Consolidating a hybrid regime: the case of Georgia under Shevardnadze and Saakashvili

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Introduction

This paper aims to further investigate hybrid regimes, which are becoming a more and more analysed topic in political studies. After the pathh breaking article by Thomas Carothers (Carothers, 2002) where he claims that many of the regimes that were considered usually in "transition" were actually proved highly durable and did not move neither toward autocracy nor democracy, other scholars started to be interested in this particular phenomenon as such. In this paper I stem from the definition of Hybrid regimes provided by Leonardo Morlino: "A hybrid regime is always a set of ambiguous institutions […] lacking as it does one or more essential characteristics of that regime but also failing to acquire other characteristics that would make it fully democratic or authoritarian" (Morlino, 2008:7), in order to investigate how incumbents hold and strengthen power in this peculiar political and institutional environment, without forcefully become never fully authoritarian or fully democratic.

In this paper, Georgia is taken as case study because first of all Georgia was a durable hybrid regime for at least two decades: despite two revolutions

(independence and Rose Revolution) Georgia never reached the rank of stable democracy in any of the indicators (Policy IV, Economist Intelligent Unit "Index of Democracy", Freedom House)[1]. Secondly, because Georgia provides two different examples of incumbent's ruling style in the context of hybrid regime. Indeed, the lack of full democratization allows me to take this case as a perfect example of a hybrid regime with two starkly different periods, which consist of disparate sets of political choices. Thirdly because Georgia's recent history is characterized by the presence of strong actors that affected the capacity of the incumbents to rule the country.

As a theoretical framework I am going to use the Theory of Domestic Anchoring (Morlino 1998, 2011), which allow me to explain the top-down processes that link incumbent elite with other stakeholders and groups in the society. In particular this study shows how and through what means rulers in Georgia consolidated hybridity instead of democracy or autocracy. Thanks to the adoption of the concept of "anchor" I am able to analyse how both Shevardnadze and Saakashvili used this tenet in order to consolidate their power *vis à vis* possible opposition groups in a durable hybrid regime, and to prove that even in hybrid regimes there are anchoring mechanisms that characterize the strength, the grip on the society and the ruling style of the incumbent. This is important insofar it provide further investigation on hybrid regime, which are yet far from being deeply explored as regime as such. In order to evaluate the "anchoring" capacity of both the presidencies I will look at three main issues, fundamental to consolidate the regime, which involved the elites in post-independence Georgia and that characterized the last two decades of recent Georgian's history: warlords and integrity of the territory, fragmentation of the political actors, and relationship between political and economic elites.

In the first part of the paper I am going to provide a brief description of the state of the art in terms of literature concerning hybrid regimes, underling how there is still much to analyse in order to improve the comprehension of this particular form of regime. In the second part I am going to present the theory of the

[1] In addiction Georgia has been classified as a stable hybrid regime for the period from 1991-2006 by

domestic anchoring and I explain how it can be useful to help in understanding hybrid regimes' power dynamics. In the third part I analyse the two different presidencies in Georgia in terms of how they acted in relation to the three linchpins (warlords and territorial integrity, fragmentation of political actors and political-economic relationships) and in terms of continuation of informal and institutional manipulations. Finally, I provide an additional understanding of these processes: on one hand I show how even in hybrid regime there is a consolidation process that allow the regime to be durable; secondly, I interpret those finding with the theory of anchoring, demonstrating how democratic theories might be helpful in order to explain non-democratic processes.

Literature review on hybrid regimes

In the last decades there has been a growing attention on different regimes types that followed the third wave of democratization. As a matter of facts, many third waves countries could not be straightforward labelled as democratic or autocratic, and subsequently this triggered a long-standing debate about this "grey zone" and on the definitions of democracy. This debate has not yet comes to an epilogue, and despite the already mentioned end of the "transitiologist" paradigm (Carothers, 2002) there is still a lively debate on labelling the disparate variety of regimes around the world according to the degree of "democratic/autocratic" outlook. In particular, for what concern hybrid regimes, Epstein asserted that partial democracies "account for an increasing portion of current regimes and the lion's share of regime transitions" (Epstein et all., 2006:564). As a matter of facts Henry E. Hale claims, "The chief goal of research has been less to understand how these regimes actually function and more to evaluate their prospects for becoming more democratic" (Hale, 2011:23). In addiction, Hale argues that hybrid regimes must be studied on their own because they posses some characteristics that have to be considered peculiars. This is a new conceptualization of hybridity, which consider it as a distinct and durable regime type and it is becoming prominent in the literature (see for example Larry Diamond, 2002; Leonardo Morlino, 2008; Steven Levitsky and Luncan

Way, 2010; Andreas Schedler, 2013). However, what is still missing is a deep understanding of how this kind of regimes function.

Some attempts to explain how incumbents rule in hybrid regimes have been carried out, such as the careful analysis of Andreas Schedler (2013) about the key characteristics that affect electoral autocracies, which are informational and institutional uncertainties, especially when it comes to deal with elections. The latters are considered as arenas of asymmetric conflicts in which internal dynamics unfold within theirs confines (Schedler, 2013: 7); according to Schedler's analysis, incumbents in electoral autocracies cannot avoid the opposition to strive for winning the election and being elected, but they dispose a variety of tools (such as institutional manipulation) in order to nullify opposition's attempts to get the power. Schedler's analysis is extremely inspiring and it helps scholars to focus on further investigating the unsecure environment in which incumbents operate in hybrid regimes. Rulers might use an infinite way and infinite elements that can enhance the longevity of their regime. In the already mentioned analysis by Hale (2011), he categorizes and lists several methods, which are at the incumbents' disposal in order to defeat their opponents, this includes media manipulation, coercing or buying votes, supporting informal groups to attack opposition, manipulation of the choice set (creating fake opposition movement as a way of challenging or diverting opposition votes), selective prosecution, falsification (stolen elections) pressuring, co-opting or blackmailing elites.

In this study I focus mainly on the last example of method, because as long as recent analyses of "Coloured Revolutions" are concerned, elites defections are identified as turning point in the change of regime even in the case of Georgia's Rose Revolution (Radnitz, 2010; Hale, 2006; McFaul, 2005; Paul D'Anieri, 2006; Welt, 2010; Wheatley 2010). Therefore, in accordance with the elitist theory I consider "elites management" one of the key characteristics for consolidating a long-lasting hybrid regime. As David Truman writes the stability of the system depends upon the elites, "being more influential, they are privileged; and, being privileged, they have, with few exception, a special stake in the continuation of

the political system on which their privileges rest" (Truman, 1959: 489). Thus, in order to further investigate the role and the dynamics performed by these actors I borrow a theory from democratization studies, the Theory of Anchoring, which explains how domestic incumbent elite managed to keep bound different societal actors and other elites to their regime.

A democratic theory for a non-democratic process

In order to be able to use a theory coming from democratization studies, first of all I should investigate if there are the pre-conditions that allow me to borrow safely concepts and theoretical frameworks from one field to another. The Theory of Anchoring has been conceived in order to explain the consolidation process as whole, because at the time being the mainstream literature was too much focused on the role of legitimization and legitimacy (Morlino 2011: 109). As a matter of fact, for many authors legitimacy was the most important and even defining element for democratic consolidation (Linz and Stepan, 1996; Diamond, 1999). However, in the course of time, democratic consolidation has come to include a variety of items such as the neutralization of anti-system actors, civilian supremacy over the military, the elimination of authoritarian enclaves, party building, the organization of functional interests, the stabilization of electoral rules, the "routinization" of politics, the decentralization of state power, judicial reform, the alleviation of poverty, and economic stabilization (Schedler, 1998:92); therefore, consolidation encompasses much more than legitimacy, and it goes beyond mere legitimizing stances. According to Philippe Schmitter "regime consolidation consists of transforming the accidental arrangements, prudential norms and contingent solutions that emerged […] during the uncertain struggles of the transition into structures, i.e. into relationships that are reliably known, regularly practiced and habitually accepted by those persons or collectives defined as participants/citizens/subjects of such structures" (Schmitter, 1995: 539). Therefore, it was necessary to integrate the different nuances of consolidation in a consistent theoretical framework. In the Theory of Anchoring we find the process of democratic consolidation composed by two different sub-processes;

on one hand there is the bottom-up process, "legitimation", which is conceived as "positive societal attitudes […] that, in spite of shortcomings and failures, existing political institutions are better than possible alternatives" (Morlino, 2011: 112); on the other hand there is the top-down process, which is the "anchor". An anchor is "an institution, entailing organizational elements and vested interest, that is able to perform a hooking and binding effect on more or less organized people within a society" (Morlino, 2011:113). This process, the creation of anchors, is performed by the elites at the time of transition and instauration of a new regime.

At this point, two simples but straightforward questions would rise: is there a consolidation period even in hybrid regimes? How it is possible that a hybrid regime stabilize? According to some scholars there are periods in which incumbents must overcome challenges to their rules and to manage the vested interests that would underpin their governments. The anchoring side of a consolidation process is emphasised by Christian who writes that democratic and authoritarian regimes face similar challenges such as "establishing and upholding universal rules of the game to prevent splits in leadership, secure society's compliance and gain support if the regime is to become sustainable" (Gobel, 2011: 177). This conception is shared by those scholars who consider autocracies not necessarily instable or less viable than democracies (Schedler, 2006; Brooker, 2009). The already mentioned analysis by Hale, underlines how hybrid regimes showed un-expected longevity and stresses the importance of regime institutionalization in attaining stability and durability performances (Hale, 2011:40). Furthermore, democratic institutions, such as parliaments and political parties are fundamental sources of stability for an authoritarian regime because, by establishing formally representative institutions, authoritarian rulers set up relations of dependency (Schedler 2013: 72; Gandhi, 2008). Yet, the consolidation of an hybrid regimes is not composed only by top-down processes, even the second sub-process of consolidation, bottom-up, is observed in hybrid regime: corroboration for this claim come from recent studies, which demonstrate how even non-democratic regimes necessitate forms of legitimacy that are fundamental in consolidating their stability (Gilley, 2006; Schlumberger,

2004, 2007); in addiction, there are other researches highlighting that political skills, such as political communication and marketing are as important in democracy as in autocracy (Way, 2005).

It is not possible to observe straightforwardly that Shevardnadze or Saakashvili aimed to establish or consolidate a hybrid regime *per se*. Hybridity is a result of certain practices and procedures that characterize a form of managing the country, or the outcomes of a negligence to implement other policies. Nobody would profess to undertake some reforms in order to build a hybrid regime or to manipulate some democratic institutions. Notwithstanding, the construction of a democratic state with a proper rule of law was the slogan in most of the newly independent states, because, as Mazmanyan asserts, in post-Communist countries "democracy remains the legitimising ideology" (Mazmanyan, 2010:196), even if eventually it did not lead to a real democratization process. In addiction, the apparent rejection of authoritarianism was "a strategy for authoritarian leaders seeking to protect themselves from the power of other bureaucrats" (Roeder, 2001:33). Therefore, according to Roeder, in Georgia there was an inconsistent inclusion of the selectorate[2], which determined that "[in Georgia] it is consensus among power holder rather than open public contestation that selects their leader[s]" (Roeder, 2001:16). As a matter of fact, anchoring mechanism is far more important for hybrid regimes insofar it counterbalances the low level of legitimacy of the regime. As Morlino asserts, "to achieve consolidation, the more exclusive the legitimacy, the stronger and more developed the anchors have to be." (Morlino 2011:113). In this study I consider the stabilisation of elites as indicator of the presence of strong anchors that hooked and bound the incumbents to the other societal actors.

One may argue that the concept of "linkage" (see for example Lawson 1988) is extremely close to the concept of anchor. Yet, I found the latter theoretical framework more adaptable to hybrid regimes contexts because firstly it encompasses two mechanisms of hooking and binding with some outcomes such

[2] According to Roeder, the selectorate is "the group that can pose a credible threat of removing the policy makers; it can be formed by people inside the state apparatus or a selectorate in the society (Roeder, 2001:14)

as stabilisation and consolidation; secondly it suggests to asymmetrical connections between institutions and social groups or individuals (Morlino, 2011:114). This asymmetry, which characterizes the anchoring process, is well observable in one of the strongest type of anchors: clientelism. As we will see, these relationships were overwhelming in the Georgian case.

To conclude, as this paragraph demonstrated there is a new stream in the literature that consider consolidation as a process that affects both non-democratic and democratic regime. In this study, through the theory of democratic anchoring, which is conceived to explain a sub-process of the democratic consolidation and can be – *mutatis mutandis* – adopted to study the domestic process of hybrid consolidation, I provide evidences to this theoretical assumption, through the analysis of the regime consolidation by Edward Shevardnaze and Mikail Saakashvili.

The First Consolidation: Shevardnadze's Presidency

The case of Georgia independence was one of the bloodiest in the former Soviet Union (hereafter FSU) countries. In occasion of the Congress of People's election, which resulted highly controlled by communist party officials (Slider, 1997: 160) opposition movement peacefully manifested discontent; in the morning of April 1989 soviet troops repressed violently the sit-in in front of the government building. The political environment in Georgia became extremely radicalized and highly anti-Soviet, with a renewed chauvinistic fervour. Gamsakhurdia was the best figure in order to drive the country out of the Soviet sphere; he was an intellectual who struggled against Sovietization of Georgia and a human rights activists. However, from early 1990 Georgia witnessed an escalation of violence among political, societal and ethnical actors. In particular, criminal group (warlords) formed during the Soviet period played a major role triggering violence in order to maintain vested interests and privileged positions in the country's political establishment. Moreover, the nationalist outlook of Gamsakhurdia's government exacerbates ethnic tensions and separatists' claims in Abkhazia, Ajara and South Ossetia. Gasmakhurdia did not succeed dealing with

domestic order and rooting out the warlords; he lacked the willingness to engage in political compromises and had and extremely polarized style of leadership which played a decisive role in his failure (Jawada, 2012: 144), moreover some provision aimed to this goal proved to be counterproductive (such as the establishment of a National Guard, which became in turn another element of secure instability). The military coup took place on January 6 1990; Gamsakhurdia had to leave from the country, and armed groups seized the power. For the time being Jaba Ioselani and Tengiz Kitovani were the two strongest men in the country; they headed the two most important quasi-military organizations (respectively Mkhedrioni and National Guard) but they were rivals. Yet, they agreed on invite the former first secretary of the Georgian Communist Party Edward Shevardnadze back in Georgia to lead the new state.

When Shevardnadze returned to Georgia in 1992, he found a state that was yet to be consolidated. At his arrival Shevardnadze was appointed as speaker of the parliament, which acted as President of the country. The institution and the provisions of the young Georgian state were close to collapse (Jawada, 2012:144). Shevardnadze had to consolidate both his leadership and state institution avoiding the re-kindle of the civil war and the separatist stances of some regions.

After the brief description of the troubled independence from the FSU, it could be asked how Shevardnadze assured the stabilisation of the elites and consolidated the hybrid regime in Georgia. The first issue was first of all related to the challenging presence of armed groups around the country, which were loyal just to warlords.

In Georgia the warlords and their militias acted as un-official army because the inexistence of an official body intended to provide with security. A Georgian academic said, “We have passed through the romantic stage and now we are in what I call the ‘Afghanistan period’ of Georgia” (Remnick, 1990). At the outset of Shevardnadze government, the leader of Mkhedrioni, Ioselani, and the leader of the National Guard Kitovani kept in check Shevardnadze who could not root out

their influences. Consequently the two warlords were benefiting from their position of power: Ioselani was elected in the Georgian Parliament and obtained the control of the Ministry of the Interior, whereas Kitovani continued to act as Minister of Defence and remained at the command of the National Guard. Thanks to this agreement Shevardnadze could try to demobilize part of the militias, even if contrasts rose concerning the role and the tasks that they had to carry out (Weathley, 2005:68). The problem of the warlords is deeply entrenched with the quest for separatism in some ethnic regions of Georgia. As a matter of facts, at least two other warlords coming from the "periphery" of the country were challenging, even more directly, the integrity of the state and thus, its sovereignty; they were Aslan Abashidze in the province of Ajara and Emzar Kvitsiani in the district of Upper Kodori. Both the warlords acted as middleman between Tbilisi and local population, they were collecting revenues and customs duty in the respective zones and they were at the top of a patronage pyramid. In order to tackle a possible secessionists action, Shevardnadze opted to accommodate with both the warlords (Marten, 2012), reaching for an apparent stability at the cost accepting limits to Tbilisi direct control over those regions. In Ajara, Shevardnadze allowed Abashidze to act as middleman and to collect fees from the "border". This accommodation served to Shevardnadze as well, who could establish a personal patronage relationship with Abashidze. For example in the contested election of 2003 Shevardnadze could relied on Abashidze's unique party (Revival Party) for a strategic alliance, which allowed him to claim for victory. In the Upper Kodori, in the context of the Abkhaz-Georgian[3] war and the subsequent case-fire in 1993, Shevardnadze promoted a carrot policy appointing Kvitsiani as first deputy representative. In addiction Kvitsiani reported to have been paid by Shevardnadze $ 50.000 per month for his cooperation in "humanitarian aid" (Marten, 2012:89). For the time being Shevardnadze could not coercively root out all the militias that were scampering around the country. Through the use of the negotiation and accommodation Shevardnadze succeeded to keep the country's unity and to avoid the revival of the civil war. However, the agreements with the elites remained extremely

[3] In August 1993 Kitovani organized a military attack in Abkhazia in order to eliminate all pro-Gamsakhurdia militias. However, Georgian's troops were ward-off thanks to the Russian support to Abkhaz militias. The Kodori gorge became a buffer zone between Abhkazia and the rest of Georgia.

unstable and the separatists' stances from several regions in Georgia never extinguished.

Political fragmentation characterized especially the first years of Shevardnadze presidency. In part because of the electoral law that ruled the parliamentary election of 1992 (no minimum threshold, proportional system, and no possibility for the Central Electoral Commission to refuse the registration of political parties), in part because the lack of strong and dominant parties, in Georgia there was a highly fragmented political environment (there were 24 political parties in the parliament, which it has 150 seats overall). However, Shevardnadze could rely on, both in the capital and in the other regions, his personal political network from the period when he was First Secretary of Communist Party in Georgia (Weathley, 2010:359). What characterized Shevardnadze ruling style was the widespread web of patron-client relationship that became the central power of his presidency. According to Timm "Shevardnadze has made extensive use of this kind of integration not solely to secure his own political power base but with the purpose of supporting a comprehensive state building process" (Timm, 2012:170). These informal practices went hand in hand with formal structures in a neo-patrimonial logic. As a matter of fact, according to this mechanism "clientelism combined with formal state structures can be identified as the engine of neo-patrimonial authority" (Timm, 2012: 173). Administrative and political positions as well as public goods were the wares of the clientelist relationship; in this way clientelism acted as integrative capacity inasmuch the patron was performing a broker role for different social groups (Lemarchand, 1972:66-68). Thanks to these connections Shevardnadze could launch his new party Georgian Citizens' Union (CUG), which gravitated around his leadership. As a matter of facts Shevardnadze was "the ultimate decision maker both within the State and within the CUG (Jawad, 2012:145). The party allowed him to maintain lively connections; it was a "broad church that out of necessity would include most of the key players in Georgia" (Weathley, 2010:359). Thanks to the CUG, Shevardnadze could have the new Constitution (which re-introduced the post of president) adopted in August 1995. This result might be regarded as astonishing if we take into consideration the high level of elites and political fragmentation;

yet, it has been analysed as a symbolic seal among the elites (Roeder, 2001) that signified a first step in the consolidation of power; however, as Merkel stressed "the introduction of democratic structures does not necessarily imply their institutionalisation" (Merkel, 2012:51).

In November 1995 there were both the Presidential and the Parliamentary elections that were won by Shevardnadze and the CUG respectively with 75% and 24% (which assured CUG to gain 111/181 seats)[4]. After 1995 Shevardnadze was the cornerstone of this system; he managed different vested interests in order to balance fragmented, competing and sometimes rival elites. Therefore, despite Levitsky and Way assert that the organizational power by Shevardnadze was not so strong, and that he lacked coercive capacity (Levitsky and Way, 2010:221) I would claim that after the Constitutional agreement and the election in November 1995, Shevardnadze assured the consolidation of the country thanks to a widespread use of anchors. Thanks to these further anchors, he was finally able to get rid off his relations of dependency with Ioselani and Kivotani, whom still maintained renowned positions in his entourage[5].

The ample use of co-option went far beyond the solely political sphere but was aimed to entangle all the stakeholders of the country. Yet, Georgia was one of the FSU countries that experienced a high level of economic liberalization and thus, economic dispersion. Shevardnadze started to deal effectively with economic issues only from 1994, when he launched the "anti-crisis program" in order to recover from the mistakes of the "populist economic reform" occurred from December 1991 till early 1992 and from the unaccomplished Shock Therapy (Papava, 2012)[6]. From 1994 Shevardnadze started to take IMF and World Bank recommendations seriously and to carry out some of the reforms envisaged by

[4] Because the other parties that overcame the 5% threshold scored 8% (National Democratic Party) and 6.8% (All Georgian Revival Union)
[5] Both were arrested in 1995: Ioselani because he was accused to having connection with the attempted car bombing of Shevardnadze, whereas Kitovani was arrested after having attempted to lead a para-military attack to Abkhazia with Mkhedrioni militia.
[6] During this relatively short period of time, Georgia experienced the Shock Therapy, which was introduced in post-Communist countries by former Polish finance minister Leszek Balcerowicz This plan entails the simultaneous adoption of measures concerned with price liberalization and reduction of national budget deficit (see Papava, 2012: 2-7)

the international institutions[7]. Meanwhile the government strengthened the privatizations' plan aimed to preserve the redistribution of assets in the hands of state officials and their clients (Radnitz, 2010:135). Among the state officials, a former Communist Party leader, Avtandil Margiani, played a prominent "anchoring" role; he was appointed as deputy's prime minister and represented the vested interests of the head of state enterprise at the top levels of government (Slider, 1997:192). In addiction, despite the IMF and World Bank advices, Shevardnadze never fully committed his administration to specific policies in the economic sector, in fact the economic policy and social model in Georgia used to be "adjusted to the interest of the rent-seeking part of society" (Gogolashvili, 2011:173). Yet, neo-patrimonial dynamics could not prevent the development of an independent economic class. As a matter of facts, the economic pluralism, developed prior to 2003, allowed some businessmen to set up political parties, which fostered criticisms over government economic management (Radnitz, 2010:135), such as the New Rights, funded by David Gamkrelidze in June 2001 that started to ask for a reduction of the budget deficit. Moreover, some other started to develop independent media, such as Badri Patarkatsishvili who funded Imedi Media Holding a broadcasting station extremely critical to Shevardnadze. In addiction, the third sector (mainly composed by NGO) could grow impressively thanks to significant financial resources that were beyond Shevardnadze control (often foreign sponsored) (Wheatley, 2010:363). Economic pluralism assured the presence of actors that were not anchored to the system; these elements were at the basis of the Rose Revolutions, which soon after took place.

Shevardnadze was able to set up and consolidate a stable hybrid regime that allowed himself to rule from 1995 until 2001, when after some elites defections and the growing discontent about the inability to cope with budgetary crisis, a real and a challenging opposition started to develop.

[7] Thanks to IMF and World Bank activities Georgia succeeded in attaining macroeconomic stability and in building up its financial system, even if IFM and World Bank recommendation proved to be wrong in many cases (see Papava, 2012:17-22)

The Rose Revolution

Many and various interpretations have been made on the so-called Rose Revolution. For the sake of the argument, my interest is focused on understanding the possible destabilisation of the elites and thus the de-anchoring process of the hybrid regime. By the way, there is a general understanding that the worsening of economic conditions and elites defections allowed the creation of a favourable environment to a change. Taking into account the Theory of anchoring it is possible to interpret this piecemeal drift as "more or less gradual breaking up or destructuration of those institution and vested interests" (Morlino, 2011:113), in which the anchors might break and unbind.

At the time Georgia was witnessing a deep structural crisis triggered by a huge budgetary deficit. This in turn, provoked high level of disaffection by some economic elites that started to openly criticise the government neo-patrimonial system. A young but charismatic leader, Mikhail Saakashvili who was the Minister of Justice under Shevardnadze government was ready to ride the wave of the moment and declaring that he could not bear anymore the corrupt and inefficient systems of the country. Shevardnadze's peculiar way of managing the country began to serve the interests of a narrower power elite, and "clear signs of 'state capture' appeared" (Gegeshidze, 2011:32). The parliamentary election, scheduled for November 2003, brought under the spotlight the unsustainable neo-patrimonial system and thus other members of the economic and political elites started to take the distances from Shevardnadze administration[8]. The election was marred by fraud, and despite Shevardnadze claimed victory the Georgia Supreme Court nullify the result of elections. Shevardnadze began to be stigmatized and became the "lame duck" to which everyone pointed to; meanwhile the CUG collapsed, and thus the political and clientelistic networks disentangled with the actors, with the society and with the rest of the elites. Shevardnadze did not want to resign and he asked for help to Abashidze and

[8] For example: Nino Burdjanadze (Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia), Zurab Zhvania (CUG General Secretary and Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia), David Bezhuashvili (Director of Sakgazi – Georgian Gas), Temur Chkonia (owner of Coca-Cola Georgia and McDonald Georgia).

Kvitsiani. Truly, the anchors with the warlords functioned until the very end of Shevardnadze regime: Abashidze and his Revival Party remained loyal and provided support to Shevardnadze until the eve of the Rose Revolution, providing the president with electoral votes from their constituencies and with supporting manifestations in Tbilisi. In the capital during those days there was also Kvitsiani, who was there to sustain Shevardnadze government that granted him the laud of Georgian patriot for his merits for defending the country from attacks by Abkhazian and Russian forces (Marten, 2012:90). However, with the Parliament surrounded by Saakashvili's supporters, which sought for a resignation of Shevardnadze, warlords and theirs followers could little in avoiding the crowd to enter into the parliament. Soon after Shevardnadze had to fly out from the country.

Thus, Shevardnadze could not rely anymore on the complex networks of support he set at the beginning and all along the duration of his presidency. In addiction, despite tools for institutional manipulation were at the disposal for incumbent to assure their holding in power (including elections), Shevardnadze did not succeed in managing the forthcoming elections and thus he did not manage properly to cope with, what Schedler calls, the *institutional and informational uncertainties* that characterize hybrid regimes; in a last tentative he launched his pro-government initiative, a coalitions of leaders and parties, called "For a New Georgia", aimed to grab still some consensus and to provide his few supporters with what would resemble an organizational power, however this tentative failed to bring unity in a fragmented political environment.

Notwithstanding Cory Welt finds a paradox when he asserts that Rose Revolution happened in a country that "moved further down a democratic pathway than those that have not" (Welt, 2010:188), I would claim that it is exactly "this set of ambiguous institutions" (Morlino, 2008:7), which implies a higher level of uncertainty on the stabilisation of the regime and makes the management of a crisis more challenging.

However, this does not imply that these kinds of crises and post-elections protests have to be seen as real revolutionary moment in terms of regime change (through the transitology paradigm). As a matter of facts, the Rose Revolution did bring to an end the Shevardnadze's presidency and system, however it did not bring to an end the hybridity of the system. Therefore, according to Henry E. Hale, elite de-consolidation and post-elections protests against unpopular incumbents "can be an integral part" of hybrid regimes' accountability mechanism (Hale, 2006; 2011:39). Given the high-level of uncertainty in hybrid regime, every time there is a change in the elites settlement a process of re-consolidation occurs. This happens in so far as in hybrid regimes elites stabilisation plays a major role in consolidating the regime. Elites and society bound together through anchors are part of the consolidating process; therefore, in case of crisis and de-structuration, the regime has to undertake a new consolidating moment, with the creation of new anchors among the most important actors with interests at stake as a cyclic phase of hybrid accountability.

The Second Consolidation: Saakashvili's Presidency

There was no surprise looking at the high turnout of presidential election in January 2004, when Saakashvili was elected president with 96% of the preferences. People expected a real change and massively participated in this "new turn" elections (more than 80% of turnout). However, even these "victory elections" were marred by fraud and irregularities (ODHIR, 2004), demonstrating how Saakashvili started to use immediately one of the institutional management methods that characterize hybrid regime. As Wheatley writes about the 2003 and 2008 elections, "the purpose of elections in Georgia is not to give voters the opportunity to replace their government, but to confer legitimacy on the incumbent regime" (Wheatley, 2010:374).

After the elections Saakashvili started immediately to address many issues in several sectors and reformed the 1995 Constitutions. In the election's campaign Saakashvili promised that he would restore full control over Georgian territory

and would have harshly combat corruption. Hereby, it follows the analysis of the three linchpins that I presented so far; it is possible to observe substantial differences with Shevardnadze system, demonstrating how Saakashvili acted to re-structure the anchors engaging in a different way with the main actors of Georgian's society.

As far as the situation with the warlords is concerned, Saakashvili demonstrated since the beginning that he was not satisfied with the "accommodating" behaviour of the previous presidency. As a matter of facts, Abashidze and Kvitsiani were integrative parts of the Shevardnadze rule, thus Saakashvili decided to get rid off them as soon as possible. First of all, Saakashvili indicated that it considered those conditions in Abkhazia and South Ossetia to be intolerable and would have taken active measures to resolve the conflicts (Nodia, 2005:53). Subsequently, thanks to his populist appeal, Saakashvili was able to starkly contrast both the warlords in their own regions.

Abashidze after the Rose Revolution condemned the coup and closed Ajara's border with the rest of Georgia, declaring the state of emergency (Civil Georgia, 2003). In January 2004 Saakashvili launched an investigation on the illegal traffics and activities in Ajara and on one of the major financial funders of Abashidze, the Omega Group (Marten, 2012:78). Notwithstanding these developments rekindled ancient tensions, Abashidze's Revival Party run for election in Georgian's parliament but failed to overcome the threshold. After this failure, Saakashvili arrested the Georgian military commander in Batumi, General Dumbadze, for not having obeyed to Tbilisi's orders and took direct control of the 25th Brigade based in Batumi (Marten, 2012:79). In the meantime Abashidze was loosing the control of Ajara and of the support by the local elites, whereas Tbilisi's forces step by step took control of all the strategic centres. Abashidze eventually left the country on May 6, 2004, and Saakashvili re-gained the control over Ajara without firing a shot. Saakashvili's popularity allowed the president to make promises, which would allow him to gain support from this part of the country; yet, soon after the overthrow of Abashidze, Saakashvili appointed as governor of the region his old friend Levan Varshalomidze (he was

Saakashvili's personal representative to Ajara)(Marten, 2012:81), whom would have guaranteed territorial integrity and loyalty to his presidency.

For what concern Kvitsiani and the situation in the Upper Kodori, there were external pressures in order to not alter the state of affairs (Marten, 2012:91). However, Saakashvili decided in December 2004, after having settled down the situation in Ajara, to abolish the post of special representative to Upper Kodori held by Kvitsiani (Civil Georgia, 2004). This move, triggered harsh reaction in the region and Kvitsiani's militia decided to continue their "securitizing" operation even in the illegality. The situation degenerated and Kvitsiani launched an alarm to journalists saying that Tbilisi was ready to invade Upper Kodori with the army in order to gain the control of the region by force, thus violating the case-fire agreement of 1994 with Abkhazia. Russia intervened warning Saakashvili to avoid use of force in Upper Kodori. Notwithstanding these antecedents, on 25 July 2006 Tbilisi forces entered to Upper Kodori and arrested Kvitsiani in a special "police operation"[9]. The mission was accomplished with facility because according to Marten, "a successful deal was worked out by Saakashvili administration beforehand to woo Kvitsiani's supporter away from him" (Marten, 2012:94). Soon after the "police operation" Tbilisi was able to restore full control over the region that was renamed Upper Abkhazia. In the subsequently months, the government lavished the region with millions of dollars aimed at many projects of local developments.

Despite this swifts and smooth developments in dealing with Upper Kodori, Saakashvili's action kindled security and separatists stances in Abkhazia and consequently in Russia. Kvitsiani managed to escape soon after the arrest and then moved to Sukhumi under the protection of Russian forces (Marten, 2012:97). The August 2008 Russian-Georgian war saw the active participation of Abkhazian troops, which moved firstly into Upper Kodori. This region at the end of the war has been extremely contested, but in 2010 Kvitsiani's nephew took

[9] In spite of what declared by the Government regarding the "police operation", media and Russian Authorities spoke about a real "military operation" which would broke the agreement of 1994. Civil Georgia writes that "A military convoy of Georgian 30 Kamaz-type trucks, 18 Niva off-road cars and two armoured vehicles are moving towards Kodori gorge in breakaway Abkhazia" (Civil Georgia, 2006)

the political control of Upper Kodori (Marten, 2012: 99) demonstrating how the Saakashvili project over the region was illusory. Removing the actor playing the anchoring role proved to be fallacious, in addiction the re-organization of the vested interest throughout the new policies (such as the high promises of political and economic cooperation) did not work as supposed. Yet, Saakashvili was aware about the complex and dangerous situation with Abkhazia, but he was resolute to re-gain the full sovereignty of the country insofar it was a pillar of his consolidation's project. This strategic move would affect the integrity of its regime and weakened his position *vis à vis* some domestic actors. However, the Georgia-Russia war in August 2008 the "Cyprusization" of the contested regions allowed Saakashvili to remove elements of ambiguity[10] regarding his policy toward South Ossetia and Abkhazia (Papava, 2012; Nodia, 2012: 729). For Tbilisi the new interlocutor was Moscow, and no more local leaderships (warlords) in both the regions, which from that time on were considered as Russian's proxy regimes.

In terms of the consolidation of the hybrid regime regarding the political sphere, Saakashvili adopted several provisions, which made clear that he was not following policies aimed at democratize the country, but instead they were aimed at strengthening the President's powers. One of the first acts Saakashvili accomplished was passing amendments of the constitutions, which allowed him to dissolute the parliament in case of necessity and deprived it with the power to amend the budget or to question the government's annual report on budgetary obligations (Dolidze, 2007), thus limiting the separation of power. According to some analysts (Fairbanks and Gugushvili, 2013; Filippini, 2005; Di Quirico, 2013), Russian presidential model would have inspired Saakashvili constitutional reform (as well as other cases such as Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan), which granted the executive with extraordinary powers. Saakashvili was able to carry out these reforms thanks to a political unity that conceded him unusual liberties to act. One of the key players in securing this

[10] Such as the problem of the integration of the separatists regions in the country (which was the postponed to the indefinite future), and the role of Russia, which before the conflict pretended to be recognized as neutral power.

favouring environment was the United National Movement (UNM) – Saakashvili political machine, considered a "party of power" (Wheatley, 2010: 351) for its role in including many important Georgian stakeholders. The United National Movement always rejected accusations of merger with the state apparatus (Nodia; Scholtbach, 2006:57), in fact many of newly appointed high-level figures came from close circles that gravitated around Saakashvili and his party: Kakha Lomania (Minister of Education and former member of SOROS foundation), Giga Bokeria and Givi Targamadze (entered into parliament, before they both worked at Liberty Institue), Vano Merabishvili (Minister of internal affairs and previously Secretary general of Saakashvili National Movement); as Muskhelishvili and Jorjolani claim, soon after the Rose Revolution the UNM was able to encroach "upon the sphere of almost all civil society institutions: university organizations, and professional union (Muskhelishvili and Jorjolani, 2009:694). In addiction, in the first two years of the Saakashvili presidency there has been a massive turnover in the public administration, around 20.000 among policeman, tax collector and custom officers were removed from their posts and replaced by people from the civil society (Timm, 2012:174). Thanks to this huge operation the government polished up those institutions that were crucial for the Shevardnadze neo-patrimonial system.

All those invasive policies were justified by the government that stressed that they were caused by requirements of radical reform in the state apparatus and the need to uproot corruption (Nodia; Scholtbach, 2006:57). Yet, the UNM was becoming, even more than in Shevardnadze era, the centre for the distribution of posts and offices, the hub for the informal networks that underpinned Saakashvili's regime. A high level of rotation characterized the mechanism of appointing civil servants, state officials and administrative staff. As Timm explains, "the unpredictability of rotation ensures that actors seek to hedge their power base not within the subsystem they currently command but towards the ruling elite" (Timm 2012:176) in this way it allowed both the prevention of the creation of oppositions' streams and the strengthening of informal relationships. Thus, as Timm continues, "the Saakashvili's administration fell back on another proven instrument – the installation of a governmental party as political

machine. This decision triggered a new cycle of neopatrimonial relationship" (Timm 2012:177). Saakashvili therefore did not want to proceed toward a real democratization of the country, instead it re-constructed informal networks and institutional manipulations, which re-consolidated the hybridity of the Georgian political system.

However, Saakashvili's government faced a first massive political crisis in the fall of 2007, when part of the Georgian population started to manifest openly against the lack of representation within the state apparatus. As a matter of facts, one of the main failures of the Saakashvili administration was the population's impossibility to participate in the political sphere, even at local level (Jawad, 2008: 152). This triggered the feelings of powerless and betrayal among the population excluded by the Saakashvili's political machine. Notwithstanding people disaffections, the crisis was initiated by the arrest of a former member of the government, Irakli Okruashvili[11], who announced the creation of an opposition party (Movement of United Georgia). Soon after the launch of his party, Okruashvili was detained with several charges concerning his period in office as Defence minister; in response to this, many members of parliament passed to the opposition's seats inflating the ranks of the United Public Movement. This political group organized one of the largest manifestations in contemporary Georgia, which ended up in violent clashes with police. The government declared the state of emergency and some opposition media were closed down; Saakashvili resigned and new presidential elections were scheduled for January 8, 2008. Despite international observers described the election as "democratic" (OSCE/ODIHR 2008:2) Saakashvili was re-elected, with 53% of the vote, in an election marred by the absence of a second round, it wan moreover characterized by massively state resources used for campaigning in Saakashvili favour, by implausible voter turnout, by selective cancellation of election results and by other institutional manipulations concerning voting and elections procedures (OSCE/ODIHR 2008).

[11] Okruashvili was the former minister of Defence and was very popular among the population

For the sake of the argument it is important to note that despite some defections among the ranks of the incumbent elite, most of the stakeholders and politicians remained closed to Saakashvili and to UNM, demonstrating how well functioning was the rotation system established by the President. Tensions with the opposition remained until the end of the Saakashvili era: the opposition parties suffered many attempts to be co-opt, marginalized and divided, and in fact on the eve of the parliamentary election in 2012 none would imagine that there would be other political parties able to challenge the Saakashvili's National Movement. Moreover, for what concern the presidential election in 2013, the President of Georgia was securing his power through a Constitutional reform that would allow the prime minister to acquire more prerogative *vis à vis* the President of the Republic; as a matter of fact, due to legal provision Saakashvili was unable to re-run for a new mandate as a president of the republic: with the new constitutional reform, Saakashvili attempted to follow the example of Putin-Medvedev tandem.

It is noteworthy at this point, in order to have a comprehensive understanding of the Saakashvili regime, to reflect on the effects that the short war with Russia had on Saakashvili's regime. Despite attempts to provoke a regime change by some opposition groups (Nodia, 2012), the war with Russia was not a major source of instability for the government; taking into consideration data from Caucasus Barometer concerning "trust in the president" it shows that since 2008 the percentage of people that trusted or fully trusted the president was constantly rising till 2012[12]. According to Nodia, "save for the separatist regions, the results of the war were not as dramatic as the initial shock had suggested" (Nodia, 2012: 723); As a matter of facts, if we take into consideration the first source of concerns for Georgian people in 2008 it was territorial integrity (20%) followed by relations with Russia (16%), whereas issues such as fairness of elections or corruption were at the bottom of the list (with respectively 3% fairness of elections and 6% corruption) (data from Caucasus Barometer 2008). However the "shock of war" lasted for a short period of time, already in 2009 the

[12] Figures concerning people trusting and fully trusting the president (total) 2008: 51%; in 2009: 48; in 2010: 56%; in 2011: 58% (data from Caucasus barometer)

biggest issue of concern for Georgian was unemployment at 33%, and relation with Russia fell to a mere 5% (Caucasus Barometer, 2009). In addiction the Georgian government could profit from at least two main developments: the first one was the renewed popular support, given that Georgian people blamed Russia to have started the war; secondly Georgia benefited of a huge assistant aid package from the West (around 4.5 million dollars), which allowed the country to suffer less, in the short run, from the global economic crisis compared to the other regional economies (Papava, 2012: 64). In terms of international relations, the war enhanced the Western attention toward the country (almost 60% of people endorsed NATO membership for Georgia in 2009 – data from Caucasus Barometer, 2009), in particular cooperation with the EU became more important and in June 2011 negotiation for the Association Agreements were launched.

Lead Georgia toward the West and on the path of a prosperous liberal future were two of the major linchpins of Saakashvili's rhetoric. As a matter of facts Saakashvili's regime differed from Shevardnadze's one also for what concern the ideological justification of government's policies. Libertarianism and modernisation were the fortes of United National Movements, even with an authoritarian outlook (Jobelius, 2012). According to Jobelius this ideology would served for at least three goals: first of all the ideology could justify the strengthening of power through modernization's imperatives; secondly the ideology provided with clear-cut relationship with like-minded people, subsequently furnishing the incumbent elite with stigmatising arguments against those who "did not want Georgia to become modern"; thirdly Libertarianism helped the government to cope with undesirable coalition of players or stakeholders. Truly, Georgia became pointed as a successful example by international observer, which endorsed the reforms, including the most controversial: the labour code reform. Thanks to the so-called neo-liberal reforms Georgia scaled from the 112th position in 2005 to 12th position in the *Doing Business*'s chart.

With the 2009 Economic Liberty Act, the government sought to strengthen the international status of Georgian economy thanks to some provision aimed at

removing obstacle to external investments, to avoid price regulations and to avoid the introduction of further regulatory institutions. However, according to some critics there were no urgencies to adopt these provisions, in particular because Georgia already had a law on foreign investments and management of profits since 13 years at that time (Papava, 2012: 66). Beside this act that was in line with liberal economist receipts, the government was domestically adopting a political economy that was all but liberal. Some of the so-called "rosy mistakes" as former minister of Georgian economy, Vladimer Papava, labelled them included: illegal sales of state properties, restriction of competitions, violation of property, manipulation of statistical data, plan to reduce the independence of the National Bank of Georgia (Papava, 2012). Therefore, substantial interventions on the economy through non-liberal measures characterized Saakashvili's economic agenda. In addiction, doing business in Georgia was affected by the arbitrarily decision of the UNM, which was determinant in: keeping alive informal practices and networks (Aliyev, 2014), providing access to certain markets (Timm, 2012: 176), and carrying out property expropriation (Christiansen, 2006). With a judiciary power not fully independent (Ditrych, 2013), the absence of social rights for employees and violation of property right Georgia was an example of authoritarian liberalist country (Jobelius, 2012: 88). To sum up, business in Georgia was possible as long as entrepreneurs or investors were not financing or helping opposition's movements.

Despite the government attempted to harshly control all the opposition activities, one member of the economic elite, Bidzina Ivanishvili, started to challenge Saakashvili's administration. Ivanishvili is one of the richest Georgian oligarchs, which amassed a vast fortune during the privatization era in early 90s in Russia and since October 2011 he started campaigning against Saakashvili through its new political party, called "Georgian Dream" (GD), for the parliamentary election in 2012. In one of his first written statement Ivanshivili openly condemned Saakashvili's management, saying that "Actually no free business exists in Georgia because of the unprecedented pressure exerted on the Georgian business through use of tax [service], prosecutor's office and judiciary – it [the market] is totally controlled by the Saakashvili group with its financial

revenues; aggressive dispersals of protest rallies, cruel beating of protesters and their persecution has become a norm" (Civil Georgia, October 7, 2011). At the outset the Georgian Dream was not a unified political actor with policy positions really defined, instead it was more a network of people that started to be disgusted by Saakashvili's presidency (Fairbanks, Gugushvili, 2013). As a matter of facts, for the first time the economy indicators in 2009 showed a negative outlook (Georgia GDP Annual Growth Rate -4%[13]) and illegal economic practices as long as lively corruption started to nullify government's attempts to reinvigorate the economy: foreign investors stopped to invest in the country, and the task to fight poverty through economic development failed (Fairbanks, Gugushvili, 2013).

Saakashvili's government started to be attacked for its policies both concerning the economy and the civil and political liberties. The government re-acted trying to discredit first of all Ivanishvili (by spying into his computer and private life in order to gather material for a *kompromat*, and by depriving him from his Georgian citizenship); subsequently the government issued a law limiting expenditure for campaigning contribution, it inflicted more than $ 125 million in fine to GD for irregularities in financing activities. This led to Saakashvili declaring in August 2012 that GD was not in line with the legal standard concerning the election's rule and thus was barred from running for the election. However, soon after Saakashvili retracted. Fearing possible negative consequences both from his western supporters and from Georgian people, Saakashvili did not dare to fully "eliminate" Ivanshivili and his party from the political arena (Fairbanks and Gugushvili, 2013). Saakashvili was affected and thus limited, when he had to deal with Ivanshivili, by the high level of western leverage and by his rhetoric on the democratic development of the country (Fairbanks and Gugushvili, 2013; Levitsky and Way, 2010).

This episode shed lights on how difficult is ruling and holding the power in a hybrid regimes, where fine and well tuned balances of power are extremely important in keeping the different elements of the pyramids of power bound

[13] Source: CIA World Factbook

together. According to Fairbanks "Saakashvili and his lieutenants found that they had imprisoned themselves in a box of democratic rules" (Fairbanks and Gugushvili, 2013:121) and they could not avoid to ultimately obey to them. Otherwise they would not be able to maintain their "democratic" outlook neither toward the West, nor toward the people. As Schedler points out, institutional manipulation might serve to preserve power, but at the same time it may provoke negative consequences for the incumbents; therefore it is a matter of finding the right "manipulative equilibria" (Schedler, 2013: 269) in order to cope with current challenges and avoid future rebounds.

Saakashvili did not find the right equilibria and at the 2012 parliamentary election Georgian Dream won the majority of seats (55%), whereas UNM garnered just 40.3%. Saakashvili soon after declared that the UNM lost the elections and he recognized the victory of the party led by Ivanshivili. Among the rank of the UNM party some prominent personalities started to abandon Saakashvili (such as the ministries of Defence, Justice and Interior). Ivanshivili was elected as prime minister of the country and he stayed in power until the Presidential election scheduled for November 2013. In the presidential elections of 2013, the first after the constitutional reforms passed by Saakashvili, the candidate of GD – Giorgi Margvelashvili, won the election with 62% of the vote, whereas the candidate of the UNM - Davit Bakradze – just garnered 22%. This was the first time for Georgia to experience an alternation of power without *coup* or revolution since its independence. However, it is still too early to judge whether this alternation can be seen as a real path toward democracy or is still a re-structuration of hybridity. According to Fairbanks there are persisting ambiguities in the way GD is managing the country and he stresses "the importance that the crucial decisions about Georgia's direction are not going to be made in churches, business offices, or student or NGO meeting rooms, but rather in the halls of formal politics." (Fairbanks, 2014:165) because Georgian people seemed too scared to take a clear road. This corroborate the formulation of this article, where it is emphasised the role of the elites in determining and consolidating the regime of the country.

Continuity and change

There are many differences between Shevardnadze style and Saakashvili style, however both ruled a country for most a decade and did not transform it into a fully democracy or a hegemonic autocracy. Both suffered from institutional and informational uncertainties and they both tried to cope with those shortcomings through institutional manipulation. Both the presidencies could rely on a dense mechanism of anchors, which were able to keep stakeholders, civil society and ethnic bound together.

Therefore, Georgia, despite it never become a fully autocracy or a fully democracy it experienced a long period of consolidation: it consolidated as hybrid regime. This process was characterized by a double step of consolidation because as far as elites are concerned, they played a fundamental role in assuring the durability of the system. Thus, alternations in power, despite rare, can occur and provoke a deep re-structuration and re-balancing of stakeholders and vested interests. The anchors must be re-built and re-organized. There is continuity beneath all the arrays: this is proved by the constancy in avoiding the full enter into force of a real rule of law and by the continuity to underpin the system with informal practices such as neo-patrimonialistic networks and institutional manipulation. The substantial outcome is that the elites involved in this process become over time aware about those practices and contributed to the consolidation of the hybridity of the system. Therefore, despite the different president's style, we found similarities in the way the two presidents managed the various elites and stakeholders even if the Rose Revolution determined a massive spoil system within the state branches.

Concerning the linchpins taken into consideration in this analysis, warlords and integrity of the territory, fragmentation of the political actors, and relationship between political and economic elites, it is possible to verify that: warlords and territorial integrity were fundamental to the consolidation of power in both cases; Shevardnadze included local warlords in his system of anchors, whereas Saakashvili openly contrasted them causing eventually an intra-states conflict; after that the warlords have been replaced as interlocutor by Russian

counterparts. Yet, the "Cyprusization" of the situation lies on further possible developments of Georgia in the Western sphere of influence and in its attempts to escape from Russia's shadow. For what concern the fragmentation of political actors it is possible to observe how despite the highly-fragmented political landscape, both Shevardnadze and Saakashvili succeed in consolidating their power *vis à vis* other political actors through a impressive system of co-optation, corruption and neo-patrimonial mechanisms of domination. The ability of the two presidents in anchoring the other societal and political actors assured them to dispose of high-level of loyalties and to develop informal practices and mechanism of institutional manipulation that are fundamental to consolidate power in a context of democratic rule of law. However, they both missed to fully manage a key element in the country: the economy and the business elites. This might be seen as one of the most challenging task to be manipulated and thus controlled. One reason is that, as Hale points out, in hybrid regimes there is "lower level of business confidence because of authorities systemically politicized business (Hale, 2011:40). Therefore for what concerns the capacity of the anchoring mechanism of the Shevardnadze and Saakashvili presidencies it is possible to conclude that they were lacking a strong grip on the economic sector. This analysis is in line with what Scott Radnitz that recognized economic pluralism as key elements that characterizes and differentiates post-communist countries and theirs political developments. According to Radnitz when business elites believe "that a change in the status quo benefit them, they [have] form[ed] tactical alliances with opposition activists and parties to help unseat the ruling elite" (Radnitz, 2010:127), without necessarily looking for a real change in the form of government. In Georgia, it happened in both cases that economic actors were not satisfied with the economy and they put the presidencies under pressure, this in turn provoked the crisis of the elite in power. Despite a "Rose Revolution" we did not assist a democratic breakthrough, but simply an alternation of power in line with the normal dynamics of patronal presidentialism observed by Hale. In this sense, we might observe that the anchors related to the government-private relations in hybrid regimes, are the most fragile as these connections are extremely volatile and unpredictable. Similar dynamics characterized the rise and the fall of ruling elites also in

Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan. Therefore, I am convinced that further explorations of the relationships among incumbents and business elites in hybrid regimes are necessary in order to enhance the understanding of this kind of regime and how they consolidate.

Conclusion

In this paper I investigated and demonstrated how incumbents consolidate the hybridity of their regime through anchoring mechanism that became the support for their power. This kind of regime has been only recently under the lens of the academic research. In order to analyse it I adopted a theory coming from the democratization studies to further investigate mechanism of consolidation in non-democratic country, and I took Georgia as a case study.

Prima facie evidences that the theory of anchoring might be helpful to study hybrid regimes came from elitist theory and recent analysis of the "Coloured Revolution". Furthermore, I realised that thanks to the Theory of Anchoring it is possible to analyse how and to what extent incumbents are able to maintain their grip on the society and on the stakeholders of the country.

The most important results are twofold. The first one is that this paper aimed to further explain how even in hybrid regime there is a process of consolidation, and thus providing a contribution in the academic debate regarding democratization or de-democratization processes. As a matter of facts, this paper further contributes to the conceptualization of hybridity as a regime with specific characteristics, in particular showing that despite what occur in democracies, the consolidation process might occur every time there is an alternation of power. The validity of this statement needs further investigation in other cases of alternations of power without a real change in the political system. Only in this way it will be possible to verify whether the re-consolidation period can be identified as a key characteristic of hybrid regimes. The second one is that there is a theoretical framework, the theory of anchoring, which can be used to study even non-democratic processes. As the article demonstrated the anchors

are even more important when there is a low level of legitimization. Lacking a specific theoretical framework aimed at analyse hybrid regime, I consider this paper an attempt to overcome the lack of a specific theoretical framework aimed at study hybrid regime as such.

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