (HSLs). The elections marked the victory of HDZ, with the leadership of Franjo Tudjman, who being a populist nationalist leader, sought for Croatia's independence.<sup>44</sup>

Coming to power HDZ adopted constitutional amendments, under which the Serbs which made up about 15% of the Croatian population, would lose their status as the constituent nation in Croatia turning it into a minority.<sup>45</sup> This was considered to be a strong negative message to ethnic Serbs, comprised a large community in Croatia, who in

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<sup>41</sup> Goran Cular, "Political Development in Croatia," 32.

<sup>42</sup> Nenad Zakosek, «Political Parties and the Party System in Croatia» in *The 1990 and 1992/93 Sabor Elections in Croatia: Analysis, Documents and Data*, ed. Ivan Siber (Berlin: Sigma, 1997), 42.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>44</sup> Hoare, 117.

<sup>45</sup> Fisher, 58.

response rebelled in the Serbian populated area of Krajina (Srpska Republika Krajina) in 1990. After Croatia's declaration of independence on June 25, 1991, the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) controlled by Serbia, with the support of Krajina Serbs, gained the Croatian lands, at the same time, expelling ethnic Croats. The war ended in December 1991, when the area became a United Nations protected demilitarized zone resulting in the loss of a third of the Croatian territory, which was not to be returned until 1995.<sup>46</sup>

In contrast to the Croatian nationalist movement, which initially demanded more autonomy within the Yugoslav federation and later turned to an independence movement, Armenia's path towards democratization started with the Nagorno Karabakh movement in 1988, when mass demonstrations both in Armenia, and the Armenian populated enclave of Azerbaijan, the Autonomous region of Nagorno Karabakh for the unification with Armenia shook the stability of the Soviet Union. This was to a large extent the result of the General Secretary of the Communist Party Mikhail Gorbachyov's policy of glasnost (openness) and perestroika (reconstructing) intended to renovate and improve the communist system, which however did not foresee how the openness of the new discussions on history will lead to the re-emergence of the "the national questions" in the territory of the USSR. Mass demonstrations started in Nagorno Karabakh at the beginning of February 1988. On February 20<sup>th</sup>, 1988, the Soviet of People's Deputies of Nagorno Karabakh officially requested from Moscow to unite with Armenia, with the legislature voting 110 to 17 in favor of unification, which later was denounced as illegal by both Moscow and Baku.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Mieczysław Boduszynski, *Regime Change in Yugoslav Successor States: Divergent Paths towards a New Europe* (Baltimore: the Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), 82-83.

<sup>47</sup> Joseph Masih and Robert Krikorian, *Armenia at the Crossroads* (Amsterdam: the Gordon and Breach Publishing Group, 1990), 5.



A leadership group emerged by June 1988 facilitating the establishment of independence of Armenia, which was called 'Karabakh Committee'. Gradually this committee which had the support of overwhelming majority of the population became a de facto opposition to the communist leadership, controlling political affairs, by regular meetings attended by the crowd in the Opera House Square, which keeping within the 'legal' limits and keeping order within its ranks represented a model of democracy.<sup>48</sup> This committee later started to deal not only with the problems of Karabakh, but also with all those concerning Armenian internal politics. However, the primary goal at its formation was national reunification rather than democratization.

In July 1988, Gorbachyov labeling Armenians as nationalists ruled the decision to leave Karabakh within the Azerbaijani SSR.<sup>49</sup> Before that the Soviet authorities did not prevent mass atrocities against Armenians in Sungayit, and later after the 1990 Gorbachyov's decision - in Baku. The frustration from the Soviet authorities created an advantageous situation for Armenia to claim independence in order to solve the Nagorno Karabakh issue; that is, to unite Nagorno Karabakh to Armenia without any obstacles imposed from the Soviet authorities. So democratization in the Armenian context could be framed as a means to an end (reunification) rather than the end goal in itself.

Armenian National Movement (ANM), which played the major role during the transition to democracy, soon originated taking a final shape in 1989 on the basis of Karabakh committee dealing with the issue of Nagorno Karabakh movement, which had a single issue of unification of Nagorno Karabakh to Armenia. There was no discussion of the independence from the Soviet Union or the democratic reforms. It was after

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<sup>48</sup> Christopher Walker, *Armenia and Karabakh: the Struggle for Unity* (London: Minority Rights Group, 1991), 127.

<sup>49</sup> Masih and Krikorian, 11.

Gorbachyov's decision to leave Nagorno Karabakh within the Republic of Azerbaijan in 1988, that the committee underwent important ideological and political changes. Some of its members saw the unification as the most important issue, even though that meant to arm the people and defend the interests of the Armenian people.<sup>50</sup> However, all of this was without claiming independence from USSR. The others like Levon Ter-Petrosyan, who later became the first president of Armenia, considered the solution of Nagorno Karabakh issue to be achieved only after changing the system.<sup>51</sup> Accordingly, the independence from the USSR would give Armenia an opportunity to solve the problem by herself without being dependent on Moscow. Importantly, as can be seen from this, democratization was not the primary aim of the committee. Those eleven intellectuals forming the Armenian National Movement, in addition to the Nagorno Karabakh issue added the issues of democratic reforms and independence.

Meanwhile in 1991, the Soviet authorities not being able to solve the problems with the independence movements in most of the republics, made a decision on the disintegration of the USSR. The same year a violent conflict took place in Nagorno Karabakh, between Armenian and Azerbaijani forces, which lasted until 1994. The NKR Army with the support of Armenia gained control of seven districts in Azerbaijan proclaiming NKR an independent state.<sup>52</sup> The Russian brokered ceasefire agreement was signed in Bishkek on February 16<sup>th</sup>, 1994 by Armenia and Azerbaijan.<sup>53</sup> Since then, Nagorno Karabakh is a de facto independent state, not being recognized by any state.

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<sup>50</sup> Mark Malkhasian, *Gha-ra-bagh! The Emergence of the National Democratic Movement in Armenia* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1996), 72.

<sup>51</sup> Thomas De Waal, *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 57.

<sup>52</sup> Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, *Azerbaijan: Seven Years of Conflict in Nagorno Karabakh*, (New York, Human Rights Watch, 1994), 16.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 49

Being economically dependent on Armenia, it creates additional problems for the democratic consolidation of Armenia.

As we see from the discussion of these cases, the problem of ‘stateness’ was present both in Croatia and Armenia. In Croatia it emerged because a considerable part of the inner population (the Serbs) did not consider themselves as minority within the Croatian nation, which was imposed by the constitution. Due to this, turning to the neighboring country in search of national unity, they created additional problems for the transition of Croatia. However, on the other hand, Croatia herself removed the status of the Serbs (15%) as a constituent part of the Croat nation, imposing unity to people, who do not identify themselves with ethnic majority of Croatia. In contrast, in Armenia, the ethnic kin inhabiting in the borders of the neighboring country, made the Armenians in Armenia stand up against the state apparatus demanding unification of the nation, and given that Armenia was a homogeneous state, the population wholly supported the unification, prioritizing the unification issue over democratization and independence from the Soviet Union. The problem of ‘stateness’ of both countries influenced the decision of the emerging elites as how to lead the democratization process.

## **2.2. The First Parliamentary Elections and the Consensus-Led Transition**

In frames of this subchapter I will discuss the emergence of the new elites as a result of the national movements both in Croatia and Armenia at the same time testing the following hypothesis:

*The prioritization of the national question over democratization in consensus-based transitions results in the failure of the elites to consolidate democracy.*

In 1990 the Croatian reformed communists (DKH-SDP) called for the first parliamentary elections which were the first multi-party elections after more than 40 years of Communist rule and were to be “a referendum on sovereignty, socialism and Milosevic”.<sup>54</sup> Cular argues that the sudden decision of the communists to hold parliamentary elections had several functions. First, it was a powerful message to all other republics’ leadership, especially Serbia, as well as to their own hard-liners about the need of political changes in Yugoslavia. Second, they wanted to seize the newly organized domestic party scene improving their chances for electoral victory. Third, by winning the victory, they would acquire the much needed democratic legitimacy to start the resolution of the Yugoslav conflict. Due to these reasons, the reformers did not conduct any negotiations with the opposition on the issue of transitional pace, the constitutional form of the new democracy, even the type of electoral system for the first elections, which were left to set down only after the elections.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, in their campaign they mainly tried to distance themselves from the past, and convince people that they have changed, eliminating communist symbols and promising that 'state socialism was something that people would read only in dusty books'<sup>56</sup>, which played little role given that there was much frustration among the public because of their inability to solve the economic problems that the federation was faced with.

To the great surprise of the communists, the Croatian-Democratic Union (HDZ) won 42% of the vote – 55 places out of 80 in the Socio-Political Chamber. SKH-SDP was only the second gaining 34% of the vote and 20 seats consequently.<sup>57</sup> The victory of HDZ had several reasons. First during their campaign HDZ and its charismatic leader Franjo

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<sup>54</sup> Fisher, 23.

<sup>55</sup> Cular, “Political Development in Croatia,” 32.

<sup>56</sup> Fisher, 50.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 49

Tudjman emphasized the need “to build contemporary Croatian national consciousness” exercising the Croatian historical state right.<sup>58</sup> Second, the party promised to ensure the territorial integrity of the Croatian people within historical and natural borders”, as well as national unity to combat against Serbian radicalism.<sup>59</sup> The final important theme in the campaign was the so-called “return to Europe”, that is HDZ promised to create a stable, democratic civilized and successful democratic state,<sup>60</sup> which also implied that HDZ had an ultimate goal to ensure the independence of Croatia. By voting for HDZ, “Croatian voters expressed their desire to counter-balance to Milosevic, the need for change of government, a wish for Croatian independence and revival of Croatia”.<sup>61</sup>

It should be noted that before the elections it was already clear, that there had been established ideologically different parties, and the people had to choose between the government and opposition, i.e. the reformed communists ready for democratic change or the anticommunists – the nationalists.<sup>62</sup> And the people made their choice. They chose HDZ and the independence of the Croatian state. Given that the turnout was 84%, and HDZ won 67% of the seats in Parliament in the first round gaining 41.8%, it meant that HDZ received only 45% of all eligible Croat voters, therefore being able to mobilize only half of the Croats.<sup>63</sup> According to Gagnon, the most striking feature about the elections is that it was not based on the ethnic hatreds as the Serbian nationalist party which portrayed itself as a defender of the Serbs, received only 13,5% of the vote, winning only one seat from Knin, while most of the Serbs voted for SKH (46%).<sup>64</sup> However, the Serbian votes were given to the SKH not because of the desire of

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<sup>58</sup> Dragan Djuric, Bojan Munjin, and Srdan. Spanovic, *Stranke u Hrvatskoj* (Zagreb, NIRO, 1990), 59-62, quoted in Fisher, 32.

<sup>59</sup> Fisher, 41.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Mirjana Kasapovic, “Parliamentary Elections in Croatia: Electoral Models and Their Effects” in *The 1990 and 1992/93 Sabor Elections in Croatia: Analysis, Documents and Data*, ed. Ivan Siber, ed., (Berlin: Ed. Sigma, 1997), 55.

<sup>63</sup> Valere Philip Gagnon, *The Myth of Ethnic War: Serbia and Croatia in the 1990s* (New York: Cornell University Press), 141.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 139.

peaceful ethnic coexistence, but most probably influenced by Milosevic's rhetoric that the national movements are destroying the unity of Yugoslavia and the Communist party itself.

There was one important peculiarity in the Croatian party system: as Cular states, "the communist – anti-communist divide from the very beginning was absorbed by the issue of Croatian independence, being different from other post-communist cases in which the founding elections were dominated solely by the regime divide".<sup>65</sup> This basically meant that there emerged ideologically two different blocs – reformed communists, who were for Croatia's sovereignty within the Yugoslav Federation, and nationalists, who were for independence and ethnically homogeneous Croatia. Later, the war broken out in Krajina, which urged HDZ to organize the government of Democratic Unity, with all the parties, including opposition turning the elites of those parties into strong leaders of organizing the country's defense.<sup>66</sup> This means that, not determining the rules of the democratic game, however, the elite-consensus transition took place.

In Armenia, the first parliamentary elections in May 1990 brought the ANM to parliament, which won 59 seats against the Communist party's 136 seats in the Supreme Council of Armenia. Despite the victory of the Communist Party, communists created a coalition with ANM,<sup>67</sup> and the ANM leader Levon Ter-Petrosyan became its elected speaker.<sup>68</sup> As Masih and Krikorian note, "The Communist Party deputies feared the growing outside interference and polarization in Armenian society and wanted to avoid a civil war at all cost. They believed that only an ANM supported candidate could prevent the breakdown of order and keep Armenia away from the brink of catastrophe".<sup>69</sup> This shows that the Armenian communists like the Croatian ones although reformed, in contrast to them however, were not pursuing democratization agenda, but rather relied on ANM to solve the unification issue. What is

<sup>65</sup> Nenad Zakosek and Goran Cular, "Croatia" in *The Handbook of Political Change in Eastern Europe*, ed. Sten Berglund, et al. (Cheltenham, Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 1997), 461.

<sup>66</sup> Goran Cular, "The Croatian Party System" in *Between Authoritarianism and Democracy: Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia*, ed. Dragica Vujadinovic et al. (Belgrade: CEDET, 2003), 201.

<sup>67</sup> "History of Armenian Parliaments (Brief Glimpses)," Official Website of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, <http://www.parliament.am/parliament.php?id=parliament&lang=eng> (accessed 29.05.2013).

<sup>68</sup> Arus Harutyunyan, "Contesting National Identity in an Ethnically Homogeneous State: the Case of Armenian Democratization" (PhD diss., Western Michigan University, 2009), 157.

<sup>69</sup> Masih and Krikorian, 23.

interesting here is that ANM brought together the three different ideological groups – the reformists – the Communists, who wanted to make reforms and were for unification, radicals – The Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) who were for unification, and moderates – who were both for the resolution of Nagorno Karabakh conflict and democratization.<sup>70</sup> It should be noted that the national question which prevailed over democracy brought all of them together, and de facto there were no other forces who considered democracy above national issue. Ter-Petrosyan with his moderate ideology seemed to stand alone against the nationally-oriented elites.

The elections of the Supreme Council of Armenia were followed by the adoption of the declaration of Independence on August 23, 1990, which officially came to force on 23<sup>rd</sup> of September, 1991, after the referendum on the 21<sup>st</sup> of September 1991. I want to draw attention to the text of the declaration, which is evidence of the argument, that the unification of Nagorno Karabakh to Armenia was the central if not the first priority of the declaration:

*“The Supreme Council of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic,*

*Expressing the united will of the Armenian people; aware of its historic responsibility for the destiny of*

*the Armenian people engaged in the realization of the aspirations of **all Armenians and the***

***restoration of historical justice; exercising the right of nations to free self-determination; based on***

*the December 1, 1989, joint decision of the Armenian SSR Supreme Council and **the Artsakh***<sup>71</sup>

***National Council on the "Reunification of the Armenian SSR and the Mountainous***

***Region of Karabakh"; declares the beginning of the process of establishing of independent***

*statehood positioning the question of the creation of a democratic society based on the rule of law...”*

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<sup>70</sup> Razmik Panosyan, “The Diaspora and the Karabagh Movement: Oppositional Politics between the Armenian Revolutionary Federation and the Armenian National Movement” in *The Making of Nagorno- Karabagh: from Secession to Republic*, ed. Levon Chorbajian (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 159-166.

<sup>71</sup> Artsakh is the Armenian name of Nagorno Karabakh

As we see in the cases of both countries the consensus-led transition took place. In the ideological sense, however, they were different. In the case of Armenia the transition happened on the agreement among elites on the issue of national unification. Even the communists, although reformed, in the case of Armenia pursued nationalist agenda, demanding unification and prioritizing national issue, along with the other parties – ARF and ANM. In contrast, in Croatia, the consensus was based considering the urgency of cooperation to manage the war. However, in the ideological sense, the communists as well as the other minor parties did not pursue strong nationalist policies, unlike HDZ, whose main agenda was the prioritization of the Croatian nation throughout 1990s. The advantage of the ideological cleavages between those two parties determined the competition among them during all elections, setting basis for further organizational development, including the ones in January 2000.<sup>72</sup>

### 2.3. The Oppression of Opposition and the Violations of Electoral Rules

In this subchapter the following hypothesis will be tested:

*The state of emergency, resulting from ethnic conflict creates opportunities for political elites to strengthen their power over the country's politics, while also oppressing opposition forces.*

After the first parliamentary elections, both Armenia and Croatia started a discussion for regarding the adoption of constitution and the electoral rules. In Croatia, HDZ's vast majority in the parliament after the 1990 elections meant that it could approve the Constitution to make it easier for them to take control over the state. Thus, the constitutional amendments were adopted in July 1990, which were approved in December 1990.<sup>73</sup> The Constitution provided for strong presidency and bicameral parliament. (Constitution Cr. 1990) Second, it declared the republic of Croatia as “the national state of the Croatian people and of the members of other nations and minorities who are its citizens”. The label “Croatian” in the Constitution and their status as a

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<sup>72</sup> Zakosek and Cular, 201-202.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.



minority within Croatia, as already mentioned above, was the main reason for the Krajina Serbs to rebel and declare the independence of the Krajina Republic.

Using the rhetoric of the threat that was coming from Croatian Serbs disturbing the national sovereignty, some provisions of the Constitution were adopted in the interest of Tudjman for increasing his powers. One of them provided that the mayors that were elected to the office must be confirmed by the president, which was at first regarded as a safety measure against the Serbian radical secessionist politicians in municipalities with local Serb majorities.<sup>74</sup> However, as Ramet argues, “in 1995-1996, when the opposition coalition won the mayoral race, Tudjman used this provision to veto the installation of four opposition candidates, one after another and installed his own candidates instead”.<sup>75</sup> Moreover, along with constitution a new citizenship law was passed, which allowed ethnic Croats living abroad to apply for citizenship, as a result of which a lot of Croats from the USA, Australia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, became citizens of Croatia who were later to support Tudman’s regime ensuring votes for the parliament.<sup>76</sup>

The loss of the Eastern parts of Croatia had an enormous influence on domestic politics. HDZ, blaming the Serbs in threatening the national security of Croatia, strengthened its positions and created an image for itself as the defender of Croatian sovereignty and interests.<sup>77</sup> The individual freedom was diminished in relation to collective belonging to the Croatian nation which was not to be criticized.<sup>78</sup>

Meanwhile in Armenia after the elections in 1990, a large debate on the adoption of the law on presidency and Constitution arose. Libaridian gives a detailed account on that debate. The

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<sup>74</sup> Zoran Kusovac, “The Prospects for Change in Post-Tudjman Croatia,” *East European Constitutional Review* 9: no. 57 (Summer, 2000), 61.

<sup>75</sup> Sabrina Ramet, “Politics in Croatia since 1990,” in *Central and Southeast European Politics since 1989*, ed. Sabrina Ramet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 260.

<sup>76</sup> Boduszynski, 82.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 83.

<sup>78</sup> Vesna Pusic, “Dictatorships with Democratic Legitimacy: Democracy versus Nation,” *East European Politics and Societies* 8, no. 384 (September 1994), 386.

law on presidency was passed in July 1991, on the request of Prime Minister Manukian, who argued that the country needed a strong executive president elected directly by the people. As Libaridian argues ‘Manukian thought that he would be the natural choice, however in the face of Ter-Petrosian's overwhelming popularity, he withdrew his candidacy and started organizing his own party – National Democratic Union’.<sup>79</sup> With the votes of 83% Ter-Petrosyan ensured his victory in the presidential elections in October 1991. With regards to the Constitution, Ter-Petrosyan and ANM government thought that such a document needed some testing and deliberation of time, which would reflect the country's needs. Therefore, a commission was established in 1992, which completed its draft in 1995, which was passed by referendum in 1995.<sup>80</sup> It should be noted that the war in Nagorno Karabakh had its impact on the belated adoption of the Constitution, which was passed soon after the ceasefire agreement was signed.<sup>81</sup>

Although UNDP Human Development Report emphasized the progress in Armenia's democratic initiatives until 1994,<sup>82</sup> another study conducted by the international program “Democracy and Local Authorities”, states that in Armenia and other CIS countries, democracy was taken to refer to negative freedoms, such as the freedoms of speech, press, conscious and so on, while in the western and central European interpretations, democracy is considered as a participation of the population in all levels of decision-making - their participation in the process of government.<sup>83</sup>

In contrast to Armenia, in Croatia from the very beginning the leftist parties were blamed to be opposing nation-building, using the advantage that historically the left was the promoter of Yugoslavism being the ideological and political source for opposition to Croatian sovereignty and in the circumstances when the Yugoslavian central government initiated the aggression on

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<sup>79</sup> Gerard Libaridian, *The Challenge of Statehood: Armenian Political Thinking since Independence* (Cambridge: Blue Crane Books, 1999), 40.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 39-40.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>82</sup> UNDP Human Development Report/Armenia, *Rights and Human Development: Action for Progress* (2000), 35-36.

<sup>83</sup> Markar Melkonian, “Betrayed Promises of Karabagh Movement: A Balance Sheet: in *Making of Nagorno Karabakh*, ed. Levon Chorbajian (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 185.

Croatian sovereignty, it would not be difficult for HDZ to delegitimize the leftists.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, Linz's notion of "consensus across party lines" was interpreted as "a consensus about the irreplaceability of the existing government as long as the state was in jeopardy...any deviation from the consensus was interpreted as an intentional destabilization of the state".<sup>85</sup>

In 1992, taking advantage of their popularity HDZ called for new elections, announcing the suspension of the national unity. The HDZ returned to power gaining 44% of the vote.<sup>86</sup> However, it should be mentioned this victory and the victories in subsequent elections were guaranteed because of the manipulation of electoral law. The constitution did not set standards for electoral law, which allowed the HDZ to set the rules of the game, before each election in their own interests.<sup>87</sup>

In 1992 there also held presidential elections, when unlike before the president was elected by the popular vote, the result of which was that Tudjman claimed a clear victory with 57% of the vote.<sup>88</sup> This was not of great surprise given that the country's one-third of the territory was occupied by the Serbs and Tudjman pictured himself as the savior of the Croatian nation from the Serbian threat. How did HDZ manage with the leadership of Tudjman to use nationalist rhetoric to spread and deepen their influence over state politics, at the same time using the concept of nation as the main 'symbol' of the state, contributing to the establishment of the authoritarian regime? Gagnon highlights three basic factors that contributed to that. First, that was the policy of warfare: the constructing of enemy images, effectively demobilized, and marginalized the population, allowing HDZ to dominate policy in a war not reflective of the interests of the wider population. Second, Tudjman on the one hand supporting the moderate members of the parties, appointing them as prime ministers, on the other hand however,

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<sup>84</sup> Mirjana Kasapovic and Nenad Zakosek, "Democratic Transitions in Croatia: Between Democracy, Sovereignty and War", in *The 1990/92 Sabor Elections*, ed. Ivan Siber, 30.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>86</sup> Boduszynski, 85.

<sup>87</sup> Gagnon, 159.

<sup>88</sup> Poduszinsky, 85.

supported the right-wing and gave enormous influence over policy, e.g. controlling the state-owned media, including television. Third, his power was embodied in the manipulation of electoral law, as already mentioned above. The most blatant manipulation was in 1994, when the HDZ-dominated Sabor granted 14 seats to the 'Croatian diaspora', which were mainly controlled by the HDZ of Bosnia.<sup>89</sup> Meanwhile, no space was left for the Croatian opposition to maneuver against the established regime. Those opposition parties encountered difficulties because of the ruling parties' tendency to label them as 'enemies'. HDZ placed emphasis on the national question in their discourse, asserting that they would offend the nation's newly found statehood and thereby labeled as 'anti-Croatian'. However, the opposition parties themselves were weak enough to respond to the HDZ allegation that they are 'anti-Croat'. Instead they sometimes attempted "to demonstrate their national credentials by using divisive rhetoric or by supporting certain 'pro-national' policies".<sup>90</sup> Moreover, there was a lack of will among the opposition parties to cooperate with each other due to personality conflicts and differences in programs.<sup>91</sup>

In Armenia, the oppression of the opposition and the manipulation of the democratic rules began in 1994, just after the ceasefire), when a Decree of the President accusing the oppositional party ARF of terrorism and drug-business, ordered to arrest two members of the party who served in higher levels of National Assembly. Similar to Croatia, opposition was not given voice. The government's attack on the ARF unintentionally improved its reputation. The economic conditions during and after the war (the factories were closed down and there was no electricity supply, which was solved in 1995) as well as the public frustration from the ANM provided a great opportunity for the opposition parties like NDU, headed by Manukian, former prime minister, to criticize the president and ANM that they 'sell-out' Nagorno Karabakh, and abandon the demands of the Armenian people towards Turkey to recognize 1915 Armenian

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<sup>89</sup> Gagnon, 158-159.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 53.

genocide for the sake of establishing diplomatic relations with Turkey.<sup>92</sup> Interestingly, the opposition criticized the president not on the lack of democracy, but rather for abandoning two most important national questions. Melkonian argues, that ANM and Ter-Petrosyan gave up those five promises made in the Opera Square in 1988 – national independence, reversing environmental deterioration, promoting democracy and human rights, creating economic prosperity and enabling self-determination in Karabakh, which were compromised in sake of hostile external forces.<sup>93</sup> Dudwich in her turn claims, that all the Armenian parties (including ANM and NDU) except Communist Party and ARF, which had a long history, had only strong individuals, but not a well-established ideology and characterizes them as ‘informal group of friends who frequently gather to talk, smoke and drink coffee’.<sup>94</sup> Thus, the upcoming parliamentary elections in 1995 would be ‘a competition between patron-client networks and the individuals who lead them, as between political parties’.<sup>95</sup>

The OSCE declared that the 1995 parliamentary elections as well as 1996 presidential elections did not meet international standards. In 1995 parliamentary elections ANM gained the majority of seats in Parliament. The year after, Ter-Petrosyan, gaining 51.75% of the vote remained in the position of the president, defeating Manukian. However, the elections gained significant criticism from OSCE, which observed inaccuracies with voter registers, the problems with the voting of the military forces in favor of the incumbent, etc.<sup>96</sup> Manukian boycotted the results of the elections, however, the Constitutional Court rejected the petition to review the results of the elections, and the police dispersed the demonstrations. During 1996 presidential election campaign, neither of the candidates opposed much on the issue of economic reforms or foreign policy. However, Manukian promised to resolve the Karabakh conflict, and to fight

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>93</sup> Melkonian, 193.

<sup>94</sup> Dudwich, 88.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>96</sup> OSCE/ODIHR International Observation Guide, *Armenian Presidential Elections* (September 24, 1996).

against the cliental structure of the country, while Ter-Petrosian mentioned stability as the prerequisite for making reforms.

In Croatia, 1995 was the year, when the lost Croatian territories were gained back. The invasion of those territories gave a new wave of popularity to HDZ. The HDZ used this opportunity to call early elections for the House of Representatives (not scheduled until 1997). Taking back of Krajina meant that HDZ would be unbeatable in elections, and top HDZ officials publicly talked about reaching a two-thirds majority of Sabor, which would allow them to unilaterally change the Constitution.<sup>97</sup> The HDZ also had its own interests in dislodging the Serbian population from Krajina. Gagnon argues, that 'If the entire Serb population remained, that would be an additionally significant factor in future electoral contests and given the margins by which the HDZ was barely slipping by, it would be in its interests to ensure that Serbs not stay.'<sup>98</sup>

In 1997, in Armenia, a large debate between Armenian political elites came when Ter-Petrosyan introduced his opinion on the OSCE suggestions for the resolution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict. He showed five options, among which the most realistic option was the fifth – the package and step by step approaches proposed by the OSCE.<sup>99</sup> Harutyunyan introduces Ter-Petrosyan's detailed article "War or Peace", where he states, "To solve the question of Karabakh we have one option – compromise solution, which does not mean that the one side is the victor and the other – loser. It does mean finding an agreement based on what is possible when the conflict has reached maturity...the alternative to compromise is war. The rejection of compromise and maximalism is the shortest path to the final destruction of Karabakh and the worsening of the situation in Armenia".<sup>100</sup> Further Harutyunyan concludes that the war in Nagorno Karabakh for Ter-Petrosyan and ANM was primarily to defend the ethnic kin, which

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<sup>97</sup> Gagnon, 170.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 171.

<sup>100</sup> Levon Ter-Petrosyan, "Paterazm te Khaghaghutyun, Lrjanalu Pahy" (War or Peace? Time for Thoughtfulness), *Hayastani Hanrapetutyun*, (November 2, 1997), quoted in Harutyunyan, 172-173.

was in danger there, and when the kin was already secured, the agreement had to be reached without sacrificing Karabakh's interests.<sup>101</sup> Step by step approach was meant to return the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, in exchange of peace in Karabakh, which was argued by his opponents Robert Kocharian (the future president, who first served as president of Nagorno Karabakh when it declared its independence in 1992), Defence Minister Vazgen Sargsyan and Interior and Security Minister Serge Sargsyan.<sup>102</sup> They argued, that the military victories that they had during the war and the liberation of Nagorno Karabakh require de jure independence of Nagorno Karabakh or unification of Karabakh with Armenia and then return of some occupied territories. In Harutyunyan's words, "Thematic interplays between military victories in Karabakh and winning the war, restitution of historical injustices, and national self-affirmation were not just narratives but articulated policy positions reflected in electoral platforms, official statements and policies".<sup>103</sup>

Those contradictions in the opinion for solving the Nagorno Karabakh conflict led to Ter-Petrosyan's resignation in February 1998. Robert Kocharian became acting president and then was elected in special elections in March 1998. In those elections he was competing with Karen Demirchian (he was a communist and the communist also held the same view of victories and non-compromise Kocharian). OSCE declared those elections free but not fair – "not meeting OSCE standards".<sup>104</sup>

As this chapter showed, the prioritization of the national question and the concentration of power based on the state of emergency explain the lack of democratization in both countries for this time period. However, the differences observed in this phase came to matter later, which will be explained in the next chapter.

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>102</sup> Libaridian, 48.

<sup>103</sup> Harutyunyan, 177.

<sup>104</sup> OSCE/ODIHR, *Republic of Armenia: Presidential Election 19 February and 5 March 2003*, Final Report, (Warsaw, 2003)

### Chapter 3 - Consolidating Democracy through Defeating the Nationalists

In the second chapter I showed that the elite-led consensus on ensuring the transition towards democracy is one of the prerequisites to ensure smooth transition. In the case of Armenia, that consensus was built on the issue of national unification all the parties pursuing the nationalist agenda. In the case of Croatia, although the consensus was also on the prioritization on the national question, in the ideological sense, there were clear cleavages between the parties, and those cleavages became an important factor in the consolidation phase, allowing the opposition parties to unite defeating the ruling nationalist party.

I did not discuss the role of the civil society in the second chapter, as the discussion of the first chapter showed that the civil society although mobilizing at some point demands democracy, after the founding elections becomes demobilized transferring the democratization process to the elites. However, as the transition phase is over, the civil society becomes extremely important acting as a “watchdog” of the elites to ensure their accountability. As far as it concerns the external factors providing financial assistance to the civil society groups, I will analyze them insofar as they interact with already unified political opposition willing to defeat authoritarian governments, as well as powerful civil society movements pursuing strong campaigns leading the country towards genuine democracy.

Thus, this chapter concentrates on the consolidation stage of the democratization, testing the following hypothesis:

*Consolidation of democracy is more likely with strong unification of opposition forces and the civil society.*

While doing so I will discuss the emergence of anti-war movements in Croatia right after the start of the war and the completion of the transition phase, as well as the development of the civil society groups and strategies while preparing for the 2000 elections. Moreover, I will also concentrate on the unified actions of the opposition parties to reach the change of power. In



addition, this chapter will illustrate that the lack of cooperation both among the opposition parties and the civil society groups explains the failure in consolidating democracy in Armenia.

### 3.1. The Antiwar Movements and the Non-Nationalist Civil Society

Soon after the start of the wars on the disintegration of Yugoslavia, anti-war movements emerged throughout Yugoslavia, which gave a basis for the institutionalization of the civil society organizations in the disintegrated states, including Croatia. Between 1991 and 1992, there were demonstrations and cultural protests against the war politics pursued by the nationalist elites.<sup>105</sup> The most active among those groups was the so-called the Anti-War Campaign (ARK). Being founded in 1991, its charter stated, that “it is an informal association of organizations and individuals from the whole of Yugoslavia who want to contribute to the ending of the armed conflicts”.<sup>106</sup> Vesna Teršelic in one of her interviews gave a detailed explanation as why they established ARK and why it was important. The following is the part of his interview:

*"...we expected that scientists and government institutions would negotiate on an agreement, that they would certainly do something about the conflict, and it turned out that nothing was happening whatsoever in that regard, so in 1991, when we decided to start ARK... It was clear to us that we would work on nonviolent conflict transformation; that we would insist on respecting human rights... In principle, we saw ARK as an initiative affirming nonviolence and tolerance and respecting human rights on the one hand, and on the other hand ARK became an incubator in which more than twenty initiatives were brought to light during the years, projects, organisations, and it turned into a network."*<sup>107</sup>

ARK's publications influenced anti-nationalism Croatian intellectuals and raised awareness about the violence against activists.<sup>108</sup> Stubbs identifies four challenges that were facing ARK at that time: first of all it was a network of friends aged 18-20 by the time the war

<sup>105</sup> Ana Devic, “Anti-War Initiatives and the Un-Making of Civic Identities in the Former Yugoslav Republics”, *Journal of Historical Sociology* 10, no. 2 (June 1997), 129.

<sup>106</sup> Vesna Jankovic and Nikola Mokrovic, “*Antiratna kampanja 1991-2011: Neispričana povijest*” (Anti-War Campaign 1991-2011: Untold History) (Zagreb: Documenta, 2011), quoted in Paul Stubbs, “Networks, Organizations, Movements: Narratives and Shapes of Three Waves of Activism in Croatia”, *Polemos* 15, no.2 (2012), 14.

<sup>107</sup> Interview with an ARK activist Vesna Teršelic, in “One Should Use This Unexpected Chances” in *20 Pieces of Encouragement for Awakening and Change: Peacebuilding in the Region of the Former Yugoslavia*, eds. Helena Rill, Tamara Šmidlingna Bitoljanu (Belgrade, Sarajevo: Centre for Nonviolent Action, 2007), 79-84.

<sup>108</sup> Devic, 136.

started; second, at that time it was impossible to talk about non-violent resolution of the conflict, when war was in its aftermath; third, it was transformed into defensive project aimed to protect human rights of oppressed groups and individuals, at the same time dealing with refugees and displaced people and abused women. In addition, it later “squeezed into emerging shape of the non-governmental organization qualifying for grants from international donors.”<sup>109</sup> Later Stubbs states that the significance of ARK was the both discursively and practically a kind of a defensive act, “to preserve certain values and to resist an overwhelming nationalist homogenization”, at the same time being focused more on processes and methods more than on politics, which started only to get more active when the war ended.<sup>110</sup>

Although ARK did not turn into a mass mobilizing civic organization, its existence does provide evidence that there was a considerable number of citizens in Croatia that did not identify themselves as being nationalist and were for the multiethnic composition of the Yugoslav states.

Later, the HDZ regime, oppressing the activities of ARK, made them turn into an organization taking care of the refugees and the displaced people. Together with ARK's all disadvantages facing the ARK, however, it developed a non- nationalist civil society, ready to stand for its votes, and defeat the nationalist HDZ in 2000 elections.

Another organization present in the Croatian society was the Croatian Helsinki Committee for Human Rights. Established in 1993, it became the main defender of the Croatian Serbs, bringing attentions to the violation of the rights of the returned Serbs, as well as emphasizing the atmosphere of 'hate speech' and political violence.<sup>111</sup>

Side by side with these organizations, however, there were many civil society organizations that had close ties with the government, among them the Humanitarian

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<sup>109</sup> Stubbs, 15.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>111</sup> Sharon Fisher and Biljana Bijelic, "Glas 99: Civil Society Preparing the Ground for a Post-Tudjman Croatia", in *Reclaiming Democracy: Civil Society and Electoral Change in Central and Eastern Europe*, eds. Joerg Forbrig and Pavol Demes, (Washington, D.C.: ERSTE Foundation, 2007), 58.

Foundation for the Children of Croatia, the Foundation of the Croatian State Vow, the 'Homeland War', comprised of war veterans, which received considerable financial assistance from government.<sup>112</sup> This way Tudjman, on the one hand financing those organizations, on the other hand, demobilized the other civil society organizations, strengthening HDZ's positions.

### 3.2. Get-Out-of-the-Vote or We - the Citizens, are Observing

For almost ten years, Tudjman and HDZ using the rhetoric of democracy and self-determination, managed to stay in power, mostly due to the electoral manipulations and oppression of the opposition. The dissatisfaction of the public was expressed in the declining participation in the elections. In 1997, both the parliamentary and presidential elections had a turnout of 55%.<sup>113</sup> Before that, the largest anti-government demonstration of the 1990s took place in November 1996, when 100.000 citizens protested against the government's decision to shut down radio 101. This was the first demonstration in Croatia, which was not only connected to the problem of democratization, but also represented the public's economic and social dissatisfaction.<sup>114</sup> The victory and the liberation of the Croatian territories in 1995 did not bring any change in HDZ's policies. As a Croat political scientist explicitly stated, "the changes we thought would happen after the end of the war didn't happen".<sup>115</sup> In addition, Bunce and Wolchik show that after the war there was no change in the HDZ's policies, Croatia was isolated from international community, corruption was widely spread and the economic situation was not improving.<sup>116</sup> However, the end of violence created favorable conditions for the civil society to become more organized and hold the largest pre-election campaign throughout Croatia, initiating the so-called get out-of-the-vote campaign, with the united NGO sector in the face of GONG

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>113</sup> Fischer, 122.

<sup>114</sup> Fisher, 134

<sup>115</sup> Interview with Ivan Grdesic, (Zagreb: May 21, 2005), in *Defeating Authoritarian Leaders in Post-Communist Countries*, Valerie Bunce and Sharon Wolchik (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 60-61

<sup>116</sup> Bunce and Wolchik, 60.

(Citizens Organized to Monitor Voting), Glas99 (Civic Coalition for Free and Fair Elections) and several women's groups.<sup>117</sup>

In January 1999, a meeting was organized by the representatives of ARK, Green Action, Helsinki Committee of Human Rights (HHO), Open Society Institute (OSI) and several women NGOs, where they had discussions with the activists from Slovakia ready to share their experience on how they managed to defeat the Slovak authoritarian party similar to HDZ, HZDS, the previous year.<sup>118</sup> The Croatian activists organized the Glas campaign, which first comprising of 35 united NGOs and one month before the elections it reached 145 NGOs. The main criterion for joining Glas was that NGOs had to be non-partisan and have no connections with the government.<sup>119</sup>

Glas's three basic goals were to increase public awareness about the 2000 parliamentary and local elections, to raise turnout and increase the influence of citizens in preparing election laws and securing civil monitoring to ensure free and fair elections.<sup>120</sup> Their materials focused on voter education, informing citizens of who had the right to vote and why elections were important.<sup>121</sup>

Another group GONG was created in early 1997 to conduct domestic election observations. However, being prevented to observe the 1997 parliamentary elections, the GONG activists monitored polls for Croatian refugees in the elections for the federal government in Bosnia.<sup>122</sup> GONG was registered as an NGO in 1998 and after a huge campaign demanding a new electoral law concerning the observation of elections in 1999, the "orange amendment" was passed by the Croatian Constitutional Court to allow election monitoring, by

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<sup>117</sup> Freedom House, *Nations in Transit: Democratization in East Central Europe and Eurasia* (New York: Freedom House, 2004), 8.

<sup>118</sup> Fisher and Bijelic, 63.

<sup>119</sup> Fisher, 144.

<sup>120</sup> Fisher, 142.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Bunce and Wolchik, 80.

non-partisan organizations and individual observers.<sup>123</sup> It should be noted that the adoption of this legislation coincided with the death of Franjo Tudjman, after which the party suffered from internal fracture. As a result, the rightest and modernist wings of the party struggled for the leadership. In addition, power struggles also took place between the right wing governing elites, including some of the MPs leaving the party.<sup>124</sup> All of this therefore, had its impact on the adoption of this legislation. As Jasic notes, “All promised their support—including many HDZ members. We had expected the backing of the opposition but the governing party also found reasons to support us. The personal contact GONG workers made with the HDZ, the latter’s concerns about lacking legitimacy as a result of previously unmonitored elections, and the desire of Croatia’s leaders to gain acceptance by the West all influenced the ruling party’s decision to endorse our efforts”.<sup>125</sup>

In addition HDZ with the opposition parties included those principles of observation in the drafts of Electoral law as well.<sup>126</sup> Thus, HDZ which ruled the Croatian politics for almost 10 years, finally agreed on the rules of the democratic game. Collecting 28.000 petitions, the GONG activists met with the president of Parliament and in October three-fourths of GONG proposals were passed in Parliament adopted as an amendment to electoral law.<sup>127</sup> Prior to this in 1997, the Croatian government gave the state the authority to control NGOs imposing fines and banning them, if there was a suspicion in their working illegally, and the attempts of more than 100 NGOs to amend the draft was in vain.<sup>128</sup> Further getting ready for the upcoming elections GONG initiated its "We the citizens are observing" campaign, establishing thirteen regional offices to train election monitors. Those activities by the above mentioned coalition of NGOs Glass, starting their campaign even far before the campaign by the parties, using an eye and the

<sup>123</sup> “How was GONG formed”, Official Website of GONG, <http://gong.hr/en/about-gong/how-was-gong-formed/> (accessed 29.05.2013).

<sup>124</sup> Matthew Longo, “The HDZ’s Embattled Mandate: Divergent Leadership, Divided Electorate, 2003-2006”, *Problems of Post-Communism* 53, no. 3 (June 2006), 37.

<sup>125</sup> Suzana Jasic, “Monitoring the vote in Croatia”, *Journal of democracy* 2, no 4 (October 2000), 161.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 162.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Fisher, 137.

orange color as its symbol.<sup>129</sup> The joint efforts of the activists led to the 75% election turnout, which represents significant progress given that in 1997 the turnout was less than 55%.

### 3.4. The Opposition Unites

The dissatisfaction from the electoral legislation, which kept on changing all the time before each election to secure HDZ's victory in the parliament, as explained in chapter 2, brought six opposition parties to unite to draft the new electoral legislation in September 1998.<sup>130</sup> The legislation, which was officially signed by them on November 30<sup>th</sup> 1999, was called "Declaration on the Fundamental Direction of the Post-Elections Activity". According to it, the parties "vowed to create a common government, promised not to form a coalition with the HDZ and agreed on various policy issues".<sup>131</sup> On this issue Goran Cular explicitly states, that "existence of the fundamental political cleavage was the condition which opened up perception of possible cooperation of opposition parties and defined their 'common enemy' and increased the level of their mutual trust".<sup>132</sup>

These six parties split into two electoral coalitions: the Coalition of Four, including the Croatian Peasant's Party (HSS), the Croatian People's Party, the Liberal Party (LS), and the Instrian Democratic congress (IDS); and the Coalition of Two, that included the two main opposition parties, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) with the head of Ivica Racan and the Croatian Social Liberal Party (HSLs), with Drazen Budisa's presidency.<sup>133</sup> Those parties had little governing experience, being only in the coalition government in 1991-92 under the leadership of HDZ.<sup>134</sup> The political competition was therefore caused by the political regime – opposition cleavage, when the voter chooses between two alternative parties and not several ones.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Bunce and Wolchik, 81.

<sup>130</sup> Fisher, 156.

<sup>131</sup> Fisher and Bijelic, 61.

<sup>132</sup> Cular, "The Croatian Party System," 209.

<sup>133</sup> Bunce and Wolchik, 79.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 472-473.

<sup>135</sup> Cular, "Croatian Party System," 210.

Given that there existed factional cleavages between the rightist and leftist wings of the party, HDZ could not mobilize its resources to ensure their victory again, due to which the parliamentary elections of January 2000, brought their defeat ensuring only 24.4% of the vote and 30.5% of the seats, while those six parties won 56.4% with 63% of the seats with the leadership of SDP and HSLS.<sup>136</sup> Before the presidential elections that were held twenty days later, Racan (from SDP) and Budisa (from HSLS) agreed that Budisa would support Racan for prime minister, and Racan would in turn support Budisa's candidacy for the presidency.<sup>137</sup> According to Ramet, the Croats had no doubt that HDZ candidate Mate Granic would win the elections, if Croatia had had a single round election law, like the US, but with the option of run-off (two round elections), people could vote without worrying that they were "throwing their votes away", as the shibboleth has it<sup>138</sup>. Therefore, the two round electoral law for presidential elections enhanced the opportunity for the opposition. Stjepan Mesic, the representative of the Croatian People's Party had the first place taking 41.1% of the vote, while Budisa was the second, with 27.7% and Granic, only the third with 22.5% of the vote. Thus on the second round HDZ already lost its chance, and the presidential battle – the second round had to take place between two opposition candidates. During this round, Mesic won with 56.9% of the vote.<sup>139</sup>

With Mesic coming to power the new government announced the "De-Tudjmanization of politics, adopting a wide range of constitutional and foreign policy changes to be implemented until 2003, among them pursuing integration to the Euro-Atlantic institutions, cooperation with International Court Tribunal of Former Yugoslavia (ICTY), refugee repatriation and political corruption.<sup>140</sup> During 2000 and 2001 the necessary Constitutional amendments were passed downgrading the office of the president with the office of prime minister becoming the

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<sup>136</sup> Zakosek and Cular, 455.

<sup>137</sup> Ramet, 269.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 269.

<sup>140</sup> Dejan Jovic and Christopher Lamont, "Introduction: Croatia after Tudjman: Encounters with the Consequences of Conflict and Authoritarianism", *Europe-Asia Studies* 62, no. 10 (December 2010), 1616.

dominant political institution in Croatia. It also abolished the bicameral parliament into a unicameral one (Sabor).<sup>141</sup> Another important amendment to the constitution was made later in 2003 and 2010 when the Diaspora seats were reduced from 14 to 4 and to 3 respectively,<sup>142</sup> which meant that the elites decreased the national emphasis for the emphasis on democratic institutions.

In 2003 the SDP-HSLS coalition with the leadership of Racan was defeated by the HDZ with the leadership of Ivo Sanader.<sup>143</sup> It should be mentioned that HDZ was reformed, and the leader was the representative of the HDZ's moderate wing. During his leadership, Croatia started negotiations for accession in the European Union, which is clear evidence that Croatia fulfilled one of the main criteria for the accession, i. e. consolidated democracy. It will become a member of the European Union in July 2013.

Croatia's case showed that the consolidation of democracy was achieved through the united civil society groups and opposition parties. The civil society, which was active at the beginning of 90s, did not manage to convert into a powerful social movement because of not having sufficient material and informational resources, while at the same time being oppressed by the ruling party HDZ. However, the end of violence created additional incentives for these groups to start mobilizing citizens for change, at the same time acquiring the above mentioned resources from Slovak ARK98 activists and through the financial assistance from the West. As far as it concerns the opposition parties, from the very beginning of Croatian independence, their ideological background differed greatly from the nationalist HDZ which allowed them to unite their interests for defeating their 'common enemy'. On the other hand however, this would be again impossible if not the factionalisation inside the HDZ itself, due to which some of the

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<sup>141</sup> Ramet, 269.

<sup>142</sup> See Viktor Koska, "Defining the Nation: Constructing Citizenship in the New Croatia", *Citizenship in Southeast Europe Study* (March 29, 2011), <http://www.citsee.eu/citsee-study/defining-nation-constructing-citizenship-new-croatia> (accessed 29.05. 2013), and also, *The Constitution of the Republic of Croatia*, Article 73 (Zagreb: July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2010).

<sup>143</sup> Jovic and Lavont, 1617.



HDZ MPs left the party. The lack of those three factors explains the failure of Armenia to defeat the nationalist leaders and consolidate democracy. The discussion of the Armenian case follows.

### 3.5. Armenia – the Failed Consolidation

As discussed in the second chapter, the contradiction of opinion among the ruling elites on the resolution of Nagorno Karabakh conflict in Armenia brought about the resignation of President Ter-Petrosyan in 1998. The newly elected president Kocharian was previously President of Nagorno Karabakh from 1994 to 1997, and later was appointed Prime Minister by Ter-Petrosyan. Being an Armenian from Nagorno Karabakh he was among the first people from the president's team, who opposed Ter-Petrosyan's policies towards Nagorno Karabakh. The other two significant personalities were the Defense Minister Vazgen Sargsyan and Interior and Security Minister Serge Sargsyan, who formed together the so-called 'pro-Karabakh group', forcing the president to resign.<sup>144</sup> Libaridian characterizing them as the 'Party of Karabakh', states, "The Party of Karabakh is non-ideological. Karabakh at the top of the hierarchy of concerns; all else is subject to its logic".<sup>145</sup> As seen from this picture, the prioritization of the national issue became even stronger with the Nagorno Karabakh elites coming to power. The complete takeover of the Armenian politics by these elites took place on October 27<sup>th</sup>, 1999, when a group of armed people broke into the building of the Armenian Parliament assassinating the Speaker of the Parliament Karen Demirchian and the Defense Minister Vazgen Sargsyan, the two influential politicians who were not from Nagorno Karabakh. In this regard, Panossian explicitly states, "the Karabakh 'clan' consolidated its hold over politics in Armenia".<sup>146</sup> Further, Panossian concludes, "the small region of NKR has successfully imposed its interests and views

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<sup>144</sup> Razmik Panossian, "The Irony of Nagorno Karabakh: Formal Institutions versus Informal Politics", *Regional and Federal Studies* 11, no. 3 (2001), 154.

<sup>145</sup> Libaridian, 94.

<sup>146</sup> Panossian, 155.

onto Yerevan through the hold of the Karabakhtsi<sup>147</sup> elite on the levers of political power in Armenia. At this point, public or organized political competition in Armenia does not reflect the cleavage because to do so would mean to oppose the sacred cow of ‘Karabakh’s security’, and undermine ‘national unity’. These issues go to the heart of Armenian nationalism since 1988”.<sup>148</sup>

The question of national unity remains the foremost issue in Armenia politics even in the later stage. This leads us to my basic argument that the elites’ prioritization of the national question over establishing the democratic rules of the game during the transition phase of the democratization facilitated the absence of democratic opposition pursuing non-nationalist agenda in the consolidation stage.

Since 1998 elections there has been no change of power in Armenia. Kocharian served two terms until 2008. During his rule the National Council of Television and Radio refused to prolong the licenses of the two independent TV stations, Al+ and Noyan Tapan, which were providing objective information about the government’s actions. In addition, the existing TV stations, including the Armenian Public Television which is the largest broadcasting company in Armenia relied on low journalistic standards, favoring Kocharyan’s regime.<sup>149</sup>

In 2008, Kocharyan was followed by his ‘teammate’ Serzh Sargsyan, former Interior Minister and later Prime Minister. He was competing with Ter-Petrosyan, who returned to politics after a 10 year break. In his campaign he apologized to the Armenian people, that he brought those elites from Nagorno Karabakh to Armenia, and that in case of being elected he would correct his mistakes. As a result, the citizens mobilized into two ideological groups – ones supporting Serzh Sargsyan, who were mainly the proponents of Kocharyan’s regime, and those – who were for Ter-Petrosyan, expressing their dissatisfaction against the regime. Serzh Sargsyan in his campaign reminded the public of the poor economic situation at the beginning of the

<sup>147</sup> ‘Karabakhtsi’ means Armenian from Karabakh

<sup>148</sup> Panossian, 157

<sup>149</sup> M. Kurchivan, “The Armenian Media in Context: Soviet Heritage, the Politics of Transition, and the Rule of Law, *Democratizatsiya* 14, no. 2 (Spring 2006), 268, quoted in Bunce and Wolchik, 192.

1990s, during Ter-Petrosyan's rule, emphasizing their role (Kocharyan's and himself) in the economic development of the country after Petrosyan's resignation.<sup>150</sup>

Given that a large amount of state resources was concentrated in the hands of the regime, including the army, elections ensured Serzh Sargsyan's victory. OSCE declared massive violations of the electoral law. While stating that the process of voting was smooth according to the international standards, however during the vote count, there were inconsistencies in determining valid votes, the counters were reluctant to show the marked ballots, at the same time attributing votes from one candidate to another, and so on.<sup>151</sup> After the announcement of the election results, huge demonstrations broke out in the center of Yerevan. The current president announced a military emergency and banned media for articulating news about that. In addition, the army was brought in the center of the city, and as a result, eight people were killed.<sup>152</sup>

In 2013 Sargsyan was reelected. This time he was competing with Raffi Hovhannisian, a politician who served as Minister of Foreign Affairs between 1991 and 1992. He emphasized his commitment to the resolution of Nagorno Karabakh Conflict within the legal limits, not harming the self-determination of Karabakh Armenians. He even traveled to Azerbaijan calling for cooperation and peaceful negotiation on the resolution of the conflict.<sup>153</sup> In addition, in his campaign he emphasized the need for the parliamentary democracy. However, Serzh Sargsyan, still in 2012 expressed his disagreement on this issue, stating that none of the South Caucasus States was ready for the Parliamentary system of government, to ensure the stability of the region, strong presidency is required, and this can be possible only in 2018, when the parliament

<sup>150</sup> See Serzh Sargsyan's Promotional Video, (February 15, 2008), <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGi2c-fxG3s> (accessed 29.05.2013).

<sup>151</sup> See OSCE/ODHIR, *Election Observation Mission Report: Republic of Armenia: Presidential Elections* February 19, 2008 (Warsaw, May 30, 2008).

<sup>152</sup> See "Armenia: Eight Killed after Clashes between Police, Protesters," *Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty*, March 2, 2008, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1079564.html> (accessed 29.05.2013).

<sup>153</sup> See "Bakvum Raffi Hovhannisian eluty mets irarancum e arajacrel Adrbejanum (Raffi Hovhannisian's speech in Baku caused a great stir in Azerbaijan), (November 23, 2012), *Armenpress*, <http://armenpress.am/arm/news/700433/> (accessed 29.05.2013).

itself will be ready for the reform.<sup>154</sup> As seen from this statement, the national question still prevails in the political discourse which allows the authoritarian leaders to pursue their anti-democratic agenda.

It should be noted, that in none of the elections mentioned above the opposition forces were united, preferring to propose their own candidates. In 2003 there was an initial plan to propose a single candidate by sixteen parties, however those attempts at cooperation failed.<sup>155</sup> In addition, Wolchik and Bunce argue that the opposition candidates in 2003 campaign introduced programs similar to incumbents and relied on traditional rallies instead of debating with the so-called face to face tactics.<sup>156</sup>

In 2008, nine candidates ran for the presidency from different parties. Although Ter-Petrosyan and the ANM managed to unite some minor parties, the two largest parties in Parliament the Republican Party, headed by Serzh Sargsyan, and the Prosperous Armenia – with the head of multi-millionaire oligarch Gagik Tsarukyan endorsed Sargsyan's candidacy. 2013 elections as well did not have any progress in this sense, with seven candidates running for the presidential post.

### 3.6. Challenges for the Armenian Civil Society

This section discusses the weaknesses of the Armenian civil society and the challenges that it faces. It shows that on the one hand the civil society organizations (NGOs) in Armenia, as compared to the ones in Croatia are not united, and on the other hand most of them are closely

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<sup>154</sup> See “Serzh Sargsyany dem e khorhrdaranakan karavarman hamakargin ancelun” (Serzh Sargsyan is against the Parliamentary system of Government), November 9, 2012, <http://www.panarmenian.net/arm/news/131606/%D5%BE> (accessed 29.05.2013), also “Yst Serzh Sargsyany` APH, aravel evs Haravayin Kovkasi erkneri hamar der vagh e khorhrdaranakan karavrman ancely”, (According to Serzh Sargsyan, it's too early for the CIS countries and in particular for South Caucasus Republics to establish Parliamentary System of Government), (November 9, 2012), *Slag*, <http://www.slag.am/arm/news/100995/> (accessed 29.05. 2012).

<sup>155</sup> Aghassi Yesayan, “Discussion Paper 1 – An Analysis of the 2003 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in Armenia”, (Stockholm: International IDEA, 2004), quoted in Bunce and Wolchik, 193.

<sup>156</sup> Bunce and Wolchik, 194.

connected to the state apparatus, which only undermines the possibility of those organizations to collectively stand against the authoritarian regime. Moreover, in this regard, not fully independent civil society cannot ensure the transparent actions of state elites, as already discussed in the first chapter.

The Armenian civil society, as the second chapter showed most actively participated during the transition phase in 1988, when more than one million Armenians gathered in the Theatre Square demanding unification with Nagorno Karabakh. As a result of this mass-mobilization and the extreme popularity of Ter-Petrosyan, the 1991 presidential elections ensured strong public participation and therefore those elections are considered to be the first free and fair elections in the history of independent Armenia. However, all the other consequent elections have been considered more corrupt and less ‘free and fair’, and “created immense public cynicism, apathy and disillusion towards the elections as well as democracy in general”.<sup>157</sup> Side by side with the public demobilization, unlike Croatia during the war there were no anti-war movements in Armenia, demanding the immediate termination of the war, and the peaceful resolution of the conflict. However, this is not a manifestation of the fact that the Armenian civil society was nationally-oriented, but rather the poor economic conditions of the country and the lack of information resources demobilized the public, making them concerned more about the making ‘both ends meet’ than pursuing active political participation.<sup>158</sup>

The Armenian civil society became more active during 2003 presidential elections, when they organized two large campaigns called “Stand by Your Vote” and “Defend Your Vote”, this being supported only by a small number of opposition parties,<sup>159</sup> at that time, also fragmented, as already discussed above. In 2008, USAID funded the Helsinki Committee of Armenia, and the Urban Foundation of Sustainable Development to organize election monitoring trainings for the

<sup>157</sup> Armine Ishkhanian, *Democracy Building and Civil Society in Post-Soviet Armenia* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 36.

<sup>158</sup> As a result of the double blockade imposed by Azerbaijan and Turkey, Armenia suffered poor economic conditions. In addition, the nuclear power station was closed down, and there was no electricity supply in Armenia.

<sup>159</sup> Bunce and Wolchik, 194.

NGO activists, at the same time increasing interest in the elections among young people.<sup>160</sup> However, as Bunce and Wolchik, assert, there were no regional activists supporting the NGOs and the opposition bringing their experience to Armenia<sup>161</sup>, unlike Croatia, where Slovak NGOs cooperated intensively with the Croatian ones.

In March 2013 with the demand of the Center of Information Freedom NGO, the Ministry of Finance of Armenia published a report according to which 31 NGOs between 2010 and 2013 got more than 500 million Armenian drams from the state budget, therefore violating the basic principle of the activities of NGOs and being state funded.<sup>162</sup> In addition, in 2012 Parliamentary elections, 361 Civil Society Organization confirmed their support to Serzh Sargsyan's Republican Party.<sup>163</sup> Moreover, some of them also announced their support of Serzh Sargsyan's presidency in 2013 presidential elections.

As the analysis of the Armenian case showed, two factors are missing in the consolidation of democracy in Armenia. First of all, it is the absence of the united opposition willing to defeat the authoritarian leaders, abandoning the minor ideological differences, and realizing that they have a common enemy, in the face of the established regime. Second, there is lack of unification in the civil society organizations. Most of them, being financed by the regime, automatically become dependent on that. There are only few organizations that are trying to promote democratic change in the country. However, the absence of experience brought from the regional activists, as well as their lack of cooperation, does not provide the necessary results for the consolidation of democracy.

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid., 195.

<sup>161</sup> Ibid.

<sup>162</sup> See Aram Zaqaryan, "HH nakhagahi ashkhatakazmy finansavorel e HK-nerin" (President's Office has financed NGOs), *Aravot*, (April 19, 2013), <http://www.aravot.am/2013/04/19/232926/> (accessed 29.05.2013).

<sup>163</sup> See "361 hasarakakan kazmakerputyunner satarum en HHK-in" (361 NGOs support the Republican Party), [http://www.1in.am/arm/armenia\\_politics\\_78662.html?from=popup](http://www.1in.am/arm/armenia_politics_78662.html?from=popup) (accessed 29.05.2013).

## Conclusion

While there was scholarly debate on the democratization outcomes of the third wave countries, time revealed that the majority of them, having undergone serious political transformations, by the time of the second democratic elections successfully passed the ‘two-turnover test’ promoting the sustainable development of democratization. Those countries that did not pass this test, experienced harsh interethnic conflicts before the second elections, and those conflicts therefore had an impact on the democratization process turning them into a competitive authoritarian regime.

During democratization process these states turn into the aforementioned regime not being able to overcome the challenges facing them during transition and consolidation stage. Thoroughly discussing the challenges of both stages the thesis argued that the prioritization of the national question during the transition period in the countries in conflict brings to the emergence of non-democratic regime, which can be removed only with the strong cooperation of the united opposition and the civil society. I developed this argument through a detailed historical analysis of the political developments of two countries in conflict Croatia and Armenia, applying the method of process tracing, finding evidence of path dependence during the transition phase until failure of the ‘two-turnover test’, which ensured the same regime outcome in both countries. Despite this failure, however, Croatia managed to defeat the authoritarian leaders consolidating democracy, unlike Armenia. In this regard, I looked for ‘critical junctures’ exploring the major events that ensured the successful consolidation of the Croatian democracy. Notably the critical juncture did not coincide with the end of the conflict, but much later.

The analysis of the sequence of events on the transition phase confirmed that the prioritization of the national question over democratization in consensus-based transitions results in the failure of the elites to consolidate democracy. In the case of Armenia the transition happened on the agreement among elites on the issue of national unification with the Nagorno

Karabakh Armenians. Even the communists, although reformed, pursued nationalist agenda, demanding unification, prioritizing national issue, along with the other parties – ARF and ANM. In contrast, in Croatia, the consensus was based on the urgency of cooperation to manage the war. However, in the ideological sense, the communists as well as the other minor parties did not pursue strong nationalist policies, unlike HDZ, whose main agenda was the prioritization of the Croatian nation throughout 1990s. Thus while in Armenia there was no clear-cut ideological differences during transition, in Croatia the ideological cleavages between the HDZ and reformed communists determined the competition among them in the later stage.

Another confirmation derived from the research was that the state of emergency, resulting from ethnic conflict created opportunities for political elites to strengthen their power over the country's politics, while also oppressing opposition forces. Since 1990 the Croatian HDZ using the advantage of the conflict legitimized its power through constantly changing the electoral laws. In addition, the Constitution required strong presidentialism with the bicameral parliament, many of its members were elected from the Herzegovina Croats. At the same time, the Croatian leftist parties in the face of the SDP were demobilized by HDZ being considered threat to Croatia's sovereignty and independence. In Armenia the oppression of the opposition began in 1994, when the ARF was accused of terrorism and drug-business, as a result of which two members of the party were jailed. The conflict was often cited as the reason that Armenia is not ready for further democracy, even recently more than fifteen years after the ceasefire.

The detailed research of the first stage showed that the prioritization of the national question and the concentration of power based on the state of emergency explained the lack of democratization in both countries for this time period. However, the ideological differences that were present in Croatian party system from the very beginning of democratization became one if not the most important factor in the defeat of the nationalists.



Further, the discussion of the consolidation stage revealed two important “critical junctures” in Croatia that are missing in Armenia. The first one is the unification of the civil society organizations. The resolution of the conflict in Croatia did not lead to the willingness of the elites to consolidate democracy. Thus, the civil society groups ARK, Glas, GONG, Green Peace, some of them having their roots in antiwar campaigns during the earliest stage of democratization, organized a large get-out-the vote campaigns on the eve of 2000 elections successfully mobilizing the public. Those groups were assisted by access to material and informational resources necessary to attract larger audiences, with the support of the Slovak ARK’99 and external funding.

The second “critical juncture” was the strong unification of the opposition forces. This of course would not be possible if there did not exist a fundamental political cleavage between those parties and HDZ, which allowed them to abandon their minor ideological differences uniting their collective efforts in defeating the HDZ regime. Accordingly, the struggle of the unified opposition and the civil society based on the case study of Croatia, revealed their complementarity in the efforts of defeating the authoritarian regime.

In Armenia, after Ter-Petrosyan’s resignation in 1998, the elites from Nagorno Karabakh consolidated their authoritarian power in Armenia, prioritizing the interest of Nagorno Karabakh and therefore the Armenian national question over the broader democratization. The discourse on the importance of the national question prevailed in Armenian political agenda in all the elections since 1998, which is a clear manifestation of the path dependence in the Armenian case until now.

As far as it concerns the critical junctures of the Croatian case – the unification of the civil society and the opposition forces, the Armenian case confirmed my argument, that the lack of the cooperation between the opposition parties and their collective efforts to defeat the regime, as well as the absence of the united campaign of the civil society organizations, explain

the prioritization of the national question in the Armenian politics until now which undermines any prospect for the democratic consolidation in Armenia.

And the last important finding of the thesis is that the final resolution of the conflict does not imply that the elites would give up nationalist rhetoric and attempt to consolidate democracy. In Croatia the conflict resolved in 1995, however, the prioritization of the national issue continued until the final defeat of the nationalists. Thus, the articulation of Nagorno Karabakh unresolved conflict is just one among many lame excuses that they use to justify the lack of democratic consolidation in Armenia.

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