

The Presidential Institute in Georgia: Subjective Understanding of Political Needs and Institutional Transformations

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Abstract

This paper discusses the formation of the Presidency as an institution and the presidential rule in Georgia, as well as some attempts by leaders in power to change and strengthen the Presidency. Until 2010, changes in the Presidency had been meant to strengthen the institution, but the 2010 constitutional changes made prime minister the head of the executive branch and significantly limited the powers of the president. This paper discusses the process of establishing the Presidency according to the terms of three Presidents of Georgia—Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Eduard Shevardnadze and Mikheil Saakashvili. The process of power formation is discussed within Pierre Bourdieu's theory of social capital and social space/fields. The analysis focuses on the context, importance of personal capital, interaction with socially relevant actors/agents, steps taken to strengthen the personal power, development of media content, and the impact of procedural changes on the institutional sustainability.

Keywords

Power, Political Crisis, Presidential Institute, Georgia, Social Field, Social Capital, Media

1. Introduction

This paper discusses the formation of the Presidency and the presidential rule in Georgia through attempts by leaders in power to change and strengthen their presidency. For a long time, the understanding of the executive power in Georgia was directly related to how specific individuals were perceived by themselves

or the society. Their understanding of the state and power, as well as the others' perception of their role, place and importance, boiled down to the introduction of strong positions that enjoyed almost all kinds of rights. The institution of presidency was a divide, a social field, and its use and the rules of the game depended heavily on the social capital of the individual holding this post. Social capital also offered an advantage in the political field for subsequent creation of the rules of the game and control over compliance. Specifics of the agent's interaction with the symbolic capital also played a big role in the process. The significance of the topic is preconditioned with the study of political discourse in terms of comparison of the content and the practices of the ruling groups. The Presidential Institute in South Caucasia had been meant to be the point of concentration of the ruling groups' viewpoints, thus the analysis of those processes around it—its establishment, election strategies and activities—gives an opportunity to reveal interesting features. The discourse analysis of the presidential system and elections is new for Georgia and represents a fruitful cooperation of various disciplines (including anthropology, linguistics, political science, law and etc.) preconditioning the novelty of our research. The paper reflects the realization of personal interests by using various urgent issues in the course of ongoing processes in the country, with the intention to influence and maintain such influence on means of retaining the governance. Thus, in our opinion, the struggle for power actually was the intention to maintain the influence over the resources of power retention. For this purpose, the paper describes a period of a strong presidential rule. The process of power formation is discussed within P. Bourdieu's theory of social capital and social space/fields on the basis of critical analysis of various materials. The analysis focuses on the context, the person and peculiarities of interrelations.

2. Theory and Methodology

2.1. Theory

Power is an important part of social relationships. In Gallie's terms (Gallie, 1956), power is an essentially contested concept, and theorists are unlikely to agree on its significance and meaning. Conceptual discussions of this issue by theoretical scholars are quite comprehensive. T. Hobbes gave one of the first definitions of human power saying that the power is manifested in the existence of one's personal means by which certain prosperity can be achieved in the future (Hobbes, 1991).

Max Weber's views are undoubtedly important for understanding power. M. Weber defined power as "the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests" (Weber, 1968). For M. Weber, power is a product of interaction and should be considered in categories of probability, while probability relies on different assets (items, properties and relationships). The creation and changes of the presidency in Georgia is a chronicle reflecting

realization of individual's will (despite resistance) by using different resources. However, in our opinion, Max Weber's approach is insufficient for describing social interactions that we are trying to analyse. There are varying theoretical approaches to the concept of power, yet our goal is to analyse the formation of the Presidency in Georgia, therefore we only involve some of them as needed for the purpose.

In our opinion, the formation of the Georgian Presidency can be partly described through an approach implying that the change in the form of power was caused by a certain form of knowledge that changed the unity of previous views. It is the idea of "power-knowledge" (*le savoir-pouvoir*) introduced by Michel Foucault. If we take Foucault's view narrowly, the emergence and change of the Presidency in Georgia was related not only to the introduction of a specific regime of power, but also to an attempt to change the pattern and forms of knowledge and to establish new ones, i.e. change Soviet eschatological motives with post-Soviet ones, substitute shadowed post-Soviet practices with the end of the liberal "transition", change crime and corruption with law abiding and the rule of law, etc. In that sense, the power-knowledge (Foucault, 1999) can be seen as the intention of the "new government" to subordinate people and to create new forms for the content of power, i.e. during the pre-election campaign, the new power focused on reproducing the new knowledge. Thus, the change of the regimes was nothing more than breaking with the past, and not a transformation of the power and knowledge. M. Foucault has interesting reasoning for such situations, including his critique of the political anatomy of the body, understanding of power (in categories of ownership), its immanence, and other considerations. However, they do not seem to be of any use in relation to our study question.

For the purposes of our analysis, P. Bourdieu's theoretical views would be most relevant, including his views on the concepts of social habitus, social capital, and social space that would help us better reflect our vision of power and governance.

P. Bourdieu argues that habitus is a system of dispositions, which generate and organize practices and condition perceptions of agents. The system helps the agent navigate spontaneously in the social space in order to adequately react to events and situations. Habitus is conditioned by socialization as the assimilation of explicit and implicit principles of behaviour in a given life situation. Habitus is therefore an outcome of structures typical for a certain class (Bourdieu, 2002). Habitus is the principle that guides objective classification of practices as well as classification of practices in the perception of agents. In reality, the connection between certain economic and social conditions and the characteristics of the agent's position manifests in habitus of a particular kind, which give a meaning to practices as well as to the reasoning behind them. In this context, agents take an appropriate position for the capital and the symbolic matrix (about social topology see, Bourdieu, 1993). These properties represent the symbolic capital of

an agent, so that agents and groups of agents are thus defined by their relative positions within that space, where each of them is assigned to a position and class of neighbouring positions. One agent cannot occupy two opposite regions of the space at the same time (ibid). Thus, the social space a place where social division is not only realized, but also perceived. Agents not only can occupy a certain position in the space, but certain positions themselves are being generated (ibid). In other words, the practical action and practices of a social agent are determined by the agent's location in the social space, which in turn corresponds to their power potential (symbolic capital), and all changes result from their interplay. In turn, the social world consists of social arenas or 'fields' of politics, of religion, of economy, etc., that are a specific system of autonomous, socially defined objective connections between different positions, which either ally (cooperate) or conflict (compete), depending on their experience in the given field. In these autonomous fields, an activity carried out in one field has no meaning for or impact on another. For this reason, ongoing processes in one field do not bring success in another (Bourdieu, 2001).

Based on the above concepts, also relevant are P. Bourdieu's views on the political game. According to P. Bourdieu, ongoing processes in the political field do not so much aim at a monopoly on objective resources of the political power (finances, rights, troops, etc.), but rather at a monopoly on (re)production and dissemination of political ideas and opinions. This allows the political agent to control the main force of mobilization. In these conditions, it is important to have a monopoly on tools for imposing ideas in order to influence the society where one agent (individual or group) can disseminate one, irreplaceable and inevitable truth (ibid). Controlling the public agenda thus represents a moving space where those wishing to play on the political field struggle to conquer or dominate it. This public agenda space is represented by the media, where experts from other fields may be involved as necessary, i.e. when the dominant agent seeks to increase their influence by using the social capital of others (e.g., the intelligentsia that played an important role during that period). In this regard, the media also has the power to influence traditional criteria for distributing social capital and to change assessments and tastes in the society (ibid).

In this regard, the specifics of agents' actions and interplay in the political field, in terms of their habitus, occupation, dispositions and capital, are most relevant for our analysis of the processes going on around the institution of presidency in Georgia.

2.2. Methodology

This paper is primarily based on publications in some Georgian newspapers *sakartvelos resp'ublik'a*, and news and media website *civil.ge*, as well as studies related to the processes going on during the study period, and relevant legal documents. The information has been analysed using the approaches of description, content analysis, critical media discourse analysis, as well as critical discourse

analysis (Fairclough, 1995), to consider the linguistic peculiarities and social environment, paying attention to the context, the author and time when such materials were released, as well as all other features needed to understand the specificity of certain information. Georgian texts have been transliterated based on the “national” transliteration system, and the Russian texts according to ISO 9:1995;7.79-2000(B) system.

3. Zviad Gamsakhurdia

3.1. From Independence to Power

For a long time, the understanding of the executive power in Georgia was directly related to how specific individuals were perceived by themselves or the society. Their understanding of the state and power, as well as the others’ perception of their role, place and importance, boiled down to the introduction of strong positions that enjoyed almost all kinds of rights. The institution of presidency was a divide, a social field, and its use and the rules of the game depended heavily on the social capital of the individual holding this post. Social capital also offered an advantage in the political field for subsequent creation of the rules of the game and control over compliance. Specifics of the agent’s interaction with the symbolic capital also played a big role in the process.

Chronologically, the first constitution and system of government in Georgia go back to the period of the National Council. On May 26, 1918, after the dissolution of the Transcaucasian Federation, the National Council of Georgia adopted the “Act of Independence of Georgia” that became the basis for creating government bodies and the Constitution. The first Constitution of Georgia in 1921 was believed to be one of the most progressive and advanced constitutions of the time, enshrining many social, democratic or other rights. Yet, it only briefly touched upon the issue of the structure and administration of the state (Babeck, 2013). For a variety of reasons, that Constitution became an authoritative historical, political, and legal document that everyone kept referring to, yet that was never restored or used.

Later, the Georgian SSR established the Soviet system of state administration that was reflected in the constitutions adopted in 1922, 1927, 1937, and 1978. At the same time, different groups and movements in Georgia sought to protect their rights, language, culture, and environment (protection of the national language, movement against the construction of hydropower plants and railways, protection of monuments, movement to protect the Davit-Gareji monastery complex, etc.) (Jones, 2013). Gradually, activities of separate groups served to restore the country’s independence. With the weakening of the USSR and the rise of protests in its different republics, those groups also began competing for leadership. The national liberation movement struggled for the country’s independence, but the issue of the country’s government only gained momentum in the late 1980s, and since then has been inevitably linked to the identity of the leaders being at power in the country.

It is also noteworthy that differing opinions on the issues of independence and state government gave rise to some processes that led to controversy and bloodshed in society, and some remain unresolved years later.

On March 11-13, 1990, opposition parties held a congress of the National Forum in the Tbilisi Philharmonic Hall in order to establish the Coordinating Council of the National Liberation Movement. Following the congress, the Movement split into two groups that had different visions of Georgia's path to independence. Zviad Gamsakhurdia's supporters believed they had to come to power first and then win independence through peaceful means, while the National Congress argued it was more reasonable to win freedom before achieving independence. The debate between the two groups moved to the streets and grew into heated arguments. On October 28, 1990, the National Liberation Movement won the majority in the Supreme Soviet of the Georgian SSR, and one of its leaders, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, was elected its Chairman (Jones, 2013). In that capacity, he aimed to use legal procedure to restore Georgia's independence.

On November 14, 1990, the Supreme Council of the Republic of Georgia of the first convocation adopted the Constitutional Law of the Republic of Georgia "On Declaration of the Transition Period in the Republic of Georgia". The purpose of the law was to set legal grounds for restoring independence of the Georgian state (the Constitution (the organic law) of the Georgian SSR was amended to that effect (sakartvelos..., 1990a). On March 31, 1991, the Supreme Council held a nationwide referendum on the restoration of state independence under the Act of Independence of May 26, 1918 (Bazgharadze, 1991), and based on its results, the Council's extraordinary session adopted the Act of Restoration of State Independence of Georgia on April 9, 1991 (sakartvelossakhelmts'ipoebrivi... 1991a). Based on the two Acts of Independence of 1918 and 1991, the Supreme Council declared the restoration of Georgia's independence. At the same session, the Council approved the law "On the Constitution and the Legislation of the Republic of Georgia", a resolution "On the Introduction of Presidency in the Republic of Georgia" and initiated drafting of a new constitution. The "Law on Declaration of the Transitional Period on the Territory of the Republic of Georgia" served as the organic law in the country until the new constitution was adopted (sakartvelos..., 1991b). Although the Georgian government distanced itself from the Soviet regime, it continued to use the amended Soviet legislation.

The procedural makeover created a new reality in Georgia, which was not immediately followed by international recognition of its independence. The Soviet Union still existed and de jure recognition of Georgia by Western democracies was still ahead (Jones, 2013). In addition, despite the formation of the general framework of the public administration system, its substance, scope, rights and responsibilities remained vague. This became most noticeable as Gamsakhurdia's opponents continued to protest against his rule and to fight for power, first trying to gain the upper hand in politics. On May 23-22, 1990, the proponents of the National Congress conducted a national assembly in the Tbilisi

Sports Hall and tried to arrange elections in autumn, but failed due to the lack of quorum (ibid). Subsequent processes exacerbated the crisis that eventually reached a critical point. Clashes between the supporters of Zviad Gamsakhurdia and the National Congress that occurred on September 2, 1990, put an end to the imaginary solidarity and romanticism of the National Liberation Movement, giving way to rigidity and violence (ibid).

3.2. The Presidency

After the 1990s, all political groups tried to win political monopoly by creating and disseminating different original ideas. Borrow Pierre Bourdieu's words on the logic of politics, social sciences and journalism (Bourdieu, 2001), the groups sought to monopolize tools and means for spreading ideas in order to influence the society. They wanted to be sole possessors of the ultimate truth as to who was the genuine leader of the Liberation Movement, the defender of the country's independence and the builder of the democratic society, and who was the enemy. Hence, potential similarities between what and how they pronounced during legal and political debates were an issue with both groups, since they could cause confusion and make people associate the two groups with each other. Therefore, after coming to power they sought to monopolize public communication channels. At the same time, being in opposition and having an opposition was useful for both groups, allowing them to demonstrate their specifics and strengths in the competition.

Thus, the presidency would allow the head of state to legitimately influence the means and ways of creating and disseminating information. After coming to power, Zviad Gamsakhurdia and his political supporters advocated the presidency. Speaking about the country's domestic challenges and the situation in Abkhazia at a press conference on April 10, 1991, Gamsakhurdia said that only a president elected by universal suffrage would be able to meet the challenges (sakartvelos..., 1991c). He argued that Georgian national characteristics required strong presidential government: "a parliamentary republic here would mean the ruin of the nation and of parliament. ...Presidential rule is the only means of salvation for our people. There should be a strong president and strong presidential rule... without this, Georgia cannot exist..." (Jones, 2013). Individual control of the political field (to varying degrees) seems to have been in the public interest not only under Gamsakhurdia, but also under his successors. S. Jones points out that most Georgians identify with and trust strong leaders and support their parties in elections (Jones, 2013).

The Supreme Council considered the issue in somewhat melodramatic manner. The extraordinary session of the First Convocation of the Georgian Supreme Council, held on April 14, 1991, aimed to set the legal framework for the presidency, the timing of elections (sakartvelos..., 1991d; dadgenileba..., 1991; sakartvelos..., 1990b) and president's election by Parliament prior to the national elections (sakartvelos..., 1991d). Akaki Asatiani, First Deputy Chair of the

Supreme Council, took the floor: "...at this stage of Georgian people's struggle for true freedom and independence, it is particularly important that the country's domestic and foreign policy is led by the President, who has the greatest authority and responsibility before the people for the state of affairs". He also named Zviad Gamsakhurdia as the only candidate, highlighting the aspects of his biography that were important for the political topology of Georgia at that time: the son of a classic of the Georgian literature, a scholar, a dissident who had been imprisoned, a constant participant in the rallies of the National Liberation Movement, etc. (zviad..., 1991). In his turn, Gamsakhurdia dramatically emphasized that the presidency was not his choice: "I have never had such goals. This is well known to everyone who knows me one way or another. But the state of the country, the current situation of our nation has conditioned this" (sakartvelos..., 1991e). As expected, at the same session, he was unanimously elected President of the Republic of Georgia by openballot (zviad..., 1991f). This is how a unique situation was created, when a person elected President started preparing to be the elected President.

3.3. Social Capital

Gamsakhurdia had his own understanding of statecraft and power. He believed that the head of state should be empowered by the popular will and not by the parliament (Jones, 2013). He seemed to be confident in the support of the electorate, as he showed a peculiar attitude towards the symbolic and social capital of influential groups.

Donald Rayfield believes that as a result of pressure that he experienced in the 1970s, Gamsakhurdia focused on studying religion and thus developed a particular messianic attitude and sense of self-esteem (Rayfield, 2012). After coming to power, he often spoke about religion, used religious motives, relevant excerpts or comparisons in his speeches, and almost always made religious quotations, appeals or exhortations. He believed that the existing problems, including crime, resulted from the destruction of faith, decline of morality, abandonment and degrading of spiritual ideals (Khositashvili, 2013a). For him the struggle for independence meant "...not only the realization of individual's national and political goals, but above all it involved a moral revival based on religious faith and conscience. <...> ...The authority and power of the national Government must be based not only on the social and political definition of government, but primarily on religious and moral principles" (sakartvelos..., 1991g). Nevertheless, representatives of the Church (e.g., the Patriarch) rarely or never attended his public speeches or meetings (unlike those of subsequent presidents).

Gamsakhurdia was critical of the Soviet intelligentsia. He called them red, degenerate, bogus, next-to-criminal, pseudo-intelligentsia, etc. (Khositashvili, 2013a, 2013b). At the same time, he sought to influence part of the intelligentsia, and before the presidential election discussed awards in science and technology (sakartvelos..., 1991h). Pierre Bourdieu refers to such practices as "symbolic vi-

olence” (Bourdieu, 2007). Through a combination of such steps, Gamsakhurdia tried to influence and even control different fields. Overall, the inadequate policy with respect to symbolic and social capital had a significant impact on Gamsakhurdia’s rule, which was actively opposed by various groups (especially members of the church and the intelligentsia).

3.4. The Power

Getting back to the main question, the presidency as perceived by Zviad Gamsakhurdia implied the existence of a strong presidential power. His presidential agenda emphasized complete subordination of the executive branch to the President. Moreover, he believed that the establishment of the Presidential Council could be a reliable guarantee of sovereignty of the executive (sakartvelos..., 1991g).

Holding the elections on short notice had an impact on the pre-election campaigns. During the campaign, one of the central newspapers Sakartvelos Resp’ublik’a published statements, addresses and letters in support of presidential candidate Zviad Gamsakhurdia in all its issues. Calls and declarations of other unions and parties appeared in mass media only occasionally. Also during that period, the Supreme Council passed a number of decisions in favour of Gamsakhurdia, urgently amending the electoral law to limit participation of his influential rival (sakartvelos..., 1991i; ts’ent’ralur..., 1991; Jones, 2013). S. Jones points out that during the same period Gamsakhurdia banned opposition candidates from using the government press (Jones, 2013), and a few days before the elections, adopted a law banning insults against the President (sakartvelos..., 1991j). Control on media was tightened, and media outlets were threatened with closure for disseminating insulting or slanderous information about the president. Later, after the Moscow putsch, the Communist Party of Georgia was banned and the mandates of Supreme Soviet deputies revoked (sakartvelos..., 1991k, 1991l). At the same time, disputes (over the “South Ossetian region” and the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia) began in Georgia.

Against that backdrop, Zviad Gamsakhurdia won the presidential election with 86 percent of the vote. However, at that stage the essence of the presidency remained rather vague, as the system of government was still unshaped, the office of the president was regulated only by a temporary law, and a new constitution had not yet been adopted. Soon after, demonstrations and violent confrontation intensified in the country.

3.5. Summary of the Section

Hannah Arendt distinguishes power from both violence and force. In her opinion, individuals can only possess force; while power originates in the process of interaction between individuals, in “being together”, violence originates in the interaction between unequal actors, and violence can destroy power (Arendt, 2000). Gamsakhurdia’s attitude towards the presidency was expressed not in

co-government, but in the power of a single strong ruler. This fact and his desire to act and control several fields resulted in the consolidation of Gamsakhurdia's opponents and in extreme protests. The euphoria and romanticism of independence soon gave way to a chronicle of power struggle and critical confrontation. According to W. Babeck, perceived truth of one's own opinion prevailed in the specific culture of political discourse in Georgia; opposition was limited to monologues, and political compromise was practically impossible (Babeck, 2012, 2013). Therefore, the opposition occurred with extreme confrontation. The opponents' protest was also largely conditioned by the desire to monopolize the political game and exercise control over the objectified resources of power.

Gamsakhurdia's active attitude towards the media was mainly expressed during the election period, therefore it was vital for him to establish the control over creation and distribution of information.

Zviad Gamsakhurdia came to power through his personality, accumulated capital and leadership. As a leader, he considered the one-time mandate given to him by the electorate sufficient to confront various powerful groups, transform the system of power in order to create a strong presidential government, and establish control over the media. The presidency as an institution remained in an embryonic stage.

4. Eduard Shevardnadze

4.1. From Gamsakhurdia to Shevardnadze

In late 1991, the political crisis reached a deadlock. Opponents of Gamsakhurdia's rule (both inside and outside the country) stepped up their game. The relationship between the government and the opposition gradually evolved from the 1990s' protests to persecution, arrests, and clashes. The processes escalated into a military confrontation and ended with the overthrow of the government and a civil war. The Military Council of Georgia was formed under the leadership of Gamsakhurdia's opponents—Jaba Ioseliani, a known thief in law, Tengiz Kitovani, ex-prisoner and Commander of the National Guard, and Tengiz Sigua, Gamsakhurdia's Prime Minister—to make a claim for power (Jones, 2013). The President and his supporters were exiled from the country. The Military Council temporarily suspended the Constitution, dissolved the Parliament, dismissed the Prime Minister, declared a state of emergency, and took a number of other steps (Kitovani & Ioseliani, 1992a).

In that situation, the Military Council faced two crucial challenges: the problem of legitimacy and the problem of political leadership.

Prior to elaborating the substance and form of the government system, the Council adopted a declaration on February 21 to demonstrate the illegitimacy of the previous government, lay the foundation for its own legitimacy, and prepare the political arena for change. The declaration proclaimed Gamsakhurdia a legal successor of the Soviet Union, since he had governed the country pursuant to an adapted version of Soviet Georgia's laws. Besides, Gamsakhurdia's government

was identified as authoritarian and usurpatorial. Like the ousted government, the Military Council announced restoration of the Constitution of February 21, 1921, which was to serve as the basis for the arrangement and administration of the state. However, there was one reservation: an adapted version of the existing legislation remained in force in Georgia (Kitovani & Ioseliani, 1992b). It is noteworthy that most political groups and regimes talked about the adoption and enactment of the 1921 Constitution, although in reality it remained a symbolic artefact that, although recognized, was never fully implemented. The declaration also announced parliamentary elections in the Republic of Georgia in the fall of that year (ibid). To create the illusion of legitimacy, the Military Council convened a so-called National Assembly, which was attended by a large number of prominent, authoritative and well-known public figures. However, it did not include representatives of the overthrown government (Babeck, 2013).

4.2. The “New” Old Leader

Until March 1992, the position of the country’s leader remained vacant. Discussions increasingly emphasized the need for a clear, experienced and internationally recognized leader. The vacancy was finally closed in March, when the Military Council invited former Soviet Interior and Foreign Affairs Minister Eduard Shevardnadze to Georgia. In his brief interview upon arrival, Shevardnadze emphasized his own role, the need to work tirelessly to save and unify the country, and assessed the contributions of those involved in the overthrow of the previous government (Tchelidze, 1992).

Upon his return, Shevardnadze was considered an excellent Georgian politician and the country’s saviour, and he himself maintained that reputation, seeking recognition as a new leader regardless of his Soviet past. On his arrival day, he said: “I came as a political and public figure, I came to roll up my sleeves and work together with my people, and to work for the salvation of our homeland (ibid). In his speeches, he presented himself as a politician, an international authority (Orliki & Urigashvili, 1992), who had played a major role in the destruction of the Berlin Wall and salvation of Germany and its people, i.e. as an initiator of the globally important change (shevardnadze, 1992a; bat’on..., 1992). In order for his personality to be seen in isolation from the Soviet Union and its legacy, Shevardnadze emphasized his involvement in defeating the evils of the Soviet regime (eduard..., 1992h), in fighting the evils of totalitarianism and Soviet administration (shevardnadze, 1992a, 1992b; Orliki & Urigashvili 1992). By positioning himself in that manner, he underlined his unconditional role in the recognition of Georgia’s independence, while presenting the recognition process as an expression of trust towards him and the result of his international dialogue.” The global community trusts that we shall defend the provisions and principles reflected in the UN charter, that we are going to hold democratic elections, that we shall peacefully resolve the Georgian-Ossetian conflict, stabilize the political situation, respect human rights, and the rights of the nation, the

rights of the national minorities; that we shall implement the economic reform and lay a foundation for civil freedoms (Shevardnadze, 1992). His “new image” was created and disseminated through his radio interviews, speeches and meetings.

4.3. The Enemy

As mentioned above, domination on the political field requires exclusivity. At a time when despite various domestic tensions (the so-called “Georgian-Ossetian” and “Georgian-Abkhaz” conflicts) and confrontations with supporters of the ousted government continued with periodic success and failures in the country (Jones, 2013; Sitsotskhlis..., 1993), Shevardnadze’s main problem was legitimacy, while his opponent and enemy was Z. Gamsakhurdia. In his speeches and interviews, Shevardnadze criticized Gamsakhurdia’s steps, his legacy and his supporters. Shevardnadze believed that the previous government had awakened dark forces in the people (Eduard..., 1992c), which logically explained the people’s will to overthrow it (Vashenot..., 1992), and therefore, he supported that decision (Eduard..., 1992c). Shevardnadze’s highlighting the merits of individual leaders in those processes would lead to the recognition of their role in the political arena. He therefore described the overthrow of the government as a decision of the farsighted and wise people—“Whatever the pluralistic evaluations, the main thing is that in the events of December and January, the Georgian people made a historically important choice in favour of democratic development, and condemned and overthrew authoritarianism and dictatorship” (Vashenot..., 1992).

According to P. Bourdieu, in order to have an impact on the society, a political agent needs to control the means of producing and disseminating one irreplaceable and inescapable truth to mobilize and monopolize the political field. Existing in the political field means being unique, exclusive, while being similar to others means non-existence. At the same time, being in opposition is beneficial to both sides, because then both political subjects retain their positions in the space, benefit from them, can remain different and exceptional even in case of comparisons (Bourdieu, 2001). Existence of an obvious rival helped Shevardnadze better express his position and emphasize his own indispensability in countering the rival. Thus, despite the challenging situation in the country (contributed by a controversial amnesty initiated by the Military Council, creation of armed formations and gangs in Georgia, and Tengiz Kitovani’s activities in Abkhazia, Jones, 2013), Zviad Gamsakhurdia and his supporters were identified as the one major threat. Shevardnadze argued that the ousted parliament had failed to meet people’s expectations, to fulfil its functions or ensure pluralism, and had sought to establish an authoritarian regime, which had led the country to a crisis (Vashenot..., 1992). Resulting from actions of the former government and its supporters, the economic situation had deteriorated; negotiations with Abkhaz leaders had failed and had been followed by war; clashes continued in the

Tskhinvali region; the civil war that had started to overthrow the previous government had escalated into riots and arbitrary rule by criminal gangs. “Ex-president and his supporters prevent us from strengthening the friendship between the peoples. The tragedy they are unleashing resembles a political apocalypse. How many people have died in the conflicts they instigated, including military ones?! How many billions of damages have they inflicted on the Georgian economy? It is a very sad, thought-provoking negative trend” (vashenot..., 1992). By the end of 1992, Eduard Shevardnadze already called Zviad Gamsakhurdia a racial terrorist (shevardnadze, 1992c).

4.4. Social Capital

In his struggle against Gamsakhurdia, Eduard Shevardnadze had the support, among others, of two influential groups with significant symbolic and social capital—the intelligentsia and the church whose relations with Gamsakhurdia had been dubious. Back in the Soviet 1970s, as Minister of Internal Affairs and leader of the Communist Party of Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze had strengthened the intelligentsia and gained their support. He had been also actively involved in the development of the cultural agenda (Rayfield, 2012). Intellectuals created the academic and cultural content of the Georgian nationalism and had their own understanding of independence and their role in those processes (Jones, 2013). Before and after his return to Georgia, E. Shevardnadze made effective use of his old connections and the demand for a new reality. While for Gamsakhurdia the “red intelligentsia” was guilty and represented “dark forces,” Shevardnadze upon his return thanked the intellectuals for participating in the overthrow (Tchelidze, 1992). In his everyday communications, he replaced aggressive and intransigent rhetoric with new words and meanings—“interdependence”, “civil society”, “reconciliation” (Jones, 2013). He thanked the Georgian intelligentsia for awakening the people (Tchelidze, 1992), and in his programmatic address not only emphasized the role of the intelligentsia (scientists, writers, actors, composers, artists, theatre and film workers, journalists, and the Georgian youth), but also announced the development and implementation of a program to support cultural development (vashenot..., 1992). As a result, the intelligentsia rarely criticized Shevardnadze.

Upon his arrival in the country, Eduard Shevardnadze expressed his position on the Patriarchate: “From the airport, Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze went to the shrine of Georgia and Tbilisi—the Sioni Cathedral, where he lit a candle of hope. Later at the Patriarchate, he met with the Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia, His Holiness and Beatitude Ilia II, who blessed the worthy son of the nation and wished him to achieve noble goals for the benefit of country” (Tchelidze, 1992). Later, in November 1992, Shevardnadze was baptized, with his godparents being Catholicos-Patriarch Ilia II and poet Anna Kalandadze (Jgerenaia, 2017). Along with that symbolic act, Shevardnadze emphasized in his various meetings and speeches the role of the Church and especially the Patriarch in safeguarding the

unity if the nation (Chikovani, 1992), in the relations with the Christian world (vashenot..., 1992), and in addressing some other pressing issues. On November 25, he said: "...I have an icon of the Virgin Mary in my office. There used to be other images in my offices. I believed in other icons then, but I want to tell you, I also had my doubts. Having an icon does not at all mean that you are purified. Purification is the result of an evolution of your mindset. For example, no one forced me to leave the [Communist] party. I did it with my own mindset, and similarly my views on religion and Christianity have radically changed. That goes for many other things as well. With regard to our people, we can say that such an evolution, such a faith, would save us" (eduard..., 1992g). In general, Shevardnadze's relationship with the church was more pronounced. The Catholicos-Patriarch of All Georgia was present at almost every public event that Shevardnadze attended, and relevant photo material was published in the press and made part of the election campaign. At the same time, Shevardnadze also took retaliatory steps on behalf of the government. For example, on August 3, 1992, before the parliamentary elections that were necessary for his legitimacy, the State Council of the Republic of Georgia exempted the patriarchy from paying taxes (sakartvelos..., 1992a). Another important document was the Constitutional Treaty that granted special rights and powers to the Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Georgia and specified the special status of the Church (sakartvelosp'arlamant'is..., 2002a; for more details see Pelkmans, 2006).

4.5. Legitimacy and Mobilization

Discussing habitus, practices, capital and the symbolic matrix, Pierre Bourdieu writes that sociology is primarily social topology (Bourdieu, 1993). Shevardnadze gradually "arranged" the political players, allies and opponents in the political space. Thus, gaining legitimacy on the political field and asserting his dominant position were next on the agenda. Elections could solve the problem of legitimacy; however, had Shevardnadze been elected an ordinary MP, the issue of the country's ruler would have been more obscure. Accordingly, two other questions were to be addressed: what the country's arrangement would be like and who would be its ruler.

As mentioned above, for Shevardnadze, the situation that developed in 1992 was a consequence of a legitimate and logical process. However, he viewed the lack of legitimacy as a personal challenge, as questioned the capital that he had accumulated over the years and that was still relevant. Everything became pointless in the face of illegitimacy: "If there are no elections, it will be a disaster for our people. If we cannot deal with a legitimate government elected by the people, I can with my full responsibility declare that I would have nothing to do then and that would contradict my principles to agree to the total chaos in the country or to the establishment of a dictatorial regime" (eduard..., 1992b). Under those conditions, the potential vision of the country's arrangement was unclear, and any discussion about the specifics of the executive power was impossible.

In order to mobilize the public, Shevardnadze explained in his heartfelt texts that the situation after the overthrow had to be changed through elections (ibid), which would help the country out of crisis (Chikovani, 1992); would bring hope for establishing order (eduard..., 1992e); would transform the amorphous government into a real one (eduard..., 1992b); and would finally resolve the issue of the country's existence or nonexistence (erovnuli..., 1992). Shevardnadze linked the need for mobilization to the interests of the people: legitimacy was basically the wish of the people, of the society, therefore he declared the importance of elections in the name and for the interests of the people: "It is necessary to bring a civilized, democratic order in the economically and socially destabilized context, therefore holding elections of the parliament and its chairperson is a historical necessity. This is what people demand in accordance with the principles of democracy, social justice, and the constitutional legitimation of power" (vashenot..., 1992).

4.6. Form of Governance and Powers

Choosing a potential model of government was rather challenging. The new regime did not want to continue Gamsakhurdia's policies. Even if a different approach had been taken, the new regime would have had to rely on the system created by the deposed government (as was actually the case with legislation). Developing a new model of government would have taken a lot of time and resources that the illegitimate de facto government did not have. Given the situation and willing to distinguish itself from the previous government, the State Council initiated a discussion about the country's future with different parties and groups of society (except Gamsakhurdia's supporters) (sakartvelos p'arliament'shi..., 1992b; vashenot..., 1992). Based on the consultations and agreements (eduard..., 1992c), parliamentary republic was chosen as the system of government because: "... it more reliably rules out every possibility of dictatorship and creates foundations for freedom and democracy, for the creation of a strong democratic government" (vashenot..., 1992). According to the preliminary agreement, the text of the future constitution had to be adopted after a public debate (ibid). Adoption of an interim constitution (ibid; eduard..., 1992a) and control over the future executive branch (vashenot..., 1992) were identified as the first priorities for the future parliament. Then the Parliament had to draft and adopt the text of the country's constitution (ibid). The discussion also highlighted the main challenges of the future parliament—its diversity (eduard..., 1992b), low parliamentary culture (eduard..., 1992c), and lack of experience (vashenot..., 1992). Highlighting the difficulties should and did prove useful in the future for introducing the institution of strong presidency.

The question of the head of state remained open. S. Jones believes that Eduard Shevardnadze was aware of his own unpopularity, so he did not try to establish a strong presidential power (Jones, 2013). Yet we believe that Shevardnadze needed some degree of legitimacy that would put him in a better position for the

future. By focusing on a parliamentary republic, Shevardnadze was not about to give up his dominant position in the political field. He therefore stressed the need for a strong parliamentary system of government (vashenot..., 1992). Moreover, he argued to the public that a strong parliamentary system needed a strong executive branch because “democracy needs protection” (dzlieri..., 1992). Thus, the elections had to be held in a manner so that Shevardnadze could simultaneously receive a confirmation of his credibility and emphasize his uniqueness on the political field. The elections of October 11, 1992 had two distinguishing features. First, they were held under a mixed (parallel) electoral system in which the voter made a preferential choice in the proportional elections (having the right to vote for one, two or three electoral subjects) (Kandelaki, 2020). Second, Shevardnadze ran as a parliamentary candidate. In his preelection speeches and meetings, he indicated that the decision had been based on a consensus (vashenot..., 1992) and that the idea belonged to the Council of State (ibid). In that election he had no rivals (eduard..., 1992a). In fact, along with legitimacy, the elections guaranteed him a degree of uniqueness and exclusivity that in case of success (actually inevitable) made the idea of strong rule only a matter of time.

The newly elected parliament had its first session on November 4, 1992, and included many representatives from various spheres (kveq'nis..., 1992). On November 5, the new parliament considered the issue of the government and possible election of the parliament speaker as head of Georgian state (eduard..., 1992d). On November 6, the parliament elected Shevardnadze as head of state (sakartvelos..., 1992c) and adopted a provisional (interim) constitution (sakartvelos..., 1992d). As W. Babeck notes, all the state and political aspects of the constitution were well-balanced, except for one: the head of state was at the same time speaker of the parliament. For that reason, for the next three years Eduard Shevardnadze was both the chair of the legislature and the head of the executive branch, and the country's leader in that period was referred to as the “head of state”.

4.7. The Constitution and the Presidency

The first stage of the political processes ended successfully for Shevardnadze, so the next challenge was drafting of a new constitution and determination of the executive model. In 1992-1993, the discussion was mainly about a parliamentary republic; the restoration/introduction of Presidency was not considered, and even the term “president” was not used because it was associated with Zviad Gamsakhurdia (Babeck, 2013).

After his convincing success in the political processes, Shevardnadze began to consolidate and strengthen his position. In order to dominate the political field, he neutralized his main opponent and some key allies, the resistance of Gamsakhurdia's supporters was gradually suppressed, and members of the Military Council, who had invited Shevardnadze to Georgia, were arrested for various

reasons (Jones, 2013; Dvali, 1996). In parallel, in 1993, the government began working on the governmental arrangement. A Constitutional Commission was set up (Babeck, 2013), yet active drafting of the Constitution started after the situation in the country stabilized in 1993. Various commissions and groups with the participation of local and foreign experts drafted the constitution. On October 12-18, 1994, a special conference was held in Chicago and was attended by local and international groups and organizations. A consensus version of the Constitution was drafted (ibid). The 1992 Parliament was so diverse and unpredictable that discussions on any issue were theatrical and emotional. According to S. Jones, that was due to the fact that the Parliament consisted of "...irascible historians, academicians, and artists... whose shouting matches were televised..." Under the conditions, a large group of the "majoritarians" assured Shevardnadze a parliamentary majority on most of his initiatives (Jones, 2013).

Shevardnadze benefited from the situation and his new image as a professional, international politician, who embodied "the Georgian population's unrealistic hopes... stability and domestic peace" (ibid). In the process of drafting the new constitution, preference was finally given to a model of government that was advantageous to Shevardnadze and that provided the president with control over objective sources and resources of power. As W. Babeck notes, the final draft of the constitution was developed with Shevardnadze's participation and under his influence, and was literally adapted to him (Babeck, 2013).

The discussion on Presidency was particularly theatrical. At a meeting with a constitutional group associated with Shevardnadze, a representative of Shevardnadze's government spoke about the need for a strong presidential power, arguing: "When discussing the models of government, we decided to analyse some new forms of the 1921 Constitution considering today's realities. Today we need certain elements of authoritarianism. By this I mean a strong hand for quickly making and enforcing decisions. There is a contradiction here: despite the direct elections and the great deal of trust, the president cannot make independent decisions. His powers should be strengthened" (ibid). That statement was paradoxical, given that two years before Gamsakhurdia's government had been overthrown on charges of authoritarianism. Nevertheless, the new draft constitution gave broad powers to the president.

However, the situation was presented differently in the public domain. Shevardnadze repeatedly said that the new system of government did not limit the rights of the parliament ("strong parliament, strong president") (dziritad..., 1995; gaumarjos..., 1995; ist'oriuli..., 1995); and was a necessary and desirable model: "...The form of government that has been agreed in the parliament, i.e. the presidential system, would be the most effective and the cheapest. <...> I would like to inform the public that twice a day I receive updates on how the population reacts, and what people like and dislike. So far, the Parliament is moving in the right direction. The sentiments and wishes of the people support the model of a strong government, capable of finally putting the country on the right track"

(sakhelmts'ipo..., 1995). The final draft resulting from broad consensus was presented in the media. On August 9, 1995 newspaper "sakartvelos resp'ublik'a" wrote: "...Although there was no opposition in principle to the submitted draft, the discussion continued late into the night. Finally, a rating poll found that the Parliament supported the institution of the Presidency, with the President of the Republic of Georgia as the head of state and the head of the executive power in Georgia" (sareit'ingo..., 1995).

On August 24, 1995, the Parliament of Georgia adopted a new Constitution, which provided for significant presidential powers. At its extraordinary session on September 1, 1995, the Parliament passed the laws on parliamentary and presidential elections, and scheduled them for November 5 (Tatrulaidze, 1995). In the 1995 election, Eduard Shevardnadze's advantage on the political field was even more evident: he won both as president (eduard..., 1995) and as the leader of the "Citizens' Union" party (dzlieri..., 1995 for more details on Shevardnadze's governance see Aves, 1996).

Since then, though Shevardnadze managed to introduce a strong presidential power, in reality he failed to handle main challenges in the country. He only obtained some tools to prolong his rule, including the ones for influencing elections. His credibility and support were gradually deteriorating, and in the early 2000s the Georgian society faced the need for change. In his late rule, Shevardnadze initiated revision of the Constitution, partially for changing the executive branch, but the "Rose Revolution" prevented him from completing the process.

4.8. Summary of the Section

According to M. Weber, power is a probability to manifest one's will despite resistance (Weber, 1968). Although power is a product of interplay, in Georgia it was realized in a specific way. Through interplay, Shevardnadze could return to the political field, consolidate his position and develop beneficial legal mechanisms. Yet he could also effectively impose his will on his opponents as well as powerful supporters. Shevardnadze effectively used his old and new capital. Collaboration with powerful and influential groups helped him overcome external resistance to the implementation of his will. Gradually he succeeded in arranging "figures" and establishing "rules" on the political field.

However, the arrangement and government in the country were paradoxical. Formal reasons that had resulted in the overthrow of the previous regime became relevant again under the new one. Yet, similar to the previous regime, the leader's aspiration to exist on several fields at the same time and to maintain his influence eventually weakened his power. This time, Shevardnadze often delegated his powers. Under the inefficient patient-client arrangements, his rule was affected by his personal connections and kinship. Yet the crises were not as dramatic as previous ones because Shevardnadze's regime had its own legislative framework and cooperated with various groups.

Shevardnadze reminded the population of himself again and again through

his regular radio interviews, speeches and comments. This factor was indeed sufficient in terms of the state media. The media, partially or totally independent from the state/government, first shook and then weakened his dominant position. Hence the inconsistency between the rhetoric of the election period and the happening irregularities and chaos, had gained even more popularity than other news.

Eduard Shevardnadze was brought to power by the need for government, by his personality, his accumulated capital and the society's expectation of a leader. As a leader, he saw the need for dialogue and cooperation, yet persistently consolidated his power. He introduced strong presidency, but that institution was used for preserving power rather than for overcoming the crisis in the country.

5. Mikheil Saakashvili

5.1. From Shevardnadze to Saakashvili

After Shevardnadze came to power, the civil war and criminal violence ceased, but the economic and social situation gradually deteriorated. Apathy, resignation, and cynicism about the prospects for democracy were widespread in the country. Shevardnadze's peculiar presidential constitution resembled the rule of the Soviet Central Committee, with the president ruling the country by means of his administration (Fairbanks, 2004).

Stephen Jones argues that instead of reform, change, and reconciliation, Shevardnadze brought back a reincarnated and property-acquired nomenclature by recombining structures with the ruins of communism, under which the criminals got into politics, and the public interest merged with the private one (Jones, 2013). The system strengthened the patron-client system of governance. According to Christopher Clapham, it was a kind of neopatrimonial society in which everything was determined by one's personal relationships and status. In the patron-client system, loyalty to the leader was conditioned directly by the lines of kinship, cooperation, friendship, etc. (Clapham, 1985 as cited in Jones, 2013). The political field was gradually saturated with leaders of different levels and influence, and political parties became discredited and incapable (Jones, 2013). In the early 2000s, with Shevardnadze's growing age and his expiring term of office, the future of the country became more and more uncertain.

Under the conditions, the ruling party was inhomogeneous; gradually, several groups emerged, and opposition leaders with some leadership experience began to fight for Shevardnadze's succession (Fairbanks, 2004). In general, ever since Georgia regained its independence, political activity in the country was associated with individual leaders (on changes of political regimes in Georgia see Wheatley, 2005). Thus, parties were formed from top-down, around a leader, rather than bottom-up by some organized public interest or demand (Jones, 2013; for more details on political parties see Nodia & Pinto Scholtbach, 2006). Therefore, the political struggle was literally a chronicle of the struggle for power of this or that leader.

5.2. Personal Context

Zurab Zhvania, Nino Burjanadze and Mikhail Saakashvili were among the opposition leaders who changed the situation. Zhvania and Burjanadze were well acquainted with the local nomenclature and knew how to work with it (Fairbanks, 2004). Saakashvili, who was educated in the US and had once worked there, had a different approach.

In 1995, following Zhvania's invitation, Mikheil Saakashvili became an MP from the ruling party, and in 2000 he was appointed Minister of Justice. Saakashvili challenged high-ranking government officials to fight corruption, which made him look like a politician with a different agenda (sakartveloshi..., 2001a). Almost a year later he resigned, and joined the ruling party in the parliament. Since then, he to some extent retained his different vision (saak'ashvili..., 2001a). According to P. Bourdieu, in the struggle for power on the political field, being able to influence the power resources is as important as being different from others. Saakashvili not only remained a ruling party MP until 2000, but stayed recognizable for his activism and particular agenda, using distinctive rhetoric and eclectic symbolism (Fairbanks, 2004; sak'ashvili..., 2001b). He participated in the establishment of an opposition party, the National Movement. In 2002, Saakashvili became Chairman of the Tbilisi City Council (saak'ashvili..., 2002).

The mobilization that reflected his recognisability was in turn based on talking about the interests of those groups that Saakashvili was targeting. He did not make any specific statements about the church or the intelligentsia, yet managed to gain support of part of the intelligentsia (Kandelaki, 2006). His rhetoric was adapted to the most impoverished urban population that had suffered most from the market economy (Fairbanks, 2004). He also drew attention to the neglected and abandoned population in the regions, excluded from the political agenda (Kandelaki, 2006). His supporters were young residents of Tbilisi, including those working for foreign or local NGOs, various companies, and Western-oriented people (Fairbanks, 2004). He spoke about the need for reforms, the fight against corruption, the benefits of knowledge and education, different kinds of mobility, etc. (inauguratsia..., 2004).

Saakashvili's popularity was also due to the existence of independent media even though the Georgian legislation enabled the government to oddly interpret the media and even ban it if necessary (sakartvelos k'anoni..., 1991m). The Rustavi 2 channel that Eduard Shevardnadze tried to close, and the events around it were a kind of prelude to subsequent processes ("Rustavi 2"..., 2001; sap'rotesto..., 2001; mtavroba..., 2001; Manning, 2007). Independent television, which distinguished Georgia from other post-Soviet republics, ensured active coverage of rallies and elections and convergence of Saakashvili's interests with those of Burjanadze and Zhvania (Fairbanks, 2004).

5.3. The Rose Revolution

In the run-up to the 2003 parliamentary elections, a lot was done to improve the

electoral environment with the participation of various organizations. Reduction of the number of MPs in the next parliament was also discussed (Guralidze, 2003). However, the ruling government rejected various formats of cooperation, and the elections were held in the environment of violations, fraud, chaos and tensions. There was also a referendum for reducing the number of MPs (sakartvelos..., 2003a; sakartveloshi..., 2003). Protests started in Tbilisi as significant differences were identified between the CEC outcomes and the observers' data. The ruling groups tried to legitimize the election results at the first session of the newly elected parliament, but the protesters disrupted the session, which resulted in the annulment of the results, resignation of the president, beginning of a new transition period, and scheduling of early elections. Unlike the 1991 rallies, the public protests of 2003 aimed at protecting the constitution (Kandelaki, 2006). On November 25, 2003, Georgia's Supreme Court annulled the results of the proportional elections, leaving the results of the majoritarian elections and the referendum unchallenged (Mchedlishvili, 2003; Way, 2008).

As a result of that change of government, power was accumulated in the hands of three leaders: N. Burjanadze, who had been acting president after the Rose Revolution until the next president was elected, Z. Zhvania who was elected Minister of State, and M. Saakashvili who they considered for the presidency. Discussion began immediately about changing the presidential institution to a modified version of Shevardnadze's proposed model. However, the changes were hindered by a kind of transition period caused by the change of power. As with Gamsakhurdia and Shevardnadze, there were legitimacy issues to resolve, and various legal changes to be made. Therefore, the powers of the parliament of 1999 were extended until a new parliament was elected. In its special session on November 25, 2003, the parliament scheduled extraordinary presidential election for January 4, 2004 (sakartvelos p'rezident'is..., 2003b). The de-facto ruling parties nominated M. Saakashvili as their presidential candidate (mikheil..., 2003).

5.4. The "New" Presidency

M. Saakashvili achieved a convincing victory in the presidential election (gushin..., 2004). The day after the election, M. Saakashvili stated that he was planning to change the constitution, with the main purpose of introducing the institution of prime minister (Kvesitadze, 2004a). The constitutional amendments were also to increase the powers of the president and to somewhat weaken those of the parliament. The new leaders who came to power sought to transform the political field prior to the new parliamentary election and during the term of the old parliament. One of the amendments concerned the immunity of the MPs yet was rejected by the parliament (sakartvelos..., 2004). At the same time, the attitude toward constitutional amendments concerning the government was more positive.

Though nearly a month passed between the announcement of the constitu-

tional amendments and their adoption, discussion of the issue was very specific. The media periodically published articles related to continuous disputes and criticism of the amendments (Kvesitadze, 2004b; Kvesitadze, 2004c; Asanishvili, 2004a; Melikadze, 2004; Asanishvili, 2004b; k'oba..., 2004a; pat'ivi..., 2004; Asanishvili, 2004c; Gakharia & Sabanishvili, 2004; Asanishvili, 2004d; Zurabishvili, 2004; Apraside, 2004). Saakashvili believed that the changes and reforms in the country required creation of a new system with “much more flexible, complex and less risky mechanisms of preventing and resolving political crises” (sajaro..., 2004). The other leaders were also supportive of that idea. Nino Burjanadze spoke of necessary levers for radical reforms in a post-revolutionary context (Asanishvili, 2004c). Thus, this system would be based on the collective responsibility of the government (Tevzadze, 2004b), with the Prime Minister dealing with the current affairs, while the President would determine and control the main directions (Asanishvili, 2004e). Zurab Zhvania believed that his next post would be more independent with a stronger president, who would not be the head of the executive branch, and the government would be accountable to both the president and the parliament (Kvesitadze, 2004c). He also believed that the constitutional amendments would strengthen the parliament (Tevzadze, 2004a). For that purpose, the President was distanced from the Cabinet of Ministers (ibid), and both the Parliament and the President might dissolve the Cabinet, and the Cabinet of Ministers could raise the issue of dissolution of the Parliament (sak'onst'it'utsio..., 2004). In that situation, the President would have an advantage. Nino Burjanadze was not happy with the future unclear position of the Parliament and did not see her place in a weak Parliament (Tevzadze, 2004a). Nevertheless, under the agreement with her political allies, she actively advocated for the constitutional changes, especially when her opponents talked about public disclosure and discussions of the amendments. She believed that the new constitutional amendments came from the 2001 draft that had been requested by Eduard Shevardnadze, and had been published for discussion (Asanishvili, 2004b). Zhvania stated the same (Kvesitadze, 2004c). The main reaction to criticism was generally the same: the amendments were based on a draft that had already been published under President E. Shevardnadze (Babeck, 2012).

Thus, the president would have the primary right to dispose of the power resources on the political field; he could criticize the other two leaders and could strengthen his position dominating the others. Representatives of the non-governmental sector (Mchedlishvili, 2004), experts (Melikadze, 2004; Gakharia & Sabanishvili, 2004; Zurabishvili, 2004; Apraside, 2004) and politicians spoke against the constitutional changes. As a sign of protest, Koba Davitashvili resigned as political secretary of the National Movement (k'oba..., 2004b). The proposed model was thought to give the president special powers (Fairbanks, 2004). However, Saakashvili insisted that they were going to create a strong government according to the mandate received from the Georgian people, so the future format would not lead to any dictatorship and authoritarianism. He also

noted that the draft amendments were in principle positively assessed by international organizations (sajaro..., 2004), including the Venice Commission (chemi..., 2004). The commission's report, however, identified both positive trends and possible risks that needed further consideration and clarification. Also, the changes did not ensure a true semi-presidential system and significantly differed from other similar constitutions (Opinion on..., 2004).

Like his predecessors, M. Sakaashvili rejected the threat of concentration of power as illusory. He believed that the strengthening of the presidency was necessary to implement proposed plans and to save the country. During parliamentary debates, one of the MPs dramatically referred to the situation as natural, because "the rights of the President, who enjoys so much trust, cannot be severely curtailed. It would be a disregard for people's trust. If not for the 96 percent support that Mikheil Saakashvili received in the January 4 elections, the Constitutional amendments would not be the way they are" (p'rezident's..., 2004).

Jones believes that the constitutional reform that was supposed to increase the responsibility of the cabinet ultimately weakened parliamentary control over the executive branch (Jones, 2013). According to W. Babeck, Georgian constitutionalists widely believed that the 2004 constitutional reform was inconsistent in both form and content. The amendments strengthened the powers of the president in the Georgian presidential system (in many dimensions) because the institution of the prime minister was part of the system (Babeck, 2012).

5.5. Weakening of the Presidency

Similar to the institution of the president, the constitution of Georgia was amended to the needs of specific politicians. Strange as it was, Saakashvili changed the constitution as freely as did Shevardnadze: by 2012, the Georgian constitution had been amended 25 times (Jones, 2013). Yet the changes ultimately did not guarantee the form of government, its content, or relations. The "volatile" constitution and negative aspects of the presidency had caused a downfall of the previous presidential rule (ibid). However, Saakashvili could not further strengthen the presidency; his presidential term was also coming to an end. The only way to prolong his powers was to change the system of government by weakening the institution of the President and strengthening the institution of the Prime Minister. That could prolong his term in power and significantly change the distribution of powers between the branches.

The changes were caused by the processes and protests in the country. Mikheil Saakashvili's rule was formally a semi presidentialism, yet he actually had extended presidential rights. Zurab Zhvania died on February 3, 2005. Disagreements with Burjanadze, which started after 2007, gradually turned into a confrontation (nino..., 2008). Thus, the power was concentrated in the hands of one person. Saakashvili annually renewed his cabinet. While under Shevardnadze the parliament periodically disagreed with similar changes (moreover, the issue of

impeachment was even raised in parliament), Saakashvili's authority gave him more freedom of action, and representatives of various branches of power praised his ruling (Jones, 2013).

After Saakashvili came to power, protests against his rule gradually increased. The reasons included his authoritarianism, his methods of dealing with political opponents and leaders, the use of force, and some other issues. Despite the theatrical debates in the parliamentary chamber, the President's ruling party always dominated the Parliament (ibid). In addition, the President could threaten to dissolve the parliament or use his veto, and could be removed only by the majority of his own party (Skrivener, 2016). A. Scrivener notes that under Saakashvili the importance of parliament gradually decreased and the format of opposition changed: "Debates between the authorities and the opposition no longer took place in parliament, but rather during protests, media debates and boycotts. The opposition tried to put pressure on the government from the streets, rather than through discussions in committees" (ibid).

The protests had a huge impact on the Government that responded by increasing pressure on its supporters, opponents, and the media. The 2007 protests significantly challenged the government's position (movlenata..., 2007). In that period two TV companies were temporarily closed down (p'rezident'..., 2007; t'elek'omp'ania..., 2007; tbilisshi..., 2007; opozitsia..., 2007; "imeds"..., 2007; kartuli..., 2008). Political protests never subsided after the August 2008 war. The united opposition announced multi-day rallies for 2009, starting on April 9 (Gamisonia, 2009a, 2009b; Avaliani, 2009). The protests lasted until the end of June. One of the demands was to change the regime. Before the March 30 rallies, the parliamentary Christian Democratic faction proposed drafting a new constitution as a way out of the political crisis, with the purpose of changing and weakening presidency as institution. The idea proved acceptable to the ruling presidential party (Asanishvili, 2009a). Later, Saakashvili also raised the issue of constitutional changes in the presidential system with the purpose of limiting the rights of the president and strengthening the parliament. At the same time, he said: "Efficient presidential rule is important in Georgia, especially when a large part of the country is occupied" (p'rezident'ma..., 2009). Yet the government gradually leant towards expanding the powers of the parliament and the prime minister whereas drastically curtailing the presidency (Asanishvili, 2009b).

On June 8, 2009, the President of Georgia signed a decree on the establishment of the Constitutional Commission. Parliamentary and other qualified parties, representatives of universities, non-governmental organizations, and various bodies and structures were invited to participate in the process.

Against the background of ongoing protests, Saakashvili also spoke about the importance of the opposition's participation in the process: "I proposed creating a commission on a parity basis, which would work out a balanced constitutional model. I [also] proposed them to agree and nominate the Chairman of the Commission" (Asanishvili, 2009c; sakartvelos..., 2010a). He believed that the

candidate proposed by the opposition did chair the Constitutional Commission (Gamisonia, 2009c). Yet some parties and experts refused to participate. The critical attitude was partly caused by fact that the same people had participated in the discussion of constitutional changes since Shevardnadze's time (Babeck, 2012).

The commission worked for 16 months and sent the final draft to the president on July 19, 2010 (Demetrashvili, 2012). S. Fish believes that the amendments resulted from reflection, long and heated consultations, and often debates, which distinguished that process from other processes of constitutional change (Fish, 2012). W. Babeck argues that the president did not intervene in the process. It was believed that he did not adapt the constitutional reform to his personal interests, yet there could be the risk of him willing to thus stay in power (Babeck, 2012). For his part, Saakashvili claimed that he had not seen the draft constitution approved by the Venice Commission (saak'ashvili, 2010a), that he was thinking about the future post of Prime Minister (saak'ashvili, 2010b), but he did not adjust the Constitution to himself (saak'ashvili..., 2010c). Mikheil Saakashvili believed that the new constitution should help the government transition to a new stage of future reforms: "We are ready for a new revision of the constitution that will be more balanced. In the context of constructive cooperation between the government and the opposition, we will create a democratic constitution of the European type—with greater equality between the branches of power, a stronger parliament and permanent accountability of the government to the people" (sakartvelos..., 2010a).

On October 15, 2010, the Parliament of Georgia adopted amendments and additions that had the President remain the head of the Georgian state, yet the Government became the supreme body of executive power in Georgia (sakartvelos k'onst'it'utsiashi..., 2010b).

5.6. Summary of the Section

Pierre Bourdieu argues that the purpose of processes on the political field is to monopolize the production and dissemination of political ideas and opinions in order to disseminate one irreplaceable and inescapable truth (Bourdieu, 2001). Under Saakashvili's presidency, television remained an important channel of communication, yet the role of the internet and social networks grew as well. Despite attempts to control TV channels, independent Internet resources and media offered unrestricted opportunities for Saakashvili's opponents to express their views or plan protests, thus the form of communication as well as the political field changed.

In his struggle for power, M. Saakashvili twice managed to change the presidential institute as to retain his exclusive right to power in the ruling hierarchy. Nevertheless, his intention to be a lone player on the political field in order to influence other fields brought the country back to crisis. Saakashvili lost the 2012 election, although that time it happened within the electoral system. The vertical

of power, in fact, changed only its name, and the strongman presidential system was replaced by a system with a strongman prime minister (Skrivener, 2016).

The media was a strong tool for Saakashvili, however control over it was practically impossible due to social media and various internet services. In terms of diverse media services, attacking the media on elections topic had temporary consequences, but it also gradually weakened the potential of the media. New spaces for debates appeared, making the domination of creation and dissemination of news impossible.

Mikhail Saakashvili came to power with a different personal history, accumulated capital and image of a leader. As a leader, he saw the need to achieve exclusivity on the political field through a variety of means. He did not focus on any influential group yet tried to express the interests of a broader group of society by his actions aimed at changes and development. A change in the executive branch and a weak president are, by their very nature, an alternative way of keeping the ruling party in power.

6. Final Conclusion

Thus, in the struggle for control over power resources in Georgia, all new leaders came on a wave of euphoria and hope. In fact, periods of crisis and discord preceded the arrival of all the three presidents. They effectively used their social capital to change the political field. It was believed that the old leader needed to be replaced because the constitution was failing and had to be changed. In the process of the change, the political leaders managed to neutralize “dangerous” allies and opponents and move the political field to a dimension that they dominated. However, according to P. Bourdieu, one cannot exist in two or more different fields, so the desire to remake and control the fields according to one’s own consideration eventually led to inevitable crises, followed by a specific change of power.

In the process of coming to power and retaining it, a large role was played by various agents, who could influence the political field yet were vulnerable to those at power. Unlike Zviad Gamsakhurdia, Eduard Shevardnadze paid more attention to the still influential intelligentsia and the church, whose influence was growing. Moreover, he tried to preserve the position of the intelligentsia while strengthening the position of the Church. Tired of constant crises, the youth, the regions, and the poor took to streets to support Mikheil Saakashvili. Yet, despite their varied relations with more eclectic and diverse interest groups, Saakashvili’s government also faced problems, which contributed to the transformation of power.

Before coming to power, the leaders viewed presidentialism as a system of government that would be effective in addressing the current challenges of the distribution of power. Yet after coming to power, all the three presidents, for different reasons, yet for subjective considerations and with the same goal of strengthening their power and preventing other agents from occupying promi-

ment places on the political field, gradually transformed their presidency into an institution endowed with special rights.

S. Fish believes that “unbridled” presidents can better deal with threats than parliaments and systems where power is divided between the president and the legislature. Thus, presidents often use crisis to strengthen their positions (Fish, 2012). Gamsakhurdia used that method to create de facto independent and free Georgia; Shevardnadze applied it to stabilize the country; Saakashvili used that approach to fight corruption, implement reforms and solve other problems (p’rezident’ma..., 2009). However, according to Z. Dzhibgashvili, the subjective understanding of strong presidency resulted in losing an objective perception of presidentialism and parliamentarism. “A presidential republic was seen as a manifestation of strong presidential power, and a parliamentary republic—as the antithesis of an effective government. That was fully evident in the psychological attitude of all three former presidents toward state power” (Jibghashvili, 2017).

However, in a situation where the number of challenges, problems and risks grew with the increasing powers of the President, the processes logically led to the weakening of the presidency and introduction of a modified, collective form of personal domination.

Every “new” government actually relied on the previous one in terms of legislation, bureaucracy, and even the parliament. Thus, Zviad Gamsakhurdia started his movement towards independence with the Supreme Council elected in the Georgian SSR, yet then switched to a one-mandate and one-party system. Eduard Shevardnadze’s rise to power was preceded by the abolition of the previous parliament and the government in general; yet he ruled under the laws that had been changed by Gamsakhurdia and had somewhat modified the Soviet system of government. Mikheil Saakashvili actually continued the reforms that Shevardnadze has initiated, expanded the presidential powers, and continued Shevardnadze’s policies in various directions.

Communication with the media proved quite difficult under all the three presidents. Zviad Gamsakhurdia sought to control the media, especially during the pre-election period, thus contributing to the monopoly of his own political views. Under Shevardnadze, newspapers still were the main means of communicating with the population. Due to electric power outages, Shevardnadze extensively used radio broadcasting, and his regular radio interviews were usually published in newspapers. Under Saakashvili, first television and then the Internet took the lead. Saakashvili tried to control TV channels, yet independent Internet resources and media offered unrestricted opportunities for his opponents to express their views. Social networks were also actively used for planning street protests.

In fact, the institution of presidency and related processes were a tool for the realization of personal interests and strengthening of power. They helped control the objectified resources of power, create and disseminate relevant knowledge, and influence the population. In this respect, elections were not so much a mechanism for testing one’s own political popularity as a legitimate way to

maintain these opportunities.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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