

# **The Influence of Political Culture on Political Elite: The Case of Post-Soviet Georgia**

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## **Abstract**

The research aims to determine how political culture affected the political elites in Post-Soviet Georgia. It analyses how strong the correlation between different aspects of political culture and political elite is. This research has the goal to find how people's views, attitudes and expectations affected the political elites. The thesis traces the evolution and development of the political culture in society to determine the positive dynamics in the political elite. In order to analyze the last four governments of Georgia, I use qualitative analysis and conduct interviews. I observe the strongest elements of the political culture in each period and establish their links with the characteristics of the political actors and their actions. This research argues that positive changes in the political culture of the society influenced Georgian political actors and determined the movement towards progressive development in the form of successful cooperation.

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## **Introduction**

The research aims to determine the correlation between political culture and the political elite and bring more clarity in the study of the political environment in Georgia. It will be focused on the post-Soviet period and make a study of the role of political culture in political communication and ability or willingness of the political elites to cooperate and share power. In order to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the Caucasus, as the region has unique political diversity, the last chapter of the thesis will also cover comparative aspects of political processes in Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia.

The research question that the thesis is going to address is how political culture influences the political elite formation and elite culture in Georgia. The thesis will analyze formation of political culture in post-soviet Georgia and how it has changed throughout the past few decades. The thesis will discuss the issues of formation of the elite and their willingness to communicate and reach consensus, followed by a discussion of the correlation between the political culture and the elites.

The choice fell on this topic since it would be interesting to see how political culture interacts with elitism, and how they are affecting the current move to a democratic regime in a newly-independent post-Soviet state like Georgia. It is important to understand the role of political culture on the political elite and the role of the political elite in the creation of democratic (or non-democratic) political institutions and processes.

Political elites remain a crucial force which drives a country into different trajectories. In the case of post-Soviet countries, the impact of elites is much more significant since the regimes themselves are more unstable, while the society may easily be drawn to the verge of changing their political orientations. Newly emerged post-Soviet governments, including Georgian

ones, are characterized by elitist governments ruled by narrow interests of groups who act in accordance with their private interests.

As of today, political elites in the South Caucasus are not analyzed sufficiently. The academia has produced some works in the past, however, recent works are relatively general and do not cover the correlation between political culture and political elite. There is little literature analyzing comparative aspects of the three Caucasian states in terms of the links between their respective political cultures and political elites as of today.

A comparative qualitative method will be used to assess the relationships of separate but similar cases in order to investigate the research question. Comparative analysis using qualitative methods is useful when a small number of cases are used.<sup>1</sup> Since this research is focused on the post-Soviet Georgia and units of analysis are the individual governments, a small  $n$  justifies the choice of methodology, where the thesis will compare how political culture has contributed to the formation and actions of elites in each of the governments. At the same time, comparative analysis allows us to identify similarities and differences between the cases, and will help understand why three Caucasian states had similar starting points, but rather different outcomes.

## **Interviews**

The literature on the Georgian political life and related facts is abundant, however, there is a lack of analysis of these facts within the frames of the theories of political elites or political culture; as a result, the thesis cannot rely only on the available sources in terms of analysis. In order to compensate for the above, four interviews with the following well-known experts in Georgian political system have been conducted: Andro Barnov, Nika Chitadze, Tamara

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<sup>1</sup>Todd Landman, Neil Robinson, *The SAGE Handbook of Comparative Politics*, (SAGE, 2009), 14.

Kiknadze, and Vakhtang Maisaia.<sup>2</sup> All of these experts possess knowledge on the political landscape of Georgia. Hence their analytical insight will be of assistance to the thesis.

The interviewees were asked several questions, covering the evolution of political culture in Georgia after independence, the strength of the cult of personality, tolerance in political attitudes, strength of criminal elements in Georgian politics, elite cooperation and other questions.<sup>3</sup> The questions were chosen to fill in the analytical gap that exists in the literature regarding the issues that are discussed in the current thesis.

## **Structure**

I start with theoretical chapter, which will provide the general theoretical background necessary for conducting the analysis, providing definitions political culture, political elites. The second chapter will focus of certain aspects of political culture in Georgia that are relevant and important for this topic. Third chapter will start with a short introduction of certain features of political elites, including tendency for authoritarianism and conflict based elite culture, later discussing how the changes in the political culture have led to a short but successful period of cohabitation of elites, whereas the mere idea of such cohabitation would be unthinkable ten years earlier. The thesis will finish with a short and general discussion of the differences in and similarities in the development of political culture and its impact on the political elites in each of the three South Caucasian states.

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<sup>2</sup>See appendix 1 for more information.

<sup>3</sup>See appendix 2 for more information.

## **CHAPTER 1. Theoretical basis: main concepts of political elite and political culture.**

Since the thesis investigates the correlation between political culture and political elites, discussion of both theories is necessary. The thesis intends to analyze how the evolution of political culture has contributed to the changes in the willingness to reach consensus and share power, therefore, the chapter will start with the introduction of the concept of political culture followed by analysis of theories of political elites and the theory of consensus democracy.

### ***1.1 Political culture***

“Culture” is an all-encompassing term that has over 160 meanings under a number of headings: historical, psychological, normative, structural and residual definitions.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, culture in general cannot be analyzed from purely material conditions – a look into deeper issues is required.<sup>5</sup> Political culture is a subset of culture,<sup>6</sup> which describes how people view and perceive the state in general as well as its officials. This section intends to discuss the building blocks of political culture.

The concept of political culture, as a set of beliefs and values shared by the majority of the population, had been viewed as a critical determinant in how the people will be governed in a particular society.<sup>7</sup> The concept itself has deep roots and can be traced back to ancient Greek philosophers; since then, it has been used to analyze the changes in the regimes for the most part. However, culture is a concept built on intuitive pre-understanding, hence can be quite often used as an all-encompassing catchphrase to cover almost anything.<sup>8</sup> Vagueness of the concept had prevented its application in a wider context until Almond and Verba have conducted their work on political culture.

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<sup>4</sup>Charles Boix, Susan Carol Stokes, *The Oxford Handbook of Comparative Politics*, (OUP, 2007), 342.

<sup>5</sup>Volker Bornschier, *Culture and Politics in Economic Development*, Routledge, Feb 15, 2005, 6.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid 6.

<sup>7</sup>Todd Landman, Neil Robinson, *The SAGE Handbook of Comparative Politics*, (SAGE, 2009), 300.

<sup>8</sup>Klaus Eder, *Politics and Culture: On the Socio cultural Analysis of Political Participation*, in Axel Honneth, *Cultural-Political Interventions in the Unfinished Project of Enlightenment*, (MIT Press, 1992).

Political culture is defined by Almond and Verba as *"the set of attitudes, beliefs and sentiments that give order and meaning to a political process and which provide the underlying assumptions and rules that govern behavior in the political system."*<sup>9</sup>

This set can be divided into three levels:<sup>10</sup>

1. Political system
2. Policy making process
3. Policy outputs and outcomes

#### Political system

The system level of political culture signifies how the population views the systematic features of the state in general, which includes national identity and legitimacy, when the population has a high level of national pride and national identity, it usually has a more homogenous population in terms of ethnicity, language or history, which would unite the people in times of political distress.<sup>11</sup> Legitimacy of a government derives from the general sense of the legitimacy of the political system itself –if system is legitimate, the population is much more willing to accept and obey the government, and however, if obedience is derived from fear or coercion, then the legitimacy is low.<sup>12</sup> Legitimacy may be granted for various reasons – tradition, ideology, citizen participation or specific policies or actions,<sup>13</sup> and this basis defines the type of relationship that the government has with the population. Should this basis be violated, the legitimacy then is undermined, thereby creating a political disagreement which may lead to violence.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>David L. Sills, *International encyclopedia of the social sciences*, (Macmillan, 1991).

<sup>10</sup>Gabriel A. Almond et al., *Comparative politics today: a world view*, (Longman, 2000), 50.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid, 50.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid, 51.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid, 51.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid, 51.

In Georgia, there is a strong feeling of national pride and national identity, despite a large number of minorities in ethnically diverse Georgian society. A major source of such feeling is rich Georgian history, and culture, and religion. A good example of such national pride was 1978 manifestation,<sup>15</sup> when the Georgian society united against Soviet authorities, when the latter wanted to abolish Georgian language as state language. During 1980s, Georgia had one of the strong anti-Soviet dissident nationalist groups, which was characterized with uncompromised struggle against communist rule. This sense of identity was also evident when on April 9, 1989,<sup>16</sup> anti-Soviet demonstrations, as well as the war of 2008, when one million Georgians formed live chain to protest Russian violence towards their nation.<sup>17</sup> In new democracies and especially in the Post-Soviet space, there is a visible crisis of the legitimacy, which prevented the establishment of participatory culture of electorate.<sup>18</sup> Each time, the parties which are defeated in the elections blame winner for falsification of the elections, which indicates a low level of legitimacy in the government. Georgian population is rather vocal in criticizing the governments, though a degree of such criticism varies from one government to another. For instance, such protests of illegitimacy were relatively stronger against Shevardnadze's Government compared to other governments. Also, after the use of force against protesters by Saakashvili first in 2007 and for the second time in 2011, many citizens regarded Saakashvili as the illegitimate president.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> James Minahan, *The Former Soviet Union's Diverse Peoples: A Reference Sourcebook*, (James Minahan 2004), 245.

<sup>16</sup> Mark R. Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization and the Collapse of the Soviet State*, (Cambridge University Press 2002), 351-352.

<sup>17</sup> Margarita Antidze and Matt Robinson, Georgians rally against Russian aggression, Reuters, September 1, 2008. Available at: <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2008/09/01/uk-georgia-ossetia-protest-idUKL139338120080901>. (last accessed: April 11, 2015)

<sup>18</sup> Guram Abesadze, *Actors of contemporary Georgia's political scene*, (Tbilisi: Universal 2014), 42,

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. 36.

### *Policy making process*

Process level of political culture defines what the population expects from its government in terms of the political process, they are viewed from the perspective of political participation and trust.<sup>20</sup>

There are three types of people with respect to political participation:<sup>21</sup>

- Participants – people who are actually or potentially involved in the political process, they are politically aware and are able to forward demands to their respective leaders with regard to the performance of the latter.
- Subjects – people who obey the law and the state officials, however, they do not themselves take active part in political life of the country; even if they have their preferences, they do not voice them in elections.
- Parochials – people who are not aware of the political situation in the country, and the political life in general, including people with no access to such information, such as people living in rural areas, or people who willingly neglect the political information and its impact on their lives.<sup>22</sup>

Trust reflects an important part of the political culture – willingness to cooperate, the larger and less homogenous a nation is, the more coalitions and consensus is required in order to reach a political goal, which implies a lot of trust in other leaders to be honest and keep their promises.<sup>23</sup> Hostility, as the flipside of trust, may be based on ethnic, religious, ideological, or any other reason, and may lead to a conflict easily turning into a violent action.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Gabriel A. Almond et al., *Comparative politics today: a world view*, (Longman, 2000), 52.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid, 52.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid, 51.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid, 51.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid, 52.

Georgian people are characterized with relatively active participation in the elections, especially, in the first Georgian elections, 2003 elections and 2012 elections, despite relatively low participation in 2013 presidential elections. Although, the level of actual participation varies depending on a number of factors, such as the number of potential voters, and thereby the number of “participants”, is still high.

Trust is a major issue for Georgian people, they do not trust the political leadership, and political leaders do not trust each other. The Georgian political scene is frequently an epicenter of political intrigues and confrontations.

#### *Policy outputs and outcomes*

The third level of political culture is the expectations of the population from the state in terms of the outcomes of state policies in both the society and economy,<sup>25</sup> which is seen through the prism of what is a “good” government and what it is supposed to do, which includes the issues of social, fiscal, economic, foreign, military policy. The majority of the views on the above would form the general view of the population with regard to outcomes of the state policies.<sup>26</sup> A strong difference between various political cultures also lies in the type and strength of specific demands and preferences/priorities of citizens.<sup>27</sup>

Georgia is considered a semi-democratic country that is going through the process of transformation towards democracy, but perspective of becoming fully democratic is still far. Given the strong lasting impact of Soviet legacy, the state is expected to have a strong social policy.

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid, 53.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid, 53.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid, 53.

## Consensual vs. conflictual political culture

The discussion above may create an impression that the political culture is homogenous within a particular country/society, however, this is not the case; there are always some differences on all three levels of political culture, although to a varying extent. Political cultures can be consensual or conflictual with regard to the views in three elements of political culture.<sup>28</sup>

Consensual political culture is when the people mostly agree on legitimacy of the government and on how to solve the political and other problems that they are facing; on the opposite, a conflictual political culture is when there is a sharp divide between the people with regard to the same issues.<sup>29</sup> When the differences hold on for a while, certain political subcultures may be formed, and they are usually affiliated with certain political parties, have their own group of interest and own circle of trust.<sup>30</sup> The problems with such political subcultures become serious when the differences coincide with ethnical, religious, racial or language differences. In these cases, the differences in the political subcultures are further carried on by their respective members through social institutions like communities, neighborhoods, schools, political parties, and media.<sup>31</sup> The thesis will show that the conflictual nature in Georgian political culture does not originate along the ethnical, religious, racial, or language differences, it originates in the political preferences of the population at a given point of time.

## Political socialization

Since political culture is a set of values and beliefs, they may change overtime, and socialization is referred to how such values are formed and the political culture is transferred

<sup>28</sup>Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of democracy: government forms and performance in thirty-six countries*, (Michigan: Yale University Press, 2nd ed. 2012), 306.

<sup>29</sup>Gabriel A. Almond et al., *Comparative politics today: a world view*, (Longman, 2000), 55.

<sup>30</sup>Gabriel Almond, S Verba, *The Civic Culture – Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, (Princeton UP, 1963), 23.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid, 26-29.

to the next generation.<sup>32</sup> First point of contact for everyone is through their parents and family, where we form our first ideas and attitudes towards political processes and systems.<sup>33</sup> The differences along national, ethnic, religious, or language lines, which may create a rather deep divide, may in fact create even deeper divide by keeping the cleavages through different socialization means.<sup>34</sup>

To conclude, political culture is both stable and fluid phenomenon. It is not so easy to change the political culture and views of the population, since they are formed for ages and are usually transferred via various means of socialization.<sup>35</sup> However, certain large events may trigger serious responses which could change the political culture of the society, practically overnight, either creating new cleavages or deepening the existing ones. The civil war of 1991-1993, and the Rose Revolution of 2003 are examples of such turning points that have changed the political culture in Georgia.

## **1.2 Political Elites**

The thesis focuses on the impact of evolution of political culture on elites, therefore a theoretical framework and definition of “political elite” is required. This section presents theories of the elite that are applicable to the Georgian situation, followed by placement of each of the four governments in the respective elite theory.

“Elite” is a widely used word both in everyday life and academia, regardless of the ambiguity that surrounds its meaning, and though the notion is clear, boundary is undefined.<sup>36</sup> When transposed to the discussion of political systems, this vagueness becomes even more evident. The theory of political elites is a theory that describes how power relationships occur in the society, it postulates that a small number of individuals have a high level of influence over a

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<sup>32</sup>Gabriel A. Almond et al., *Comparative politics today: a world view*, (Longman, 2000), 55.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid, 55.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid, 55.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid, 55.

<sup>36</sup>George E. Marcus, *Elites, ethnographic issues*, (University of New Mexico Press, 1983), 7.

large number of individuals in society.<sup>37</sup> A class of these individuals, which possess direct political power or power to the impact, is called the political elite.<sup>38</sup> However, clear boundaries of who exactly the term “political elite” refers to and how to define the criteria of “elite” remains an open question in the theory of political science. Classic theories of elites are presented in works of Pareto, Mosca and Michels.

### *Pareto*

Pareto believes that the members of the elite, compared to the rest of the population, have certain higher degrees in knowledge intelligence, finances, or other quality that may have social value.<sup>39</sup> Pareto does not put a specific value to the term, implication being that potentially *any* quality that has a social value would be acceptable for the purposes of the definition, while ethical judgment is to be disregarded.<sup>40</sup>

Elites for Pareto represent the highest stratum, and the rest of the population is the lower stratum. The elite stratum in itself is further divided into several strata: governing elite who have a significant role in the government, the non-governing elite which is the rest of the elite stratum, and political elite that exercises political power.<sup>41</sup>

Pareto believes that with certain exceptions, people are governed by elites, where throughout human history, the continuous replacement of certain elites with other elites, new elites rise while old elites fall, and this is called the *law of circulation of elites* by Pareto.<sup>42</sup>

Rise of the new elites and fall of the old occur at the same time, and there are two signs that old elites are falling: ruling elite becomes soft and less able to defend its position and/or elites

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<sup>37</sup> Kevin T. Leicht, J. Craig Jenkins, *Handbook of Politics: State and Society in Global Perspective*, (Springer, 2009), 161.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 161.

<sup>39</sup> Vilfredo Pareto, *The Rise and Fall of the Elites: An Application of Theoretical Sociology*, (Transaction Publishers, 1991), 10.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 36.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, 78.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, 39, 41, 59.

don't lose their greed and keep indulging in misappropriations, whereas the new rising elite is more active and dedicated.<sup>43</sup>

For Pareto, there is a difference between general circulation of elites and circulation of elites in the ruling class. While the first one is always in the state of transformation, it takes either a lot of time or a major event like a revolution to change it fully. The second is a constant process of renewal of members of the elite which drives the transformation of the first. Due to circulation, a lot of gaps start to appear that are filled by recruiting from the lower strata. If this process of recruitment is not properly controlled, the ruling elite may become corrupted, and it may create a threat to the ruling elite.<sup>44</sup>

Pareto further divides the elite into “foxes” – those who prefer cooperation and diplomacy and “lions” – those who prefer to rule with the use of force.<sup>45</sup> Both exist in any government regardless of its form, since men holding power have a natural inclination to keep themselves in power and abuse the power for their own advantages.

## Mosca

Mosca believed that there are two classes – ruling class and the ruled class.<sup>46</sup> The ruling class has to get the support of the ruled class in order to be able to rule effectively.<sup>47</sup> For Mosca, there is always one leader among the ruling class itself, who is not necessarily the person holding the actual highest political seat, and even more, he does not have to be known to the wider audience.<sup>48</sup> As an example, this person could be the president, prime-minister, monarch, or the person who practically appoints such people and directs their actions from the

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<sup>43</sup>Ibid, 59-60.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 76-81.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid, 8.

<sup>46</sup>Mosca, Gaetano, *The ruling class: Elementi di scienza politica* / by Gaetano Mosca; edited and revised, with an introduction by Arthur Livingston ; translated by Hannah D. Kahn, (New York : McGraw-Hill, 1939), 50.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid, 51.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid, 51.

shadows.<sup>49</sup> Also, the ruling class must be conscious and sensitive about thoughts and feelings of the population in order to receive their support, at the absence of which he cannot rule.<sup>50</sup>

The ruling class for Mosca must be organized easily and effectively, which leads to the hereditary nature of political elites.<sup>51</sup> Prior to democracy, the inheritance in political elite was both de facto and de jure, in modern democracies, such transfer is only de facto, de jure they have to get support from the population.<sup>52</sup>

In order to have the support that it needs, the elite will create a theory justifying their existence, since de facto possession is not sufficient – some moral and legal basis is necessary. This basis forms a political formula, which is unique for each society since it is based on the beliefs and sentiments of resident groups.<sup>53</sup> Similar to Pareto, Mosca's elite consists of two strata: higher and lower stratum, and though the higher stratum is the core of the elite, it is unable to lead the country without support of the second stratum.<sup>54</sup>

For Mosca, minorities are always organized, which means that they are always superior to unorganized the majority, which leads to dominance of the former over the latter.<sup>55</sup> The interests of the two may coincide or differ, what matters is how the minority can accommodate the needs of the majority.

In Mosca's terms, pure autocracy is impossible, since the autocrat needs the second class to support his rule, in similar fashion, pure democracy is impossible too, since any population needs leaders, a group of which therefore becomes the rulers.<sup>56</sup> The length of this group's rule will depend on a number of factors including its strength and recruitment skills. Since people

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid, 51.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid, 51.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid, 61.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid, 62.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid, 62.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid, 405.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid, 53.

<sup>56</sup>Louis Hartz, Book Review: The Myth of the Ruling Class: Gaetano Mosca and the "Elite." By James H. Meisel, The American Political Science Review, Vol. 53, No. 3 (Sep., 1959)

needs leaders at all times, even if this group is removed from power, a new group will come to power as a result.<sup>57</sup>

### *Michels*

Michels theorized that all organizations work under the Iron Law of Oligarchy,<sup>58</sup> where any organization is set up to pursue autocratic aims, and this organization creates the ruling class. Regardless of any ideological differences, all and any organizations have oligarchic tendencies, and following factors are considered as major factors for such oligarchic tendencies: organization itself, nature of the human being and phenomenon of leadership.<sup>59</sup>

Leadership may be considered as the “necessary evil”: though leadership is not compatible with democracy, it is still a necessary phenomenon for each society.<sup>60</sup> Leaders also possess personal qualities that make them successful – force of will, knowledge, strength, self-sufficiency.<sup>61</sup> They are at first executive agents of collective will; however, as soon as they receive the required competence, they emancipate themselves and use the power to entrench their position.<sup>62</sup> Any organization per se requires an oligarchic scheme where tactical and technical necessity requires the leadership of one or more individuals for an organization to function effectively. Similarly, state is an organization that requires bureaucracy and therefore is a gigantic oligarchy.<sup>63</sup> Therefore, the changes on the level of leadership will not dissolve the oligarchy, but replace it with smaller ones. Due to the iron law of oligarchy and necessity of leadership and further emancipation of leadership allowed by the oligarchic organization,

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<sup>57</sup>Louis Hartz, Book Review: The Myth of the Ruling Class: Gaetano Mosca and the "Elite." By James H. Meisel, *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (Sep., 1959)

<sup>58</sup>Robert Michels, *Political Parties*, (Simon and Schuster, 1968), 342.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid*, 342-345.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid*, 113.

<sup>61</sup>*Ibid*, 100.

<sup>62</sup>*Ibid*, 70.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid*, 202.

most important questions will require authoritarian solution, therefore pure democracy is impossible.<sup>64</sup>

Political elites in Georgia have interesting characteristics for each of the four governments that are briefly analyzed here. The features and models of elite structure change with each government.

*The First Government-* The case of Gamsakhurdia's government is quite interesting. Pareto's theory is based on high intellectual abilities of the elite, which are present in this case. However, the ruling elite during the first government was rather inexperienced and lacked the skills to govern the country.

*Second Government-* Shevardnadze's government mostly satisfies the criteria of Michels. Shevardnadze did possess qualities that made him a charismatic leader; he had an intelligent and strong personality. Shevardnadze's government was in fact ruled using clans and corrupt officials, which helped the elite to pursue autocratic aims.

*Third Government-* In the case of Saakashvili's government, Pareto and Mosca's theories can be applied. The political elite of UNM, including Saakashvili himself, had certain high of knowledge on how to manage the government and the politics of the country, which fit Pareto's criteria of elite having superior qualities. On the other hand, as Mosca suggests, the elite always has one leader that has influence in most issues: according to opponents of Saakashvili's government, the president was directly involved or influenced in every segment of the political life.

*The Fourth Government-* The current situation in Georgia fits Mosca's theory and criteria. Mosca suggests that the leader himself does not have to actually hold the highest power and be known to a wider audience, he may even be conducting all the actions from the shadows

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid, 364.

(which may fit Ivanishvili's case). After he left politics, opponents blame him of influencing government from the shadows. In terms of special qualities required by Pareto, Ivanishvili's material resources and personal character are those qualities that make him a charismatic leader.

### ***1.3 The relationship between political culture and political elite***

As noted above, political culture is formed throughout decades and centuries, but is still subject to rapid changes. Political culture has three levels, which define who the population sees the actions, priorities and policies of the governments in a given society.<sup>65</sup> This political culture is then transferred from generation to generation through direct and indirect means of socialization. The political culture can be either consensual or conflicting, which would influence the actions and attitudes of political leadership in their political and other actions – leaders create or avoid coalitions and dialogue.<sup>66</sup>

The theory of elites assumes that there is a dominant minority that governs over a majority of the population. Most theories agree that the society requires leadership, and the leaders possess certain qualities allowing them to lead. At the same time, any leader (at least in the contemporary society) requires legitimacy in order to keep his position in leadership. Moreover, the leader must not become too greedy in abusing his power, since the loss of legitimacy would undermine his position.

Lijphart's concept of power-sharing or consensus democracy<sup>67</sup> assumes power sharing in democratic societies as a contrast to majoritarian democracy.<sup>68</sup> According to Lijphart, in

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<sup>65</sup>Gabriel A. Almond et al., *Comparative politics today: a world view*, (Longman, 2000), 52.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid, 60.

<sup>67</sup>Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of democracy: government forms and performance in thirty-six countries*, Yale University Press, 2nd ed. 2012, page 31. A Lijphart, 'Definitions, Evidence and Policy – A Response to Matthijs Bogaards' critique', *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, Vol.12, No.4, 2000, 426.

heterogeneous countries (like Georgia), majoritarian rule is not only against democracy, but very risky, because minorities are excluded from political processes and consider themselves marginalized, which may push towards confrontation.<sup>69</sup> Theory was originally designed using coalition, proportional representation, executive power sharing, multiparty system and other factors.<sup>70</sup> However, as discussed above, it might be still too early for Georgia to reach such democracy at this point of time, although certain move will be shown in the thesis.

Almond and Verba, as well as Lijphart, believe that the development of political institutions, which are designed and operated by the political elite, are correlated with the development of democratic mindset and democratic political culture.<sup>71</sup> The thesis will show that the changes in the political culture have contributed to changes in the political elite which created more grounds on the way to creating more willingness to create consensus among the elites. This change in the willingness to reach consensus is visible in the period of cohabitation of elites discussed in the third chapter.

To conclude, in general, the political culture in Georgia is characterized with low interest in policy making process and strong expectations of citizens from the state. At the same time, the political culture is still more or less conflict oriented and mostly parochial. However, the culture has developed and there is shift towards participatory political culture. Such progressive development is also evidenced in the changes in how the elites are functioning.

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<sup>68</sup>Arend Lijphart, *Patterns of democracy: government forms and performance in thirty-six countries*, (Yale University Press, 2nd ed. 2012), 32.

<sup>69</sup> Arendt Lijphart, *Patterns of Democracy –Government Forms and Performance in Thirty-Six Countries*, (New Haven: Yale UP, 1999), 32.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid, 2-4.

<sup>71</sup>Ibid, 403.

## CHAPTER 2. Evolution of political culture in Georgia

Political culture in Georgia is a complex phenomenon influenced by many factors, including the pre-Soviet inheritance, the Soviet period of the totalitarian regime, dominance of criminal elements, and the chaos of transitional period. This chapter intends to introduce the main characteristics of political culture in Georgia, as well as its gradual development. Political culture is a wide topic which requires significant elaboration, however, given size limits, only some of the elements relevant to the research question will be discussed. The chapter will start with a discussion of the general perceptions of the state in Georgian political culture, followed by the discussion of the domination of criminal elements. Later, the chapter will discuss the orientation on a single political leader, which, combined with parochial orientations, leads to a very loose party system. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of tolerance on general and political levels in order to provide evidence of conflict-oriented political culture.

### 2.1 *Perceptions of state in political culture*

Georgian political culture is an incredible mixture of varying and sometimes seemingly incompatible elements. Georgia has been a part of the Soviet Union for about 70 years, where the totalitarian communist political system did not allow any political pluralism. The communist legacy played significant role on the shaping political culture in Post-Soviet states and Georgia is no exception. A weak Georgian national community was largely hidden by the Soviet modernization in mass education, and economic development.<sup>72</sup> Negative role was played in formation of civic culture by historical inheritance of "servant" and patriarchal political orientation-behavior.<sup>73</sup> Soviet-style political system was based on the domination of a top layer of the political elite with a top-down structure of implementation. Loyalty and

<sup>72</sup>Stephen Jones, *Georgia: A political history Since Independence*, (I.B Tauris& Co2013, 2015), 26.

<sup>73</sup>Omar Gogiashvili, *"Politology"*, (Tbilisi: TSU, 2004), 414.

unconditional implementation of the orders of top officials were regarded as a recipe of success in Soviet nomenclature, while personal and professional values were mostly disregarded and undervalued.<sup>74</sup>Totalitarian, communist ideology played the role of religious fundamentalism and claimed to provide the universal truth,<sup>75</sup>which undermined an individual's will and expression of their independent and analytical thinking. In Such system therefore was against any political pluralism: elections were a cover-up.

As a result, the newly formed political culture perceived the authorities as the most important people and whose orders must be fulfilled without any resistance. This attitude was firmly rooted in the minds of the people, which created serious hurdles on the way to creating a system based on the rule of law and democratic institutions.

However, the perception of Georgian statehood was damaged by both illegitimate overthrowing of the first President Zviad Gamsakhurdia and the revolution of 2003.<sup>76</sup>These events have contributed to the development of the syndrome of changing governments without elections. The syndrome of changing Georgian governments bypassing competitive elections became a part of Georgian political culture.

Several other factors have also played a role in forming a negative perception of the state in Georgian political culture: injustice, corruption, the inefficiency of state institutions, financially privileged state officials, terrible poverty of the general population and a high rate of crime. Unemployment and poverty has always been a problem in Post-Soviet Georgia."In 1999, about 52% of the Georgians still worked in the informal sector, mostly on a small scale, and mostly as casual labor."<sup>77</sup>Moreover, the transitional period, the legitimacy of the institutions and leaders was under question because of a tradition of falsification of the

<sup>74</sup> Dmitry Gershenson, Herschel I. Grossman, *Cooptation and Repression in the Soviet Union*, November 2000, 5.

<sup>75</sup>Avtandil Tukvadze, *Comparative analysis of political culture*, (Tbilisi: Universal, 2014), 121.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid, 134.

<sup>77</sup>Stephen Jones, *Georgia: A political history Since Independence*, (I.B Tauris& Co. 2013, 2015), 21.

elections.<sup>78</sup>Because corruption had infiltrated almost all spheres of life there was evident mistrust of government institutions.<sup>79</sup>

After 2012 Parliamentary, 2013 Presidential and 2014 elections of local self-governance, the situation was radically changed on the political scene of Georgia<sup>80</sup> – these were the first occurrences of a peaceful transfer of power. The last elections changed the tradition of illegitimate changes of the governments and strengthened democracy. Moreover, the significant change in Georgia of converting from a semi-presidential to the Parliamentary republic was implemented successfully without serious complications. It was a very important test for Georgian political culture, which returned belief in the importance of Georgian political institutions.<sup>81</sup>These evidences that in term of political culture, modern type democracy with newly found the Western values were appearing in political culture in Georgia.<sup>82</sup>

## 2.2 Criminal elements in political culture

Criminal elements are common in any country's culture, however, when this becomes a part of an accepted ideology, it does not fit the description of a modern state. This section intends to analyze the impact and direct involvement of the criminal network in different stages of the Georgian political reality.

The Soviet Republic of Georgia was a nest of organized criminal network in the Soviet Union since Georgia provided Soviet Union with elite circle of the criminal world.<sup>83</sup>Georgian criminal elements were widely respected in Soviet nomenclature, and the same trend continued in 1990s. The thesis of Almond and Verba therefore does not fit the Georgian case:

<sup>78</sup>Avtandil Tukvadze, *Comparative analysis of political culture*, (Tbilisi: Universal, 2014). 138.

<sup>79</sup>Norman Schofield, Maria Gallego, *Leadership pr Chaps: The Heart and Soul of Politics*, (Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg 2011), 286.

<sup>80</sup>Guram Abesadze, *Actors of contemporary Georgia's political scene*, (Tbilisi: Universal, 2014). 6.

<sup>81</sup>CSIS, *Georgia's Post Election: Challenges and Priorities*, 1.

<sup>82</sup>*New Generation*, November 18, 2003.

<sup>83</sup>Guram Abesadze, *Actors of contemporary Georgia's political scene*, (Tbilisi: Universal, 2014), 16.

they contend that such criminal elements may rise to high levels of political structure provided that the majority of these criminal elements are uneducated and have little understanding of the actors of political processes.<sup>84</sup> In the Soviet criminal network, and later in 1990s, the prominent and elite layer of the criminal world consisted of educated and experienced people with high intellectual abilities. The criminal organization had a very strict hierarchy and its own laws; there was even a whole bureaucracy of the criminal world. So-called “thieves-in-law” were the highest members of the criminal network, and although they were prosecuted in the other countries, in Georgia, they were untouchable. In Soviet Georgia, criminal organizations enjoyed communist state protection and cultivated strong ties with officials of all levels. Even though there was a general level of acceptance of such criminal elements by the population, Tamara Kiknadze mentions that: “people were not fully satisfied with the existing criminal elements on top of the political hierarchy.”<sup>85</sup>

The involvement of the Patriarchal-criminal elements in Georgian political life was the most visible the during a troubled transitional period, when post-civil war Georgian state institutions collapsed and the Georgian government was not able to implement its laws, which gave such criminal elements the possibility to take advantage of the situation, infiltrate government bureaucracy and practically take over the functions of the state.

The armed wing of the opposition of the first government contained prominent criminal elite, who played important role during transitional period. The most visible person with strong ties with the Georgian elite of organized crime was Jaba Ioseliani, who was a very important person in opposition and founder of the Mkhedrioni.<sup>86</sup> Naturally, after a successful coup, his circle became extremely influential and criminalized Georgian social and political life. In

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<sup>84</sup>Avtandil Tukvadze, *Comparative analysis of political culture*, (Tbilisi: Universal, 2014), 131.

<sup>85</sup>Tamara Kiknadze, Professor of Political Science, Interview by author, April 15, 2015.

<sup>86</sup> The Mkhedrioni was both a paramilitary group and a political organization in Georgia in early 1990s, which was declared as outlaws in 1995. However, the Mkhedrioni were later reorganized as political party called the Union of Patriots.

1992, a meeting of the prominent people in the criminal circles was arranged in Tbilisi, where Jaba Ioseliani failed to achieve transformation of a criminal network, but after four years, in the next meeting, Georgian criminals managed to agree on reforms based on stages, which determined the transformation of the Georgian criminal network in Post-Soviet space and these changes considered the involvement of criminal network in political and economic life.<sup>87</sup> During transitional period, power in Georgia was shared between criminal elements and military leaders.<sup>88</sup>

The presence of Ioseliani at the early stage of Shevardnadze's government had several implications: first, he was a guarantee of maintaining the strength of the criminal elements in the government, second, this alliance gave Shevardnadze more control, and third, it further strengthened the patriarchal-criminal political culture by seeing criminal elements as an essential part of the state. Shevardnadze himself acknowledged: "State laws were swapped with Criminal laws of robbery, chaos and unprecedented crisis reigned."<sup>89</sup> This mixture of criminal elite with Shevardnadze's neo-nomenclature led to high levels of corruption and injustice in the country.<sup>90</sup> It became clear that Shevardnadze had serious challenge in face of Ioseliani and Kitovani, who had intention to limit his role to insignificant figure, while becoming key decision-makers themselves.<sup>91</sup> Thus, it should be also mentioned that later, President Eduard Shevardnadze quite effectively managed to achieve success in neutralization of a paramilitary groups in Georgia and normalized situation in the country.<sup>92</sup> Thus, Shevardnadze's government was clan-based and criminal elements still remained influential. The formation of strong clans in Georgian politics strengthened the process of differentiation

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<sup>87</sup>Avtandil Tukvadze, *Comparative analysis of political culture*, (Tbilisi: Universal, 2014), 133.

<sup>88</sup>Ghia Nodia, Alvaro Pinto Scholtbach, *Political landscape of Georgia*, (Eburon Delft 2006), 12.

<sup>89</sup>Eduard Shevardnadze, *"For independent, indivisible, democratic Georgia"*, (Tbilisi, 1995), 4.

<sup>90</sup>Stephen Jones, *The Making of Modern Georgia, 1918-2012: The First Georgian Republic and its successors*, (Routledge, 2014), 107.

<sup>91</sup>Kelli Hash-Gonsalez, *Popular Mobilization and Empowerment in Georgia's Rose Revolution*, (Lexington Books 2012), 33.

<sup>92</sup>Ghia Nodia, Alvaro Pinto Scholtbach, *Political landscape of Georgia*, (Eburon Delft 2006), 13.

of society and ignited aggressive confrontation between political actors.<sup>93</sup> Andro Barnov mentions that "the criminal elements in this period were too strong to be disregarded – they were in full control of the state by practically ordering the ministers and other state officials on all levels. Besides, the same criminal elements controlled the street crime elements, which led to a general acceptance of the partly criminal nature of the state by the youth."<sup>94</sup>

Shevardnadze's government was corrupt and could not resist the revival of the criminal political culture in Georgia. Vakhtang Maisaia mentions that "Eduard Shevardnadze governed the country through his family clan, but after he lost control of the government, he was not interested any more in taking any political decisions, though formally he was still the leader (similar to the situation with Brezhnev in the Soviet Union)."<sup>95</sup> A criminal network played an important role in Georgia's economic and political life, the criminal world controlled over 40% of services, 15% of energy businesses, 66% of the gambling business, 40% of construction business, and 20% of the other spheres.<sup>96</sup> Nika Chitadze mentions that "during Shevardnadze's rule, there was a chain of corrupted officials and mass corruption on all levels. Eduard Shevardnadze accepted, through his actions, that some people would and could be involved in corruption as a result of criminal mentality. For instance, during one of his interviews, Shevardnadze declared that corruption was bad, while at the same time mentioning that it is in fact, a source of income for many families. This chaos resulted in the collapse of the state when the state budget was not able to make any social payments, including pensions, let alone implementing social or other projects."<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>93</sup>Guram Abesadze, *Actors of political scene in contemporary Georgia*, (Tbilisi: Universal, 2014), 20.

<sup>94</sup>Andro Barnov, an ex-government official in Saakashvili's government and member of current opposition (UNM). Interview by author April 11, 2015.

<sup>95</sup>Vakhtang Maisaia, Professor of Political Science. Interview by author April 10, 2015.

<sup>96</sup>*Caucasian Accent*, №22, 2005.

<sup>97</sup>Nika Chitadze, Professor of Political Science. Interview by author April 8, 2015.

In November 2003, as a result of mass demonstrations against Shevardnadze, which was consequence of falsified elections of 2003, the government resigned.<sup>98</sup> This denoted the readiness of the population to remove the criminal elements from the government as well. After the logical end of Shevardnadze's inefficient and corrupt regime, the United National Movement came to power under the leadership of Mikheil Saakashvili, Zurab Zhvania and Nino Burjanadze. Saakashvili's government imposed new laws, which strengthened pressure on criminal elements on all levels of society. Within a relatively short time frame, the new government was able to remove organized crime and its elements from the state structures. Shevardnadze's corrupt officials were confronted by some part of young politicians, who fled Union of Citizens Party, who became architects of the "Rose Revolution".<sup>99</sup> From this point of view, Saakashvili's government played a very positive role in decriminalization of the political, social and economic systems. Tamara Kiknadze believes that "huge decriminalization has been carried out among the youth and in prisons for the most part, and in times of Saakashvili that criminal elements transferred to the upper circles, thereby leading to the emergence of elite corruption."<sup>100</sup>

When Bidzina Ivanishvili came to power, the fight against organized crime had already provided its fruits; therefore he was able to release a huge number of prisoners under a general amnesty of 2012. Due to a number of changes implemented by Saakashvili's government, criminal elements failed to regain power once again. At the same time, Georgian society is already much stronger to confront and respond to such anti-social behavior where criminal elements would be ruling the country; therefore, currently there is no tendency of the involvement of the criminal organizations in political life.<sup>101</sup> Andro Barnov confirmed that

<sup>98</sup>Thomas De Waal, *Georgia's Choices: Charting A Future In Uncertain Times*, (Carnegie Endowment 2013), 5.

<sup>99</sup>Guram Abesadze, *Actors of political scene in contemporary Georgia*, (Tbilisi: Universal 2014), 55.

<sup>100</sup>Interview with Tamara Kiknadze

<sup>101</sup>Guram Abesadze, *Actors of political scene in contemporary Georgia*, (Tbilisi: Universal, 2014), 66.

"the situation was reversed and the number of criminal elements in the country had significantly diminished."<sup>102</sup>

The criminal culture has dominated Georgian culture in general and political culture in particular for a long period of time. However, the change in the political culture is evidenced by elimination of these criminal elements from the echelons of power, and unwillingness of the population to tolerate the criminal elements in political power. Also, signs of clan-based governance are relatively weak in today's Georgia.

### ***2.3 Historical and modern traditions of faith in Charismatic leader***

Each society is unique in their approach to choosing, following and overthrowing their leaders, particularly political ones, and Georgian political culture is rather unique in their approach. Georgian people permanently seek a savior who will be capable of dealing with any issue and provide the population with means of wealth-creation. Orientation of society onto one person indicates that the political culture is at a rather low stage of development; political activities of the people become limited to waiting for or looking for a new charismatic leader who will provide emotional support.<sup>103</sup>

The history of Georgia is a permanent struggle for independence and that is why Georgian people always depended on a strong, charismatic King, who would lead the nation to victory. Historically, it was an honor for Georgians to die for their king and sacrifice life for the sake of the nation. Hence, as Tamara Kiknadze mentions "this phenomenon is deeply rooted in people's minds and in political culture, and it will take much more time to overcome compared to other factors." <sup>104</sup>

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<sup>102</sup>Interview with Andro Barnov.

<sup>103</sup>Avtandil Tukvadze, *Comparative analysis of political culture*, (Tbilisi: Universal 2014), 145.

<sup>104</sup>Interview with Tamara Kiknadze.

This faith in a charismatic leader was further strengthened by several decades of Soviet leadership. In Soviet times, major institutions of socialization such as School, University and family, instead of committing to party loyalty, were focused on teaching the new generation to be loyal to their great leader.<sup>105</sup> The collapse of the Soviet Union did not bring changes to faith in a great leader. Vakhtang Maisaia mentions that "the Georgian society could not abandon the cult of a charismatic leader."<sup>106</sup> Furthermore, the aspiration for the leader even extended during Georgia's transitional period, the terrible socio-economic conditions assisted in a new wave of historical tradition of belief in the charismatic leader and found a new transformation in personalities of Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze, Saakashvili, and Ivanishvili.<sup>107</sup> While discussing the role of the charismatic leader in Georgian politics, Nika Chitadze replied that "often the political leader plays the main role and the political elite were established on the basis of the authority of the leader. The society tended to create an image of a public political leader and worshipped such a leader. For example, Gamsakhurdia received 87%<sup>108</sup> of the votes in the elections, Shevardnadze – 95%<sup>109</sup>, Saakashvili 96%<sup>110</sup>."<sup>111</sup> Such high support from the electorate indicates how strong people's expectation of the savior, who will deal with problems is. People voted for the Georgian Dream because of Bidzina Ivanishvili (54.97%),<sup>112</sup> for the National Movement for the sake of Saakashvili and for the Union of Citizens represented by Shevardnadze. This means that a lot of people are willing to delegate powers to political leaders who they believe will do the job for them.

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<sup>105</sup>Rafael Grugman, *Soviet Square: Stalin, Khrushchev, Berya, Gorbachov*, (Publishing house "Peter" 2011), 267.

<sup>106</sup>Interview with Vakhtang Maisaia

<sup>107</sup>Avtandil Tukvadze, *Comparative analysis of political culture*, (Tbilisi: Universal, 2014). 145.

<sup>108</sup> Central Election Commission of Georgia, history of the elections. Available at: <http://www.cesko.ge/files/TEA/archevnebisistoria/geohistory.pdf>. 6. (last accessed: April 22, 2015).

<sup>109</sup>Ibid. 10.

<sup>110</sup>Ibid. 16.

<sup>111</sup>Interview with Nika Chitadze.

<sup>112</sup> Elections 2012, Central Elections Commission. Available at: <http://results2012.cec.gov.ge/> (last accessed: April 23, 2015).

Zviad Gamsakhurdia was a very popular leader, who was associated with Georgian independence and fighting for national ideals. Zviad Gamsakhurdia was the most charismatic among the other leaders in the dissident movement and therefore won the election by a clear majority.<sup>113</sup> He was a typical charismatic leader who did not succeed in converting into a bureaucrat-rational leader; and even after being elected as president, he stayed as an uncompromised dissident.<sup>114</sup> His emotional character, which was one of the bases of his being so popular and charismatic, indeed played a huge role in him not being able to encompass the position of the leader of the nation.

The crisis of the transitional period shifted the preferences of the Georgian people, but the faith in a new leader remained. After Gamsakhurdia's failure and the civil war, people wanted more stability and more steady development, and people believed that Eduard Shevardnadze would accomplish this task. The Military junta that took over the political powers during the civil war, as well as a part of the population, connected Eduard Shevardnadze's arrival with the country's stability, international support and economic advancement.<sup>115</sup> He was charismatic leader, who had good sense of humor and was naturally a born diplomat and a great public speaker. Eduard Shevardnadze who served as the first secretary of Georgia's communist party for 12 years and Foreign Minister of the Soviet Union for 5 years had impressive experience in the political career.<sup>116</sup> He promised changes and democratic development in Georgia by using populist means. Shevardnadze intensively used illegitimate practices to keep elite in power and manipulated politics. His presidency was marked by the revival of corruption at all levels of bureaucracy, as well as chaos, which determined the mobilization of society against him finally in November 2003.

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<sup>113</sup>Ghia Nodia, Alvaro Pinto Scholtbach, *Political landscape of Georgia*, (Eburon Delft 2006), 9.

<sup>114</sup>Avtandil Tukvadze, *Comparative analysis of political culture*, (Tbilisi: Universal 2014), 146.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid, 146.

<sup>116</sup>Kelli Hash-Gonzalez, *Popular Mobilization and Empowerment in Georgia's Rose Revolution*, (Lexington Books, 2012), 32.

The revolution, however, did not change the perception and faith in the leader. Charisma was a deciding factor in Mikheil Saakashvili's rise as president. As a result of attractive, popular promises and charismatic personality, Mikheil Saakashvili became the president of Georgia, who enjoyed both internal and external support at the same time. With his successful reforms in various areas, organizational talent and uncompromised struggle with organized crime; soon Saakashvili became even more popular.

Saakashvili was facing issues that endangered his future in the Georgian politics. After the war of 2008, with the aim of strengthening the positions of the government, he launched a propaganda machine, in which he assumed the role of the main ideologist, propagandist, and the messianic role of "the savior of country".<sup>117</sup> The faith of the people in their leader allowed Saakashvili to further this propaganda successfully; however, he made the same mistakes as Shevardnadze. Later, due to a gradual increase in the general level of political culture and political awareness of the population allowed people to recognize increasing illegitimacy of Saakashvili's government.

The quick loss of Saakashvili's popularity determined the emergence of the billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili in Georgian politics in 2011. Ivanishvili was famous for his donations to infrastructural projects in all over Georgia, charity and even providing aid to Saakashvili's Government.<sup>118</sup> Bidzina Ivanishvili created a political coalition under the name of "Georgian Dream", which united all main Georgian oppositional parties (6 parties and independent members). The population perceived him as a person with huge amounts of financial resources and a patriot who was willing to spend his money on the welfare of the Georgian people and defeat Saakashvili. In the election campaign of 2012, Ivanishvili gave

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<sup>117</sup>Avtandil Tukvadze, *comparative analysis of political culture*, (Tbilisi: Universal, 2014), 148.

<sup>118</sup>Wendel Steavenson, "The Good Oligarch." Prospect Magazine, August 10, 2010. Available at: <http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/features/bidzina-ivanishvili-georgia-billionaire-philanthropist>(last accessed: 23, April 2015).

unprecedented promises to the Georgian electorate, which seemed unrealistic, but the general public still believed in his personality and charisma. Thus, the fact that Ivanishvili needed to create a winning coalition and received only a moderate 54,97% of votes may indicate that there is decrease in the tendency of dependency on a charismatic leader, and voters have become more pragmatic.

Bidzina Ivanishvili united the Georgian opposition, which prepared the ground for the revival of the real Georgian oppositional coalition. As he once mentioned: "I wish our party to be a true unity of the people connected with ideology and value".<sup>119</sup> His frankness and the ability to acknowledge his mistakes brought a personal factor in politics: people saw a man with honor, good character, frankness, and modest human emotions, which was rare in the Georgian political sphere.<sup>120</sup> While discussing the dependency on a charismatic leader, Tamara Kiknadze added that "the political culture in Georgia is focused on finding a savior that will ensure the continued wellbeing of the people - Ivanishvili was elected since he is the billionaire and promised to invest into the wellbeing of the country. Unless and until this mindset changes, particularly among the youth, and the people start taking more responsibility and depend on themselves, the situation with political choices is unlikely to change."<sup>121</sup>

Soon Georgian dream failed to deliver a significant portion of its promises and Bidzina Ivanishvili left politics and joined the civil sector. According to public surveys, 70% of the Georgian citizens are disappointed and criticize Ivanishvili because of his decision to leave politics and failure to deliver promised welfare.<sup>122</sup> Ivanishvili transferred power to Irakli Garibashvili, who is ex-minister of internal affairs of Georgia. After Ivanishvili left politics, he constantly keeps in touch with his successor and trying to influence decision-making of the

<sup>119</sup> "New generation", November 25, 2013.

<sup>120</sup> Avtandil Tukvadze, *comparative analysis of political culture*, (Tbilisi: Universal, 2014), 149.

<sup>121</sup> Interview with Tamara Kiknadze.

<sup>122</sup> Freedom in the world: Annual survey of political rights and civil liberties (FH 2014), 273.

new Prime Minister.<sup>123</sup>Therefore, many Georgians feel disappointed and the rating of the Coalition continue to fall.<sup>124</sup>

As my respondent Nika Chitadze mentioned, "The images of the political elites were created by the charismatic leader as if the future of the country depended on them. For example, it was considered that Gamsakhurdia brought independence to the country, and only Shevardnadze could use his authority to provide diplomatic success to the country, Saakashvili would be the one to save Georgia with this young-spirit energy, and Bidzina Ivanishvili would be the financial and an economic savior for Georgia and would distribute a relevant amount of money to each citizen of the country."<sup>125</sup>

Georgian politics is characterized by establishing the cult of personality, often seen as rather 'clumsy' and tentatively introduced. It may be mixture with ancient views and communist past. The absence of success in any of the previous four leaders has not strongly impacted the attitude –Georgian people are still looking for a new leader to take charge and lead the nation.

The Georgian nation has been willing to follow a strong leader for a long period of time, and this tendency still remains, whereas this orientation towards a leader creates major obstacles in the development of strong political culture.

#### ***2.4 Parochial orientations of citizens and weak party system***

Existing political orientation in a given country is usually represented in the respective system of political parties. According to the data of Georgia's Ministry of Justice, there are 220 political parties in Georgia as of 2014.<sup>126</sup>However, the majorities of these Georgian political

<sup>123</sup>Independent, Bidzina Ivanishvili: the billionaire with Georgian dream, 2012. Available at: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/profiles/bidzina-ivanishvili-the-billionaire-with-a-georgian-dream-8118197.html> (last accessed: April 24, 2015).

<sup>124</sup> International Republican Institute, Public Opinion Survey Residents of Georgia, February, 2015. Available at: [http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/iri\\_georgia\\_public\\_2015\\_final\\_0.pdf](http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/iri_georgia_public_2015_final_0.pdf) (last access: April 26, 2015).

<sup>125</sup>Interview with Nika Chitadze.

<sup>126</sup>Registry of the Ministry of Justice. Available at: [http://www.justice.gov.ge/files/Documents/partiebis520sia/partiebis\\_sia.pdf](http://www.justice.gov.ge/files/Documents/partiebis520sia/partiebis_sia.pdf) (last access: 27 April, 2015).

parties are withdrawn from political processes and represent non-functioning and clan-family based entities.<sup>127</sup> Despite a large number of Georgia's opposition parties, they are small and divided among each other, each dominated by their respective leader.<sup>128</sup>"The Georgian political party system can be evaluated as a weak multiparty system."<sup>129</sup>For any Georgian, it is hard to imagine a Labor party of Georgia without Shalva Natelashvili and his radical rhetoric, the National Movement without Mikheil Saakashvili, New Rights without Gamkrelidze, and Industrialists without Gogi Topadze.<sup>130</sup> There have been only a few successful changes of top leadership in Georgian political parties.<sup>131</sup>As respondent Nika Chitadze mentions, Georgian people never knew which party was the right-wing or left-wing, and when they vote for major deputies identifiable with a political leader. During the transitional period, there were a number of political parties which were dissolved when their leaders decided to leave politics.<sup>132</sup>This tendency proves that there is lack of party culture in the Georgian political space, and the whole political system is built on personal qualities of the leaders.

Apart from the mix up between leaders and parties, there is a tendency of mixing the roles of right and left wing parties. Sometimes, the leaders of Georgia's political right do not fulfill their ideological role and function and have similar demands as political leftist parties. This misbalance between political functions demonstrates that there is no clear boundary between the roles of political parties, while their behavior does not always fit in their own self-proclaimed frames. Respondent Nika Chitadze noted that "although generally any political party that is a constituent part of the political elite is based upon a certain political ideology, in Georgia there are no important traditions similar to political parties existing in the West, mostly due to the fact that Georgia's political elite often is not based upon a specific or at

<sup>127</sup>Avtandil Tukvadze, *Comparative analysis of political culture*, (Tbilisi: Universal, 2014),124.

<sup>128</sup>Thomas De Waal, *Georgia's Choices: Charting A Future In Uncertain Times*, (Carnegie Endowment, 2013), 8.

<sup>129</sup>Ghia Nodia, Alvaro Pinto Scholtbach, *Political landscape of Georgia*. (Eburon Delft 2006), 102.

<sup>130</sup>Avtandil Tukvadze, *Comparative analysis of political culture*, (Tbilisi: Universal 2014), 124.

<sup>131</sup>Ghia Nodia, Alvaro Pinto Scholtbach, *Political landscape of Georgia*, (Eburon Delft 2006), 162.

<sup>132</sup>Interview with Nika Chitadze.

least identifiable political ideology and the leaders in fact, decide political directions of the party."Moreover, according to Nika Chitadze "party loyalty is not a common phenomenon and politicians often move from one party to another; for example, members of the National Movement left the party and went to the coalition of the Georgian Dream after having greatly benefited from being a member of the National Movement, furthermore, the coalition Georgian Dream itself is functioning without any particular political ideology."<sup>133</sup>

Georgian political parties are characterized by a lack of organizational functioning and a lack of ability to respond to the immediate needs of the society. Combined with the fact that the electorate mostly votes for leaders and not parties, this leads to the result that the majority of Georgian political parties lack loyal voters.<sup>134</sup>At this point of time in Georgian politics, the presidential elections did not carry weight for party politics since the main rivalry was among individuals.<sup>135</sup>Respondent Vakhtang Maisaia mentions that "Bidzina Ivanishvili managed to unite the oppositional parties where the political forces had radically different visions, including foreign policy priorities, starting from Topadze's pro-Eurasian party to the pro-Atlantic vision of Alasania's "Free Democrats".<sup>136</sup>This may emphasize the previous point on the missing right wing or left wing connotations of the political parties. On the other hand, this kind of unity can be considered as a success, because it is very interesting and unusual experience of coalition-building in Georgia. According to Arendt Lijphart, the most successful consensual governments should be comprised of multiple parties and have to be oversized.<sup>137</sup>

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<sup>133</sup>Interview with Nika Chitadze

<sup>134</sup>Avtandil Tukvadze, *Comparative analysis of political culture*, (Tbilisi: Universal, 2014), 159.

<sup>135</sup>Ghia Nodia, Alvaro Pinto Scholtbach, *Political landscape of Georgia*, (Eburon Delft 2006), 51.

<sup>136</sup>Interview with Vakhtang Maisaia

<sup>137</sup> Arendt Lijphart, *Patterns of democracy: government forms and performance in thirty-six countries*, (Yale University 1999), 91.

The party system in Georgia was dominated by the ruling parties during presidencies of both Shevardnadze and Saakashvili.<sup>138</sup> On Georgian political scene, small parties can not challenge the ruling party, since dominant power controls executive and legislative branches, which is against political pluralism.<sup>139</sup> Dominance of political power in the Georgian political scene strengthens the principle of appearance of so called "Icon of Enemy", which means perception of opponents as enemies.<sup>140</sup> The government started a process of dissolution of the oppositional specter; they artificially created pseudo opposition, which represented pseudo democratic power.<sup>141</sup> This technique is used to reduce the real opposition's value by diluting their voter base.

Wrong perceptions of state, combined with long-time dominance of criminal elements (though removed later), has contributed to a low level of political culture in Georgia. It was further diminished by the orientation towards a single leader, which in turn has undermined the idea of multi-party democracy. Although technically Georgia is a pluralistic society with multiple left and wing parties, none of them are identifiable as parties unless related to a leader. Therefore parties become a tool in hands of the elite to reach and maintain power.

It should be mentioned that after Georgian Dream won the elections, there is tendency of shifting from parochial to participatory political culture. The first precedent of the governmental change through elections changed people's perceptions. Interest and participation of civil society is relatively higher, they have become demanding of the elite and more intensively criticize the government.

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<sup>138</sup>Max Bader, *Making parties fit for democracy: Georgia, Ukraine and the challenge for democracy assistance*, 2007, 8.

<sup>139</sup>*Ibid*, 28.

<sup>140</sup>Guram Abesadze, *Actors of Political Scene in Contemporary Georgia*, (Tbilisi: Universal, 2014), 22.

<sup>141</sup>*Ibid*, 57.

## 2.5 *Elements of tolerance*

Conflict oriented culture is created or diminished by the level of tolerance in the society, when such tolerance is high, people tend to reach consensus. The other element is the cause of such tolerance or intolerance, as discussed in the first chapter, the cleavages along ethnic; language lines tend to create deeper issues than if such differences lie along other lines.

In cultural context, Georgian people have a tradition of tolerance and friendship, which is an essential characteristic of liberal society.<sup>142</sup> At the same time, there is a paradoxical situation that both a political elite and the population in general respond to the political events in the very radical way. For example, different political views may create a hostile relationship between citizens. At the same time, for the reasons discussed above (following the leader and not the idea or party) citizens change their political preferences rapidly and may become fierce enemies of the political powers for whom they were ready to fight a year ago.

Respondent Andro Barnov confirms that "in political alliance terms, there is no tolerance. The first change in the government happened when the leader was murdered. The second change required a national movement and a revolution. The government today is actively trying to prosecute the previous government members."<sup>143</sup> Respondent Nika Chitadze "had quite similar views on the situation: The tolerance elements are rather weak and this caused in particular the civil war in 1991-92, when one part of the population felt disgust towards Gamsakhurdia and the other part was fanatically in love with him. The same happened at the parliamentary elections in 2012, there were people who loved Mikheil Saakashvili and the others who hated him and came very close to a conflict; quite often radicalism prevails in

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<sup>142</sup> Omar Gogiashvili, "Politology", 2004, (Tbilisi: TSU), 422.

<sup>143</sup> Interview with Andro Barnov.

people's actions with regard to Georgian politics."<sup>144</sup> Tamara Kiknadze also confirmed the common view that some forms of intolerance existed in previous Governments.<sup>145</sup>

The chapter has shown that although on a general level, a significant development in political culture can be observed, for instance the criminal elements are not considered as the “normal” part of the state functioning. However, in some terms, the political culture in Georgia has been historically one-sided – oriented on a strong leader who would bring prosperity to the society, and this approach has not yet changed. The party democracy is not an effective way of democratic governance since the parties themselves have no real power and no real voters. When combined with high level of political intolerance, the above factors contributed to development of easily changeable and conflict-oriented political culture with highly unstable voters.

To conclude, the political culture in Georgia has been evolving and changing within the past few decades, successfully in some areas and not so much in others. Political culture in Georgia was heavily influenced by the Soviet times, which changed the perceptions of state. At the same time, this Soviet legacy brought and kept an extremely strong criminal element in Georgian politics, which was eradicated only much later – here we see a clear development of political culture. What has not changed, however, is the orientation towards a strong political leader, which has remained very strong until now. Traditions of faith in a leader have strongly influenced the political landscape in Georgia by fixing the attention on the leaders themselves and not the parties that such leaders represent. Parochial orientations of the society further assists in making the party system dysfunctional.

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<sup>144</sup>Interview with Nika Chitadze.

<sup>145</sup>Interview with Tamara Kiknadze.

### **CHAPTER 3. Georgian elites and influence of political culture**

Regardless of a number of changes, the tendency to authoritarianism has been consistent in the majority of elites in Georgia. At the same time, this authoritarian tendency has strongly influenced the ability of the elites to reach consensus with other elites, and it has created a conflictual situation in the elites themselves. However, the changes in the political culture discussed in the previous chapter have influenced political elites to the extent that a certain period of cohabitation became possible in Georgian elites and the first peaceful transition of power was made. Also, strong multi-party coalition emerged, which still more or less successfully keeps stability.

#### ***3.1 Elite Recruitment***

The rise of the leaders is determined by factors of political culture, faith in a charismatic leader and the ability of the leader to show his qualities to the populations. Given that the party system in itself is not a sufficient filter for the voters, this focus on the leader allows the elite to come to power. However, what allows the elite to remain in power is how they recruit the higher and lower strata of the elite. This section will discuss how the higher and lower strata of the elite were selected in each of the governments.

The first Georgian government utilized a new way of the elite recruitment tool. They rejected Soviet-style inheritance-based way of elite formation, which opened the doors to those who would otherwise be unable to join the political elite. Open-minded and patriotic people were recruited to the elite, rather than keeping those from the Soviet elite; and sometimes the system was even called "too open"<sup>146</sup>, since pure rejection of either method of keeping or replacing the old elite is not generally suggested, let alone during a shaky transitional period, where it is important to find a balance to keep things afloat. The criteria for success in

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<sup>146</sup>Omar Gogiashvili, *"Politology"*, 2004, (Tbilisi: TSU), 393.

governmental hierarchical structure was nationality, patriotism, loyalty towards the leader, place (region) of origin, but professionalism and ability of thinking in a creative way was disregarded.<sup>147</sup>

The system of elite recruitment in Shevardnadze's government was based on the old structure of Communist nomenclature. Shevardnadze comprised his political group of people, who had worked during Soviet times, and nomenclature represented loyal servants of Eduard Shevardnadze. Loyalty was also the key rule in Shevardnadze's government. However, Shevardnadze did not rule the system single-handedly; he used his inner circle of the political elite, which operated as a criminal clan.

The system of elite recruitment of Saakashvili's government was no exception and was focused mostly on loyalty by any official. Saakashvili created the system with young and inexperienced, but talented people, who were ready to follow the orders of Mikheil Saakashvili without any pre-conditions.

The same was for the current government, who did not choose based on specific qualities but loyalty. Here we can find similarity between all Georgian political elites. In all governments, the main criteria of elite selection and success were personal loyalty towards the leader and professionalism was disregarded. It is also worth of mentioning that according to opponents of the Georgian Dream coalition, one of the characteristics of the elite selection is nepotism.

### ***3.2 Authoritarianism in political elite and its consequences***

As one analyses each of the four governments in Georgia, he comes to understand that some of them use techniques to lay the basis of creating an authoritarian regime, combined with the fact that the political culture of following a leader is strong, and the fact that the elite was chosen based on loyalty, it allowed the leaders to create a vertical power. It is difficult to

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<sup>147</sup>Avtandil Tukvadze, *"political Elite"*, (Tbilisi: Knowledge, 1998), 196.

achieve even partial concession of power and self-restriction by legislation in Georgia, which is used to rule under authoritarianism during several decades.<sup>148</sup> It should be also mentioned that almost all Post-Soviet countries suffer from similar problems. The ruling elites in Post-Soviet space were not going to delegate power through elections and were ready to do anything to receive "favored results".<sup>149</sup> However, other leaders were unable to convert their opportunity into real power.

The ruling elite of Gamsakhurdia were not stable, internal power struggles determined the slow process of dissolution of the "Round Table". The ethnocratic elite of Zviad Gamsakhurdia could not experience routinization of state bureaucracy, did not become pragmatic bureaucratic-rational leaders, and failed to adopt the culture of state governance. Nationalistic character of Zviad Gamsakhurdia and his radical policies towards ethnic minorities caused confrontation with non-Georgian population by calling them active or potential traitors.<sup>150</sup> Instead of looking for nationalist or any other grounds for unification of the society, the ruling elite started searching for seeking for "agents of the Kremlin", "traitors" and ended with confrontation with the radical wing of the opposition and a non-Georgian population.<sup>151</sup> Low level of political culture played the crucial role during confrontation between the Government and opposition forces, since the society was easily influenced by "crowd psychology", while the political event was perceived by the population as right and wrong, black and white, good and evil.<sup>152</sup>

Soviet-era career of Shevardnadze proved to be obstacle-He was a typical representative of the communist nomenclature system and possessed the same methods of governance. Nomenclature-style political elite of Shevardnadze were unprepared for uncontrolled, chaotic

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<sup>148</sup>Malkhaz Matsaberidze, *Georgian Politics: Authority and Political process*, (Tbilisi: Center for Social Sciences, 2006), 66.

<sup>149</sup>Ibid, 27.

<sup>150</sup>Ghia Nodia, Alvaro Pinto Scholtbach, *Political landscape of Georgia*, (Eburon Delft 2006), 10.

<sup>151</sup>Avtandil Tukvadze, *Comparative analysis of political culture*, (Tbilisi: Universal, 2014), 127.

<sup>152</sup>Avtandil Tukvadze, *"Political Elite"*, (Tbilisi: Knowledge, 1998), 199.

processes which are characteristic for the transitional period. Shevardnadze's government claimed to be liberal-democratic before the elections, however, the orientations changed radically. In the beginning, the Government of Shevardnadze represented legitimate actor, but later, it became authoritarian and nomenclature-style regime, which was based on mass corruption.<sup>153</sup>The political system which developed during Shevardnadze's presidency was often called "Illiberal Democracy".<sup>154</sup>The ruling elite attempted to control each and every official; all appointed public servants were under the strong influence of the ruling party and were required to be in harmony with interests of the President Shevardnadze and his close circle. His government adopted a new Georgian constitution, which further concentrated powers in the hands of the executive branch and prepared the grounds for authoritarianism. It should be also mentioned that Corrupted clan did not have ideology, which would be attractive for the masses.<sup>155</sup>These tendencies raised the risks of the second Georgian civil confrontation.

The same trend continued under Saakashvili's and Ivanishvili's governments. Personal loyalty was a recipe for success in government structures, the whole objective and independent thinking was not preferred by the leaders. Georgian political leaders always tried to find loyal "servants" who would not even dare to go against the leader's personal views, while professionalism was a secondary requirement for Georgia's top officials.

The leaders tried to demonstrate the power of their "iron hand" and publicly punished officials who failed to follow the rules. This method of fear arousal was widely known in the Communist system, which was based on "servant-lord" ideology and in this regard we can assume that this culture of subordination is inherited from Soviet times.

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<sup>153</sup>Guram Abesadze, *Actors of contemporary Georgia's political scene*, (Tbilisi:Universal,2014), 32.

<sup>154</sup>Malkhaz Matsaberidze, *Georgian Politics: Authority and Political process*, (Tbilisi: Center for Social Sciences, 2006), 31.

<sup>155</sup>Ibid, 31.

The corrupt governance of neo-nomenclature naturally gave birth to the 2003 revolutionary processes, which changed the vector of a political process and placed the country in front of the new reality.<sup>156</sup> Members of Saakashvili's government were young people who had scarce experience in their fields and were ready to do everything that Saakashvili wanted. During his presidency, Georgia became a place of socio-political experiments, as he once mentioned: "Georgia is a laboratory of the social and democratic reforms".<sup>157</sup> He several times mentioned that Georgia should become the second Singapore. Aspiration for such a model, in which one authoritarian family rules over the country, is clearly alarming for democratic political culture. Constitutional changes under Saakashvili increased the powers of the President and after the death of Zurab Zhvania; a position of the prime minister was a position without real power.<sup>158</sup> This indicates that Saakashvili had an attraction towards authoritarianism from the very beginning. This character of constant constitutional changes did not allow Georgia a chance to establish the tradition of a strong and stable Constitution.

Bidzina Ivanishvili is a successful businessman and billionaire whose new government had a tendency of subordination of the members of the Cabinet towards the Prime Minister. Prime Minister Ivanishvili was well-known for his criticism of Journalists and political experts for their statements. Thus, it should be also mentioned that Georgian people committed the same mistakes as they did in the case of the previous leaders of Georgia – Bidzina Ivanishvili was perceived as a new and real savior of the Georgian people, who would instantly bring welfare to Georgia. It should be also mentioned that in today's political life, there is a tendency of the influencing of ex-prime minister on current Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili and this seems to be no secret. It means that Soviet inheritance of "Servant" orientation is still problematic for modern Georgian political reality. As Prime Minister Garibashvili mentioned himself on

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<sup>156</sup>Avtandil Tukvadze, *Comparative analysis of political culture*, (Tbilisi: Universal, 2014), 123.

<sup>157</sup>Georgiatimes, Saakashvili called Georgia a laboratory of democratic reforms, 2010. Available at: <http://www.georgiatimes.info/en/news/36669.html> (last accessed: 7 May, 2015).

<sup>158</sup>Avtandil Tukvadze, *Comparative analysis of political culture*, (Tbilisi: Universal, 2014), 123.

the question of German Magazine “Die Welt” whether ex-Prime Minister influences him or not: “It is natural when you address for the consultation to the Ex-Prime Minister, whom I respect very much and who is my mentor.”<sup>159</sup>

Georgian political leaders failed to tolerate the existence of a strong opposition. Once leaders established total control in their governments and surrounded themselves by loyal "servants" in their political group, they started to devote efforts to subordinate the oppositional forces by any means. One of the peculiarities of irrationality of contemporary Georgian political-cultural space is the rise of influence and the role of a dominant political party and coalition.<sup>160</sup> Based on this character of their behavior, we may assume that Georgian political leaders had at least some degree of attraction towards one-party authoritarianism.

It seems like this phenomenon of loyalty is inherited from the Soviet era, where servants had to do everything to please the leader. One of the main challenges of the Post-Soviet space is that ruling elite monopolizes financial and political power and prevents countries from implementation of progressive reforms.<sup>161</sup> Such a rapid increase in the president's power, with political culture of obedience of nomenclature and in addition terrible socio-economic and adequate reaction of the population on the event's, created fertile grounds for the establishment of authoritarian political regimes.

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<sup>159</sup> Julia Smirnova, "We Must Break the Cycle of Impunity", *Die Welt*, February 11, 2015. Available at: <http://www.welt.de/politik/ausland/article137349761/Wir-muessen-den-Kreis-der-Straflosigkeit-brechen.html> (last accessed: May 8, 2015).

<sup>160</sup> Guram Abesadze, *Actors of contemporary Georgia's political scene*, (Tbilisi: Universal, 2014), 21.

<sup>161</sup> Thomas de Waal, "Georgia after the titans", *National interest*, December 4, 2013. Available at: <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/georgia-after-the-titans-9489> (last accessed: May 7, 2015).

### 3.3 *Slowly moving from conflictual to consensual model*

During 1980s, Soviet Republic of Georgia had image of one of the wealthiest and democratic parts of the Soviet Union.<sup>162</sup> By the late 1980s, when the Soviet Union was weakened, Georgian dissident groups started fierce resistance against Soviet authority; suddenly, the situation in the country became unstable and chaotic. After collapse of the Soviet Union, Georgia rapidly lost capacity and new problems emerged in the face of territorial conflicts, organized crime, falsified elections, internal fights for power and foreign interests. The major dissident group was called the National Movement or the Round Table of Georgia. The movement was comprised of people who had very poor experience in politics and government organization, but hoped that their loyalty and contribution for fighting independence would help them to reach success. The rising elite were nationalist and had radical policies in many ways, therefore during the transitional period there was a sharp polarization of political thinking.

After a very difficult struggle and massacre of April 9 1989,<sup>163</sup> these dissidents managed to come to power when Georgia declared independence on April 9, 1991. Zviad Gamsakhurdia became the first President, who had been one of the prominent leaders of the anti-Soviet dissident movement. Gamsakhurdia was a charismatic leader with nationalist feelings. As respondent Nika Chitadze mentioned, during the transitional period the leaders had radical policies towards the political opposition and ethnic minorities (especially towards Armenian and Ossetian), which was risky for ethnically diverse countries like Georgia".<sup>164</sup> Gamsakhurdia's government was also called as the times of "Ethnocracy". The main characteristic was that it was ethnically homogenous in a multiethnic country; it was

<sup>162</sup>Thomas De Waal, *Georgia's Choices: Charting A Future In Uncertain Times*, (Carnegie Endowment, 2013), 5.

<sup>163</sup>On April 9, 1989, Soviet forces attacked peaceful demonstrators in Tbilisi, which resulted in death of 20 people.

<sup>164</sup>Interview with Nika Chitadze.

also characterized by loyalty to national ideals and prioritized the matter of strengthening national independence.<sup>165</sup> While discussing ethnocratic orientation of Zviad Gamsakhurdia, my respondent Vakhtang Maisaia replies: "Gamsakhurdia created closed type of soft authoritarian regime, which led the country to total isolation, neither West nor East. These nationalistic directions were characterized by sheer intolerance towards the ethnic minorities."<sup>166</sup>

Andro Barnov also mentioned that the first political elite were completely inexperienced and obsessed with the romantic spirit.<sup>167</sup> Respondent Tamara Kiknadze argued that "the people who came to politics had no idea or experience how to run the government. These were heroes of the National Movement, and as a result, there were two ethnic conflicts and a civil war – all caused by our conflict culture."<sup>168</sup> Nika Chitadze pointed out that the elite political culture suffered particular changes, the ex-dissidents were driven by emotions or sometimes aggression, and therefore, the ruling elite were not stable.<sup>169</sup>

Since the political players did not embrace the rules of the political game in the new era, the dissident sub-culture started creating troubles within the elite: political opponents were fighting against one another like ideological rivals and enemies. They had very different aims, which led to major confrontations and increased polarization.<sup>170</sup> The inability to find compromise, selection of extremist ideological orientation and rhetoric, dragged Zviad Gamsakhurdia into confrontation and made it difficult for parties to cooperate and reach consensus on various important matters. Georgia political forces in the transitional period

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<sup>165</sup>Mukhaev R.G, "*Politology*", (Moscow: Publishing House Prior, 1997), 108.

<sup>166</sup>Interview with Vakhtang Maisaia.

<sup>167</sup>Interview with Andro Barnov.

<sup>168</sup>Interview with Tamara Kiknadze.

<sup>169</sup>Interview with Nika Chitadze.

<sup>170</sup>Stephen Jones, *Georgia: A political history Since Independence*, (I.B Tauris & Co. 2013, 2015), 26.

failed to end the pattern of 'us' versus 'them'.<sup>171</sup> There was a lack of willingness for cooperation on both sides of the dispute. Failure to establish basic rules of the political game and lack of the willingness to reach consensus represented problem of the Georgian elites, because actors clearly had hostile characters.<sup>172</sup> The dissident subculture, which characterized Gamsakhurdia's government, was a carrier of sharp confrontation and radical ideological values. Gamsakhurdia's radical opponents did not recognize his legitimacy as a President of Georgia and were ready to directly engage in conflict with him.<sup>173</sup> Also, the disagreement was visible also inside government of Gamsakhurdia, which was represented by "Round Table - Georgia's opposition was also radical and demanded rapid transformations. In principle, there was no culture of political communication and inter-party coordination. Radical confrontation in the early 1990s led to a logical culmination – civil war: with weapons, with illegitimate intervention by the military guard and Mkhedrioni, with the help of foreign aid, under wide participation of criminal elements in the process and Zviad Gamsakhurdia, the legitimate president of Georgia was overthrown.<sup>174</sup> According to Parliament Resolution of 20 April 2000, the military coup against the government of Gamsakhurdia is evaluated as a coup d'état against legal authorities and civil confrontation, orso-called "Communist nomenklatura revenge."<sup>175</sup>

The inclination towards violence in Georgian political culture on all levels, including the elite, was strengthened by regime change after a civil war. The precedent of civil war gave rise to the feeling that it was possible to deal with the opponents by force, and that consensus was not an attractive option.

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<sup>171</sup>Ibid. P 9.

<sup>172</sup>Ghia Nodia, Alvaro Pinto Scholtbach, *Political landscape of Georgia*, (Eburon Delft 2006), 9.

<sup>173</sup>Ibid, 11.

<sup>174</sup>Ibid, 32.

<sup>175</sup>Malkhaz Matsaberidze, *Political system of Georgia*, (Tbilisi, 2014), 13.

Throughout history of independent Georgia, the political culture in have been conflict oriented, which reflected on the elite not being able and not willing to reach consensus. However, a small but gradual transformation in the political culture has been reflected in a short, but a relatively effective period of government-opposition cohabitation.

It is recognized that a democratic political system should have a strong opposition that has the ability to influence and challenge the government's decisions and the overall performance. The political elite in opposition should have some tools to control the ruling elite to ensure the effective existence of democracy. Ensuring the above has been an issue for transitional periods in post-Soviet space: the biggest challenge of the Georgian Dream coalition has been to change the culture of one-party governance and establish pluralist democratic principles in the country.<sup>176</sup> It is important to get rid of harmful elements of post-soviet inheritance and establish a strong democratic system which will be based on institutions, rather than narrow personal interests. Sharp polarization between elites and their radical political culture is one of the obstacles of the Georgia on the road to democratic development.<sup>177</sup>

Before the changes to the constitution in 2012, most of the executive power was in the hands of the president, after the change, the prime-minister assumed majority of powers. After the ruling party of Saakashvili was defeated in October 1, 2012 Parliamentary elections, the executive branch was divided into two parts, which can be taken as braking factors in self-determination of the statehood.<sup>178</sup> In 2012, when Georgian Dream won the election and Ivanishvili's inexperienced government had a majority, but they faced a hostile president who could still wield a veto.<sup>179</sup> Andro Barnov confirmed that Georgian politics is conflict-oriented

<sup>176</sup>Avtandil Tukvadze, *Comparative analysis of political culture*, (Tbilisi: Universal, 2014), 152.

<sup>177</sup> Thomas De Waal, "Georgian after the Titans", *National Interest*, December 4, 2013 . Available at: <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/georgia-after-the-titans-9489> (last accessed May 9, 2015).

<sup>178</sup>Guram Abesadze, *Actors of political scene in contemporary Georgia*, (Tbilisi: Universal, 2014), 64.

<sup>179</sup>Stephen Jones, *Democracy In Georgia: Da Capo?*, Cicero Foundation Great Debate Paper No. 13/02 201310, April 2013.

and that is one of the most serious problems in Georgian politics, since the winning party tries to destroy the rivals instead of trying to cohabitate.<sup>180</sup>

The opposition has the function of represent the part of the population which is for some reason displeased with the ruling political elite. In order for the opposition to function effectively, there should be strong state institutions that would provide the opposition more flexibility and ability to voice people's demands. In the case of Georgia, a political opposition may turn into a radical opponent of the government and destabilize the order in domestic politics.

For successful coexistence of rival political parties, it is important to have well-defined rules of actions, which are partly based on unwritten moral norms in concrete country<sup>181</sup>. The rules of the political game are developed and are functioning in the frame of constitutional norms, political, religious, ethnic, cultural pluralism; political players do not go against national and state interests; authority is recognized by all actors of political life.<sup>182</sup> Nika Chitadze replied that altogether, the people working in the government, whether ruling party or opposition, work together and share their opinions. It is a pity that dissidence exists in the political elite, which is partly caused by the split in the society, is further reinforce by political leaders who try to dissociate themselves from the society and to declare the main opposing political force as the outcasts.<sup>183</sup>

In Georgian reality, membership of the ruling political elite is directly associated with wealth-creation and personal well-being, therefore the elite tries to entrench their position as much as possible. This includes all possible ways to stay in power, from unfair spending of state

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<sup>180</sup>Interview with Andro Barnov.

<sup>181</sup>Avtandil Tukvadze, *Comparative analysis of political culture*, (Tbilisi: Universal), 2014, 153.

<sup>182</sup>Ibid, 153.

<sup>183</sup>Interview with Nika Chitadze.

finances until dangerous manipulations.<sup>184</sup> Georgian political players rarely followed "the rules of the game", and it is believed that such actions of the government led to the civil war and disorder. The opposing elite which were represented by the Georgian opposition did not follow the rules, either and tried by any means to defeat the ruling elite and obtain their privileges. These tendencies led to one civil war and another peaceful revolution.

Thus, monopolization of the political scene still remained characteristics of the Georgian political life under Saakashvili's government. Many considers his Presidency as a period of fear arousal and unfair treatment of the real oppositional forces, creating government satellite parties in opposition, making attempts to establish one party "democracy" and create illusion messianic leader. A Georgian political system was deeply buried in propaganda and disinformation PR campaigns. The Government intensively used mass-media for their own ends. Because of such situation, there was practically no objective television channel functioning on which a neutral civilian could count on and trust. The television and press were involved in informational warfare. There was unconstructive and unhealthy relation between the ruling political elite and oppositional forces. Saakashvili's government blamed opposition for being "traitors of the national interests", for being "fifth column", also, humiliating statements were made by president himself.<sup>185</sup> Politics was radicalized once again as in the 1990s with the risk of ignition of violent confrontation in the streets of Tbilisi being high. Saakashvili's government used brutal violence against the demonstrations organized by Georgian opposition parties on November 7, 2007<sup>186</sup> and in May 25, 2011.<sup>187</sup> During the November events, the government also shot down opposition television "Imedi", which

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<sup>184</sup> Avtandil Tukvadze, *Comparative analysis of political culture*, (Tbilisi: Universal, 2014), 154.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid, 63.

<sup>186</sup> Human Rights watch, Georgia: Government used excessive force on protesters, December 18, 2007. Available at: <http://www.hrw.org/news/2007/12/17/georgia-government-used-excessive-force-protesters> (last accessed: May 11, 2015).

<sup>187</sup> Human Rights watch, Georgia: Police used excessive force against peaceful protests, May 26, 2011. Available at: <http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/05/26/georgia-police-used-excessive-force-peaceful-protests> (last accessed: May 11, 2015).

signaled a serious deficit of political culture in Georgian political life. Also, Saakashvili changed the constitution to make Georgia parliamentary republic, and covert had desire to serve a third term as prime minister<sup>188</sup> - the government had no will to share power with any party or create coalitions.

Thus, the elections of October 1, 2012, was probably the most interesting and important test in Georgia's earliest history. In the elections, Saakashvili's National Movement was defeated by the united coalition of the Georgian opposition headed by Bidzina Ivanishvili. The coalition Georgian Dream consisted of political parties with radically different view on both internal and external politics, which meant that parties successfully managed to reach consensus on their primary objectives. Appearance of such multi-party coalition, which sustained stability, is great step towards establishment of consensual model.

After coalition won the elections, the situation was quite interesting, the Prime Minister was Bidzina Ivanishvili and the president (till the next elections after one year) was still Mikheil Saakashvili. We cannot say that the word "cohabitation" is popular in Georgia, but despite this, now Georgians have the precedent of old and the new government's peaceful coexistence.<sup>189</sup> This one year period was clear and a classical example of the cohabitation of two radically opposed political powers. This test was successfully completed by both Georgian government and the opposition. Thus, Georgian political culture still requires radical changes in the way that should exist space for actual debates in consensual frames.<sup>190</sup> Here Nika Chitadze stated that: "today the coalition Georgian Dream is based upon Bidzina Ivanishvili, and it is a pity, though on the other hand, the difference is that if after 1991 the Round Table – Free Georgia was liquidated once Gamsakhurdia fled, and the

<sup>188</sup>Thomas De Waal. *Georgia's Choices: Charting A Future In Uncertain Times*. (Carnegie Endowment, 2013), 21.

<sup>189</sup>Malkhaz Matsaberidze, *Georgian Political System*, (Tbilisi, 2014), 24.

<sup>190</sup>Guram Abesadze, *Actors of political scene in contemporary Georgia*, (Tbilisi: Universal, 2014), 67.

Citizens Union was disrupted after the retirement of Shevardnadze, as well as the Democratic Party for Revival disassembled without Abashidze, today, the constituent part of the political elite, in particular, the parliamentary opposition – the National Movement though was defeated in the elections, still exists and goes on with political activities. That is the first precedent, when the former governmental power today functions as the political opposition."<sup>191</sup>

Political rivals used hate speech and blamed one another for the country's misfortune, but there was no serious confrontation between the two political forces during the transitional period (only harsh statements). On this issue, a very interesting idea was presented by my respondent Vakhtang Maisaia: "I would not say the situation is not consensus-oriented. In the context of the political course Bidzina Ivanishvili was the attempt to establish cohabitation. The conflict still remains in a formalized way, though actually there is more consensus-oriented situation. So from outside it seems like conflict-oriented and inside consensus prevails. From the outside they try to fight against the opposition powers, the same with the National Movement, though the government tries to find common ground with them. I would say the government developed a non-confrontational type of real political course. So those people arrested him not only due to the fact."<sup>192</sup> Thus, many of the former officials were arrested for various allegations and the former president Mikheil Saakashvili is in the wanted list. On this issue Nika Chitadze replied: "Here are lots of such examples, e.g. the way the current Prime Minister of Georgia, Garibashvili, called the National Movement a sect. Notwithstanding the fact that approximately 800 thousand people starting in elections held on October 1, 2012 voted for the National Movement, that is why the National Movement has been selected by the significant part of the population of Georgia and it is absolutely

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<sup>191</sup>Interview with Nika Chitadze.

<sup>192</sup>Interview with Vakhtang Maisaia.

unacceptable to call the political power a sect."<sup>193</sup> On the same topic, respondent Tamara Kiknadze replied: "If talking about its consensus-oriented or conflict-oriented nature, during the previous period we had by all means the elite of conflicting nature. Though, now we encounter a completely different situation from that point of view compared to the West as there is rather organized political system and the position as well as the opposition matter there."<sup>194</sup>

Georgian political actors still have issue, which needs to be somehow overcome. Elites are quite amateur and opponents lack ability to arrange successful negotiations for sake of Georgia's future. Trend of having party interests above national interests is still visible, which remains serious obstacle on the way of developing process oriented communications. Thus, despite some side effects; we can assume that the case of Georgian political culture shows some positive signs of improvement.

Thus, it should also be mentioned that creation of coalition Georgian Dream is step forwards, which may have potential to develop consensual model in Georgia. Stability of such diverse and multi-party coalition is an interesting precedent for Georgian politics and we can assume that political actors have become more pragmatic and show skills of cooperation.

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<sup>193</sup>Interview with Nika Chitadze.

<sup>194</sup>Interview with Tamara Kiknadze.

## **CHAPTER 4. Comparative analysis of elites and political culture of the South Caucasian countries.**

The three Caucasian countries have a shared history and common characteristics; however, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, each of the three states went in its own ways. This chapter intends to show how the differences in political culture of each of the three states have influenced the creation and maintaining of the elite in the three countries. From point of view of ethnicity, culture and religion, the South Caucasus is quite diverse region.

### ***4.1 Features of formation of elites and political culture in Azerbaijan.***

In the life of independent Azerbaijan, three main phases can be distinguished. The first phase, which covers the years 1992-1993, is the presidency of Elchibey. The second phase started with the presidency of Heydar Aliyev and lasted until 2003. The third period of Azerbaijan started from 2003 when Ilham Aliyev came to power and lasts until now.<sup>195</sup>

From the time Azerbaijan became independent, the pro-Russian and ex secretary of the Communist party, Ayaz Mütəllibov, became the leader. Thus his rule couldn't last for a long time on the background of internal political situation and war with Armenia. After February, 1992 tragedy of Khojalan, Mütəllibov was forced to resign.<sup>196</sup> In June of the same year, the leader of Azerbaijani People's front, Abulfaz Elchibey, was elected and he was not able to estimate the interests of large countries in the region and committed serious geopolitical mistakes, which cost him his presidency. In 1993, after Elchibey failed to realize promises he made to the people, in particular implementation of democratic reforms and victory in the conflict of Mountainous Karabakh, the country sank into economic and political chaos. It should also be mentioned that among other internal political reasons for Elchibey's

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<sup>195</sup>Shireen T. Hunter, *The Evolution of the Foreign Policy of the Transcaucasian States* (In: Crossroads and Conflict: Security and Foreign Policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia, Gary Bertsch, Cassady Craft, Scott A. Jones and Michael Beck (Eds), (Routledge, 2000), 39.

<sup>196</sup> R. Hrair Dekmejian, Hovann H. Simonian, *Troubled Waters: Geopolitics of the Caspian Region* (I.B. Tauris&Co Ltd., 2003), 61.

misfortune, a few reasons are worth to be mentioned. One of the mistakes was that after he came to power, he did not arranged Parliamentary elections. He kept the old legislative organ, where old and new (National Front) equally shared seats. Besides, he could not reach a consensus by old bureaucracy and their major part was substituted with old inexperienced personnel.<sup>197</sup> At the same time it should also be mentioned that Azerbaijan was the first Post-Soviet state, which successfully managed the withdrawal of Russian armed forces and the border keeping units.<sup>198</sup>

It is worth mentioning that the anti-Iranian and particularly anti-Russian policy incurred a loss to Azerbaijan, especially with regard to the Karabakh conflict.<sup>199</sup> In addition, Elchibey also failed to evaluate situation inside country and ethnic minorities (by the beginning of the 1990s they numbered 14 percent of the total population) felt themselves marginalized.<sup>200</sup> As a result of this kind of chaotic situation, General Surat Huseinov started a military coup against Elchibey, which ended with removal of Elchibey from power.<sup>201</sup>

In June 1993, Elchibey, who was perceived by the Azerbaijani population as a naive and inexperienced politician, was removed from power and his place was occupied by ex-Communist leader Haydar Aliyev.<sup>202</sup> He was elected who was an experienced politician and from some points of view represented a charismatic leader.

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<sup>197</sup>Leila Alieva, Reshaping Eurasia: *Foreign Policy Strategies and Leadership Assets in Post-Soviet South-Caucasus* (Berkley Program in Soviet and Post-Soviet Studies, (Working Paper Series, Winter 1999-2000), 22.

<sup>198</sup>Elkhan Nuriyev, Post-September 11 *Regional Geopolitics: Azerbaijan and New Security Environment in the South Caucasus* (Connections, The Quarterly Journal, Vol. 1 No 3 July 2002, 14)

<sup>199</sup>Shireen T. Hunter, *The Evolution of the Foreign Policy of the Transcaucasian States* (In: Crossroads and Conflict: Security and Foreign Policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia, Gary Bertsch, CassadyCraft, Scott A. Jones and Michael Beck (Eds), (Routledge 2000), 40.

<sup>200</sup>Kaweh Sadegh-Zadeh, *Iran's Strategy in the South Caucasus* (Caucasian Review of International Affairs, Vol. 2(1), Winter 2008), 4.

<sup>201</sup>Houman Sadri, *Elements of Azerbaijan Foreign Policy* (Journal of Third World Studies, Vol. XX, No 1. 2003), 183.

<sup>202</sup>Elkhan Nuriyev, Post-September 11 *Regional Geopolitics: Azerbaijan and New Security Environment in the South Caucasus* (Connections, The Quarterly Journal, Vol. 1 No 3 July 2002), 3.

After coming to power, it became clear that Haydar Aliyev was a much more pragmatic leader than his predecessor. His main strategy was normalization of relations with Russia and Iran, which aimed to make Azerbaijani foreign policy more balanced.<sup>203</sup> In September 1993, Aliyev visited Moscow and signed CIS charter and also joined the collective security agreement.<sup>204</sup>

It should also be mentioned that despite the fact that Aliyev wanted to normalize relation with Russia, he still resisted Azerbaijan's presence in Russia's sphere of influence. Particularly, he did not want to sign many military-political agreements, which would restrict the freedom of Azerbaijan's actions. Besides this, Aliyev refused Russia's demand to locate Russian military units on Iran-Azerbaijan border.<sup>205</sup> Despite the fact that he agreed to Russia's role as a mediator in Karabakh conflict, he refused to let Russian peacekeeper forces inside the conflict zone. The relations between Azerbaijan and Iran developed more positively, than during Elchibey's rule.<sup>206</sup>

Because of health related issues, Aliyev was forced to resign, and his place after 2003 elections was occupied by his son Ilham Aliyev. The Political orientation of Ilham Aliyev does not differ from his father's policy and is characterized with a balanced orientation between West, Turkey and Russia.

While considering the political culture of Azerbaijan in the post-Soviet period, we can make several conclusions: During the period of Elchibey's rule after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the political culture of Azerbaijan's population can be evaluated as participatory,

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<sup>203</sup>Shireen T. Hunter, *The Evolution of the Foreign Policy of the Transcaucasian States* (In: Crossroads and Conflict: Security and Foreign Policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia, Gary Bertsch, Cassidy Craft, Scott A. Jones and Michael Beck (Eds), (Routledge 2000), 40.

<sup>204</sup>Rasim Musabekov, *Russia-Azerbaijan: Relations in Theory and Practice* (Central Asia and Caucasus, No 3, 2000)

<sup>205</sup>Gary Bertsch, *Crossroads and Conflict: Security and Foreign Policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia* (Routledge 2000), 41.

<sup>206</sup>Shireen T. Hunter, *The Evolution of the Foreign Policy of the Transcaucasian States* (In: Crossroads and Conflict: Security and Foreign Policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia, Gary Bertsch, Cassidy Craft, Scott A. Jones and Michael Beck (Eds), (Routledge 2000), 41.

which was determined by national, anti-imperial tendencies, but it was followed by disappointment of the population because of 1988-1993 socio-political reforms and Elchibey's de-legitimization.

The later stage (Haydar and Ilham Aliyev's) is connected with Post-Communist transformation of the political regime and rule, which is expressed in the authoritarian and anti-democratic ruling of the state by elite. A clear confirmation of this statement is the abolishment of the terms on the election of president, the reduction of the space of the electorate and dominance of political parties loyal to the president, the high level of corruption in governmental structures, non-transparency of political decision-making (according to information of international organizations), and political culture of the population can be evaluated as servile and parochially oriented.

While making comparison with Azerbaijani and Georgian political cultures, my respondent Tamara Kiknadze mentions that: "Azerbaijan still remains the Eastern country and therefore the political culture. Looking at changes of the elites we may trace in Azerbaijan the tendency to inherit the power. There was the father Aliyev, now there is the son Aliyev. Here indeed obedient and subordinate psychology is presented."<sup>207</sup> Andro Barnov has quite similar view regarding Azerbaijan: "even the worst part of the Georgian elite differs from those Azeri."<sup>208</sup>

The, respondent Vakhtang Maisaia has different view, he believes that situation with regard of authoritarian governance is similar in Azerbaijan, only with the difference that in Azerbaijan authoritarianism is stronger. Nika Chitadze believes that: "In Azerbaijan the person-dependent model prevails and the opposition is comparatively weak". He also added: "It should be also mentioned that:" It might be said that in Azerbaijan the presidential rights

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<sup>207</sup>Interview with Tamara Kiknadze.

<sup>208</sup>Interview with Andro Barnov.

were transferred from father to son, I mean at the elections held in Republic Azerbaijan in October 2003."<sup>209</sup>

#### ***4.2 Armenian political elite and features of political culture.***

After the declaration of independence, three stages can be distinguished in the development of Armenia's politics. The first stage starts from the period of rule of Ter-petrosyan and Armenian national Movement and lasted until 1997. With the background of internal confrontation, he was forced to resign and his place was occupied by the Prime Minister of the mountainous Karabakh, Robert Kocharyan. The second stage started after he became president and lasted until the early 2008. The third stage is represented by presidential term of Serj Sarkisian, which continues until today.<sup>210</sup>

It should also be mentioned that all three periods were characterized by more similarities than changes and differences, which is determined by being an ally of Russia and respectively less changes in internal and external policies. Despite the fact that the EU is a more important trade partner to Armenia than Russia, its main milestone of foreign policy is the strategic partnership with Russia.

National-state identity, perceptions on democracy and political leader, also, the personality of the political leader, which for citizens represents the symbol of authority, also examples of the other Post-Soviet countries and primarily of Russia, significantly influence the political culture of the Armenian population and elite formation.<sup>211</sup> Besides, there are several key factors: first, conflict with Azerbaijan over Karabakh, second, the issue of recognition of the Armenian genocide and the third factor is the influence of the Diaspora on Armenian politics.

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<sup>209</sup>Interview with Nika Chitadze

<sup>210</sup>Taline Papazian, *From Ter-Petrosian to Kocharian: Explaining Continuity in American Foreign Policy, 1991-2003* (Demokratizaia, Spring 2006, Vol. 14, Issue 2)

<sup>211</sup>Gor Badyan, *Image of the Authorities in the minds of Armenians*, ( PhD dissertation of the candidate of political science, 2009).

This background has been creating political culture of Post-Soviet Armenian citizens, which, in my view, despite the periodic influence of the elements of participatory culture, still remains parochial and representatives of the political elite represent the symbol of authority for the population.

With regard to Armenian case my respondent Tamara Kiknadze mentions: "As for Armenia, the country is the strategic partner of Russia and that is why even in the political system the active opposition is not encountered and all those processes go on, which were presented in the Soviet Union."<sup>212</sup> On the same topic Nika Chitadze mentioned that: "Armenia there is no authoritarian regime functioning in Armenia, and that is why the president Petrosyan resigned in 1998 due to pressure from the part of the opposition."<sup>213</sup> Andro Barnov believes that "Armenian elite is typical post-Soviet elite, which has a lot of similarities with old Soviet-style governance."<sup>214</sup> Vakhtang Maisaia mentioned that in Armenia Soviet elements of political system is visible and plus "As for Armenia, here autarkic regime prevails with the closed elements caused by the blockade of the country from Azerbaijan and Turkey, which reinforces closeness. That is the third factor for Armenia, distinguished for its closed nature."<sup>215</sup>

### **4.3 Comparative aspects**

In the case of Azerbaijan, authoritarianism is much stronger and the perspective to develop participatory political culture will take much more time than in the other two countries. All negative elements, which represent obstacles for the transformation of post-totalitarian state is still strong in the country. In the case of Armenia, the situation in society and in political elites is better than in Azerbaijan. Armenia had successful elections and opportunity for

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<sup>212</sup>Interview with Tamara Kiknadze.

<sup>213</sup>Interview with Nika Chitadze.

<sup>214</sup>Interview with Andro Barnov.

<sup>215</sup>Interview with Vakhtang Maisaia.

democratic development is higher. In the case of Georgia a country shares common features and characteristics with the other South Caucasian. Thus, Georgian politics managed to more or less overcome elements of soviet legacy, which prepared fertile grounds for democratic development. While comparing three countries, my respondents agree with my claim. Respondent Tamara Kiknadze believes that: "From the point of view of democratization Georgia is the leader in the region and that is generally recognized fact."<sup>216</sup> Andro Barnov also mentions that "Georgia is the first in the region from the point of view of political culture."<sup>217</sup> Vakhtang Maisaia pointed out that "in the case of Armenia and Azerbaijan the perspective is long-termed from the point of view of settlement of those problems."<sup>218</sup> Nika Chitadze has slightly different view with regard to regional comparison: "still there are some similarities with the rudiments characteristic for the region, which becomes dependent on the particular persons. Today the particular person without the position in the government governs the country and it might be said that Georgia from the point of view of development of democracy, I mean political culture at least and did not go forward compared to Armenia and Azerbaijan. Georgia is slightly ahead."<sup>219</sup>

Based on this analysis, we may assume that there are some similarities between the South Caucasian countries. One of the common characteristics is parochial orientation and the tradition of faith in charismatic leader. Political culture and democratic development is more or less problematic in all of the three countries. All of the three states were affected by the Soviet legacy, but national traditions and characteristics also played important role. These differences can be explained from different points of view such as culture, religion, national characteristics, and Geopolitics.

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<sup>216</sup>Interview with Tamara Kiknadze.

<sup>217</sup>Interview with Andro Barnov.

<sup>218</sup>Interview with Vakhtang Maisaia.

<sup>219</sup>Interview with Nika Chitadze.

## Conclusion

After declaring independence, Georgian political culture was affected by various elements—Soviet legacy, socio-economic problems, and national characteristics – all of these elements have shaped Georgian political culture to some extent. Therefore, the political culture in Georgia has been evolving and changing within the past few decades, successfully in some areas and not so much in others. The evolution of the Georgian political culture was quite a slow process, and only a few years ago more significant changes happened in the form of democratic transition of authority. In this thesis, I assumed that political culture existing in the society has affected Georgian political elites and their actions. The general trend in Post Soviet Georgia's political scene has been conflictual and unstable, which prevented elites from cooperating. Citizens were characterized with low interest in political processes and very high expectations of the ruling elite.

One of the strongest elements of Georgian political culture is the faith in a charismatic leader. The orientation towards a strong political leader has remained very strong until now. Georgian people could not overcome this negative tradition of counting too much on the leader, and the people overestimate the abilities of the personality to bring welfare and good standards of life. People still devote more attention to the specific character of a person and less attention to left-right wing parties or a specific ideology. The problem is the same inside the political elites, where leaders play crucial role and monopolize the authority, in fact changing the directions of the parties as they see fit. Parties have no real traditions and values, which would help them to be oriented to a particular ideology, rather than the personality of the leader. Thus, the fact that Ivanishvili received only moderate 54,97% of votes may indicate that this tendency of dependency on a charismatic leader is decreasing. I argued that the cult of personality in modern Georgia is both a national characteristic and a Soviet legacy.

The fact that people are not aware of the political processes and do not vote for particular left-right wing ideologies indicates that there is still a low level of political education in society. This situation gives politicians the ability to easily manipulate people and make promises which are unlikely to be realized. Primitive views on politics directly impact the political culture as a whole, which in turn leads to the election of the elite which is expected to dominate the society and not the contrary. After the disappointment of people with the elite, the electorate starts to seek a new savior, rather than looking for a new ideology or party which would have a particular realistic program for development. The parochial orientations of the society further assist in making the party system dysfunctional.

The parochial political culture gave rise to authoritarian practices on the elite level because: 1) the elite itself becomes extremely obedient towards the leader, because the leader enjoys popular support, 2) the ruling elite feels that it is easy to manipulate the population and pursue authoritarian aims, and 3) the ruling elite overestimates its own role, which makes it difficult to give up power or reach consensus. These factors have been a problem in Georgia's reality, because all of the Georgian leaders were perceived as saviors and their personality decided the fate of the elections. For the same reasons it is hard to remove the ruling elites from their positions. For instance, this may explain why Gamsakhurdia's elite led the country to civil war, Shevardnadze increased the presidential term to 5 years and resigned only after the revolution. This explains for instance why Saakashvili wanted to serve a third term as prime-minister. People's attitudes and expectations allowed the leaders to forget that they should serve their term and give up power one day; furthermore, leaders do not have a strong feeling of responsibility toward the people.

Intolerant views in society have a direct impact on the attitudes of the elite and counter-elite, which is characterized by conflictual political culture and makes it difficult to unite political forces under one particular idea or policy. Radicalism is still characteristic of Georgian

politics, which does not tolerate different political views. This trend prevented political forces from cooperating and reaching mutually beneficial consensus. On a societal level, people have radical views, which prepared dangerous grounds for civil confrontation based on political views. Also, voters quickly change their preferences and support towards elected officials, which means that parties lack loyal voters. Lack of tolerance in the political elite is an important element for the authoritarian practices and views. In Georgian reality, the political elite justify the confrontational policy towards opponents with the fact that it is the people's will.

When it comes to elite recruitment, loyalty towards to the leader outweighs professionalism, which creates a feeling of injustice. This criterion of elite recruitment is undoubtedly a Soviet legacy inherited from communist selection of nomenclature. Also, such practices increase the chances for the establishment of authoritarianism, because such selection is directly oriented to the will of the leader. As a result, such a system has similarities with Soviet authoritarianism and creates vertical power, where the whole system is managed in the way to suit the preferences and interests of one person.

The current situation shows that there are some advances. Increasing interest of people in political processes and demand for united political opposition led to the creation of the coalition Georgian Dream. The establishment of such power was a step forwards the development of a consensual model of democracy. The coalition represented various political parties with different characteristics and respectively had higher legitimacy in the eyes of ordinary citizens. Despite the fact that the coalition has a very diverse composition, they still quite successfully manage to keep flexibility and demonstrate good skills of coordination. It should also be noted that a few members decided to leave the coalition, the degree of unity and stability is still sustained. The stability of the multi-party ruling coalition is an interesting precedent for the Georgian politics, which may prepare the ground for the establishment of

consensual and more pragmatic politics. Thus, the government and opposition are still quite conflictual, but at least this problem does not cause major confrontation and crisis. There seems to be at least a small amount of consensus on the rules of the political game and political elites are not trying to ignite civil confrontation learning from the negative experience of the 1990s.

In terms of political culture, more and more people show their interest in the policy-making process and there is a tendency of shifting from being a parochial to participatory political culture. In my view, this shift towards participatory political culture was marked by the fact that Georgians managed to achieve the first democratic transition in 2012 without civil war or revolution as was the case in the past. This change shows that people know that authority is in their hands and any government can be reelected if not pursuing their interests sufficiently, whereas a radical action is not necessary to ensure a political transition. This shift towards participatory political culture has the potential for further development and mobilization of society.

The first precedent of the government-opposition coexistence together in the executive branch was established in 2012, which should be considered as a crucial achievement for Georgian democracy. Despite conflict-oriented rhetoric from both sides, no major violence has happened, which still seems to be fine for a post-Soviet state. The fact that Saakashvili recognized defeat and peacefully gave up authority is also another success, which may prepare fertile grounds for the establishment of democratic traditions.

Georgian politics is slowly getting free from some of the negative elements which were strong during the 1990s. Corruption and criminal elements have significantly declined in the country and the political scene has become more transparent. It should also be mentioned that clan-based method of governance is not as strong in modern Georgia as it has been in the past.

Civil society and the counter elite have become more demanding of the ruling elite and political life is receiving more attention. Strong competition between political actors is visible, which is important to prevent the ruling elite from monopolization of the political space.

For further development of political culture, it is important not to repeat the mistakes of the past. The success in creation of civil society with high political culture depends on the ability of society to overcome negative aspects of the inherited political culture. With regard to Georgian political elites, long term development of the consensual model of democracy in Georgia depends on the stability of the ruling coalition and the ability of the other actors to form new coalitions. It is also important how the elites will manage to cooperate on various matters important for the nation.

With regard to comparing the South Caucasian states, it should be mentioned that countries have some common characteristics, like dependency on a charismatic leader, parochial orientations, and clan-based governance. Some countries have better political culture and some worse, which may be determined by factors such as national character, religion, geopolitical challenges, and value-orientations. Just like the Georgian case, post-Soviet Azerbaijan and Armenia suffer from underdeveloped political culture. It should also be mentioned that radicalism and political intolerance is one of the common characteristics of the South Caucasian countries and this undoubtedly represents an obstacle for process-oriented politics. The attraction towards authoritarianism has been one of the trends in the region, but it especially remains strong in Azerbaijan, where power was transferred from father to son, which does not fit democratic standards. Ultimately, Georgia has achieved relative success compared to the neighboring countries and managed to overcome some of the negative elements mentioned above.

## Appendix 1

List of Respondents
Andro Barnov is a current member of the Georgian opposition and has worked on the leading positions during Saakashvili's period and represents one of the prominent members of UNM party. His experience and knowledge provide interesting information about Georgian political culture Interview conducted in Tbilisi, Georgia on April 11, 2015.
Professor Nika Chitadze is a famous expert in political science in Georgia. He serves as Professor as well as MA and PhD program coordinator at the Faculty of Social Sciences at International Black Sea University. He has held key positions in Georgian government in the past and he also is an author of multiple books and publications. Interview conducted in Tbilisi, Georgia on April 8, 2015.
Professor Tamara Kiknadze is Head of International Relations Program at the Caucasus International University and former Dean of the Faculty of Business, Management and Social Sciences at International Black Sea University and also she is a visiting professor in a number of other universities. She is a well-known and influential expert in Georgian political science, she also has multiple books and publications in both Georgian and English language. Interview conducted in Tbilisi, Georgia on April 15, 2015.
Professor Vakhtang Maisaia is an expert in Georgian politics and international security, having published various books and articles. He continues academic career in Caucasus International University, while also delivering lectures in other universities. He is also member of Independent Experts club of Georgia; Member of the "Partnership for Peace" Program consortiums in different working groups. Interview conducted in Tbilisi on April 10, 2015

## Appendix 2

<b>List of asked questions to the respondents during the interviews</b>
How would you evaluate the situation is like in Georgia from the point of view of the political elite culture? Is that conflict- oriented or consensus-oriented?
What type is the political elite culture of Georgia? What are its traditions and characteristics?
What would you say about parochial and participative political culture?
Which type of political culture dominated in Georgia? I mean various governments.
After establishment of independence to which extent and in which direction has the political culture changed?
Which type of political culture dominates in the post-soviet political elites?
What would you say about polarization between the governments? What was the difference between them?
What would you say about the political elite of the transitional period?
What would you say about existence of the criminal elements in the Georgian politics?
Does Soviet legacy play significant role in the formation of Georgian political culture?
What would you say about the role of the charismatic leader? Is that the soviet legacy or national characteristic? What is its role in the Georgian political culture?
How strong are the elements of the political tolerance in the Georgian politics?
What would you say about parochial and participative political culture?
In your opinion, upon obtaining of independence, to what extent political elite culture of Georgia has changed? And if it changed, in which direction took the change place?
What would you say about the elite of the transitional times of 1990s?
What are the similarities and the differences between the Georgian political elite and the Azeri or the Armenian political elites?
What would you say will Georgia need approximately the same time to settle the problems existing in Georgia just like in Armenia and Azerbaijan?
Which factors determined formation of political culture in Armenia and Azerbaijan?
Which type of political culture dominates in the post-Soviet South Caucasus political elites?

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