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Two Decades, Two Theories

Stagnation of Democratic Development in Georgia

1. Introduction

Georgia separated from the Soviet Union in 1991 (Wheatley 2005, 50-55). After initial unrest Eduard Shevardnadze became president (Wheatley 2005, 67). Since the country started to move from autocracy towards democracy, in the period between the seventies and the late nineties, Georgia is considered to be part of the Third Wave of Democratisation (Diamond 1999, 1-2). Soon after independence the country's orientation became focused westward, and in 2003, it seemed to move even further towards becoming a liberal democracy. In that year the Rose Revolution ended the Shevardnadze government, after the Georgian people pressed for a more democratic, and less corrupt system. Opposition leader Mikhail Saakashvili succeeded Shevardnadze as president (Wheatley 2005, 190-205).

Soon after the peaceful revolution, progress on the democratisation continuum scale halted. On one end of this scale are autocracies, and on the other liberal democracies. The level of democracy is determined by several civil liberties and political rights indicators (Freedom House 2011). According to the most recent Nations In Transit report, Georgia has barely improved its democracy score in the period from 2003 until 2011 (Aprasidze 2011, 215). In the Bertelsmann Index Georgia also remains stable, at a Democracy Status of 6.2, on a scale of 1 to 10, where 10 is the most democratic (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2012). When looking at Georgia's Freedom House scores, it seems that in the two decades after independence, the political rights and civil liberties scores of the country have remained stable (Freedom House 2012). This stability happened despite the wish of Georgia's current government to make their homeland a democracy modelled on the United States and Western European countries (Asmus 2010, 111-140). In the period that Georgia stalled in its democratisation process, other former Soviet countries that were part of the Third Wave, such as Estonia and Lithuania, became consolidated democracies (Merkel 2011, 59-70), while Georgia's immediate neighbours, Armenia and Azerbaijan, remained significantly less democratic (Aprasidze 2011, 39).

After previous democratisation waves across the globe, a reverse wave of partial democratic breakdown has taken place. Some expect to see a similar movement in Third Wave countries (Diamond 1999, 2). This idea is expressed, for instance, in Laverty's article on the problem of lasting change following the Colour Revolutions.

He suggests that electoral revolutions only cause a temporary alteration in the democratic content of a country (Laverty 2008, 143-162). A reversal towards autocracy however, is not what seems to be happening in Georgia. As described, Georgia's democracy score has remained stable at a level between autocracy and liberal democracy, after having moved somewhat towards the democratic side of the spectrum in the early nineties (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2012). The aforementioned facts lead to the following research question:

What factors explain the stagnation of democratic development in Georgia, in the period under the rule of presidents Shevardnadze and Saakashvili?

In order to be able to answer the question posed, two theories that attempt to explain democratisation, or the lack thereof, are discussed; they are presidential power theory and Carother's revised transition paradigm. The two theories suggest different institutional and structural factors that influence the chances of development towards liberal democracy. A large part of this paper is an analysis of the presence of indicators of these factors in Georgia during the aforementioned time period. After elaborating on the theories and the presence of indicators of their factors, we can conclude if one of the theories can explain the Georgian case.

2 Theory

2.1 Presidential Power Theory

The theory that is first discussed here is the presidential power theory. This theory is often cited when democratisation in post-communist countries is researched, but it is also applied more generally.

The most prominent factor influencing chances of democratisation according to presidential power theory, is the amount of power vested in the office of president. The concept 'power' here entails both formal and informal authority. It describes in how far the executive power is centralised in the office of president as well as in those political actors close to him, e.g. his cabinet. Furthermore, the amount of power is

partly determined by how extensive the influence of the president is on the legislative and judiciary branches of government (Beliaev 2006, 389-395).

The larger the amount of presidential power is, the lower the chances of successful democratisation are. This does not mean that a presidential system with large power vested in the office of president is in itself intrinsically undemocratic. However, large presidential power does cause clear obstacles, that stand in the way of successful democratic development. An important aspect of liberal democracy is the rule of law (Diamond 1999, 10-13). When the executive branch is relatively strong, compared to the legislative and judiciary ones, the importance of the law comes under pressure. Unrestricted executive presidential power is strongly related to less political freedom and a poor human rights record (Beliaev 2006, 389-395). Furthermore, if legislative and/or judiciary rights are added to large presidential power, the lack of independence of the branches of government negatively influences the check on the executive and the democratic performance of the state (Beliaev 2006, 389-395). A strong legislative branch can act as a check on the president and hold him accountable for his actions (Fish 2006, 18).

From the mechanisms underlying the negative effect of the presidential power factor on democratic development, follow two mitigating factors that, if present, increase the chances of successful democratisation. One of these is decentralisation (Diamond 1999, 117-120). By transferring authority to lower levels of government, the relative amount of power vested in the office of president decreases. Even if there still is large power at the executive branch, relative to the legislative and judiciary ones, or the president has arbiter power in those branches of government, decentralisation increases the weight of vertical checks on the presidency. Shifting power towards local officials makes the public administration more visible to and accessible for citizens (Diamond 1999, 121-132).

The second mitigating factor is the proportionality of the electoral system. Even in a system where the president is vested with large authority over the legislative branch, proportional representation in parliament ensures at least some competitiveness in politics (Baliaev 2006, 395). Single member district regimes lead to the opposite result. They tend to cause one-party dominance in parliament, underrepresentation of societal diversity, and an uncompetitive party system (Birch 2005, 295-296).

2.2 Carothers' Revised Transition Paradigm

Another theory that explains democratisation is Carothers' revised transition paradigm. His set of assumptions takes into account that it is possible to remain stable in what he calls the "grey zone", between non-democracy and liberal democracy (Carothers 2002, 17-20). The chances of successful democratisation are determined by two main factors (Carothers 2002, 15-17).

The first of these factors is state-building. Theories on democratisation often focus on diffusing power, instead of on building a functioning state. Carothers' claim is that policies directed at the redistribution of power, weakening the power of the executive branch, and promoting decentralisation, are lowering the chances of democratisation by neglecting the institutional framework necessary for a liberal democracy to consolidate (Carothers 2002, 16-17).

The other factor that determines the chances of successful democratisation is the presence of favourable structural conditions. These are the level and the concentration of wealth, sociocultural traditions, and the amount of experience with political pluralism in society. 'Sociocultural conditions' is a term that describes a wide range of subfactors, such as having equal and fair access to public services, the level of support for democratic ideals, the level of regard for politicians, etc. The structural conditions determine the gulf between political elites and citizens. When the general public is not considered poor and has experience with political pluralism, the income inequality is low, and sociocultural conditions are not an obstruction to democracy, the chances of democratic consolidation are high. If, however, most of these conditions are not met, electoral competition cannot overcome them (Carothers 2002, 15-16).

Countries that are 'stuck' in the grey zone, because of factors that prevent further democratisation, can be classified in either the feckless pluralism, or the dominant power politics category (Carothers 2002, 11-14). In states that are described by feckless pluralism, there is a form of pluralism, but it is ineffective. Political freedom exists, elections are held regularly, and power alternates. At the same time there is little political participation, high corruption, and people are disaffected from politics. It is seen as stale, corrupt and elite-dominated. The state remains weak and unable to

deliver on any problem facing the country, e.g. economic performance is substandard and the security of citizens is not guaranteed (Carothers 2002, 11-14).

The second syndrome, dominant power politics, is claimed to be commonly found in former Soviet Union countries. In a political system that follows a dominant power politics pattern, even though there might be some political space for opposition groups, and basic democratic institutions exist, there is only one dominant political grouping and no alternation of power. The line between the leading party and the state almost disappears. Elections are fraudulent, and because of decaying bureaucracy this type of state executes its everyday tasks poorly (Carothers 2002, 11-14).

2.3 Two Theories

The two aforementioned general theories, namely the presidential power theory, and Carothers' revised transition paradigm, may both have clear merit in answering the proposed research question. At some points however, the theories cannot coexist. The first theory calls for decreasing the power of the executive, to raise chances of democratisation. The second theory sees this redistribution of power as detrimental to successful democratisation. These assumptions cannot be both true in one case at the same time. Which theory explains the Georgian case better will be elaborated upon in this paper.

2.4 Case Selection: Theories and Georgia

Georgia, while being part of the Third Wave of democratisation (Diamond 1999, 1-2), has stalled on its path towards liberal democracy (Aprasidze 2011, 215). This makes it a suitable case to be studied with the previously mentioned two theories in hand, since they both suggest factors that influence the chances of successful democratisation. In Carothers' terms, the country is stuck in the grey zone. Moreover, indicators of both theories are present in the Georgian case. Georgia is, for instance, a country where, ever since its independence, the office of president has possessed relatively large power, compared to the legislative and judiciary branches of government (Global Security 2011). The amount of power that is concentrated in the president is an

important factor in presidential power theory. At the same time structural factors, that might indicate the merit of Carothers' revised transition paradigm, such as high income inequality, were also present in Georgia under Shevardnadze and Saakashvili (CIA 2012).

3 Methodology

The method used to answer the research question is a literature study. In this study, the primary focus was on finding to what extent the two theories, that were described earlier, can explain the stagnation of democratic development in Georgia. Information has been collected from a number of different sources. Some of the data, dealing with the institutional and structural conditions in Georgia, was found via Freedom House and the Bertelsmann Index. Information on the economy and development of the Georgian gross domestic product (GDP) and gross national income (GNI), needed to review Carothers' revised transition paradigm in Georgia, is provided on the World Bank's website (The World Bank 2012) and in the CIA World Factbook (CIA 2012). To review some other structural conditions, such as the Georgian people's views on democracy, the Georgian National Survey, conducted in 2010, was used (iri 2010). Previously published articles on Georgia's democratic development were carefully considered.

It needs to be noted that, while the subject of research is a single country, two distinct time periods will be analyzed separately. The political realities under the rule of Shevardnadze, and under that of Saakashvili, differ to such an extent that they deserve to be dealt with individually.

4 Theories Applied

In order to assess the merit of each of the two theories in the Georgian context and to make for a clear argument, the aforementioned separation of time periods will be incorporated in this report in the following manner: for each theory, the presence of indicators of the associated factors in Georgia, and their most probable effect, is described in a chronological fashion. First the factors of presidential power theory

(the amount of power vested in the office of president, the level of decentralisation and the proportionality of the electoral system) present during the time that Shevardnadze was in power will be analyzed, followed by factors in the same period that influence chances of successful democratisation according to Carothers' revised transition paradigm (state-building and the presence of structural conditions). The same order will be maintained when analysing the merit of the aforementioned theories in Georgia after the Rose Revolution. A conclusion about which factors caused stagnation of democratic development in Georgia can then indicate which theory explains the Georgian case best. In conclusion I will indicate which factors caused stagnation of democratic development in Georgia and which theory explains the Georgian case best.

4.1 Presidential Power Theory applied to Shevardnadze

Georgia became independent in 1991, after having been a part of the Soviet Union. Following a brief period with democratically elected, but autocratically ruling Zviad Gamsakhurdia as president, civil war broke out (Wheatley 2005, 60-70). The president was disposed and, via a military council, former Soviet minister of foreign affairs Eduard Shevardnadze became the new Georgian leader in 1992. Three years later he was officially elected president (Wheatley 2005, 67-76).

The system under Shevardnadze's rule can be considered to be a strong presidential system. The president had power that was much larger than the power of any other political institution or person in the country. One of the special rights of president Shevardnadze, was a personal right to exclusively manage the executive branch (Chiaberashvili, and Tevzadze 2005, 188-189). This meant he could personally appoint people to any position in the state administration. The administration could then act without any parliamentary control (Country-Data 1994). According to the presidential power theory, such a right would impair the chances of successful democratisation.

When the office of president holds special legislative authorities, this also contributes to the presidential power factor (Beliaev 2006, 389-395). President Shevardnadze had such authorities. He had the right to preside over the parliament, and initiate

legislation, including constitutional changes. Since the absolute majority party in parliament consisted of supporters of the president, this essentially meant that the president had, if desired, almost absolute power over the executive and the legislative branch of government (Chiaberashvili, and Tevzadze 2005, 188-189). Furthermore, Shevardnadze had the right to rule by decree on economic policy, bypassing the parliament altogether (Country-Data 1994).

There were, however, some factors that mitigated Shevardnadze's powers. The president might have had large managerial powers over the executive branch, but government was not totally centralized. The Georgian constitution gave all local communities the right to govern themselves on regional issues. Shevardnadze kept some control over governors and other officials by (illegally) appointing them himself, but the regional governors received extensive autonomous rights (Chiaberashvili, and Tevzadze 2005, 196-198).

The amount of power of the president was mitigated by the fact that his government only controlled about seventy percent of the country. Abkhazia, South-Ossetia, and Achara were led by separatist governments. Georgia had some influence over the three regions, especially in Achara, but they mostly governed themselves autonomously. While this situation can not be seen as a purposefully organized decentralisation of government, since it happened under the threat of armed conflict, it still dispersed some governmental power to a lower level of government, diminishing the power held by the president (Mitchell 2009, 173). By the end of Shevardnadze's rule, the situation could no longer be considered as a form of decentralisation. Georgia's central government had lost any control it had over the three regions. They were *de facto* independent states (Mitchell 2009, 171).

In Georgia the electoral system was a mix between single mandate district majority voting and a party-list proportional representation system. Parliament had a fixed amount of 250 seats. While parties could enter parliament if they met the required threshold of four per cent of the votes, local candidates that won their district could enter even if their parties did not meet the national threshold (Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress 2012). According to presidential power theory, a proportional representation electoral system partly counterbalances the negative effect that large presidential power has on successful democratisation (Beliaev 2006, 395).

However, the positive effect of proportional representation was hindered, under Shevardnadze's rule, through electoral fraud. Especially in the later years of his presidency votes were bought and government supporters were allowed to vote multiple times, in order to ensure support for the president in parliament (Mitchell 2009, 174-175).

It seems then that presidential power theory does not offer a clear explanation for the Georgian democratic stagnation under Shevardnadze's rule. While formal and informal executive power was largely vested in the office of president, as well as special legislative rights, mitigating factors should have increased chances of successful democratisation. Even though the positive effect of a proportional representation regime was hindered by electoral fraud, the extensive autonomous rule of local officials, and the *de facto* decentralisation of government both lessened the weight of the presidential power factor.

Results presented in an article by John Ishiyama and Matthew Velten support this conclusion. After conducting research in post-communist countries, one of which was Georgia in the period of Shevardnadze's presidential terms, they found no systematic relationship between having large executive power concentrated at the office of president and stagnation of democratic development (Ishiyama, and Velten 1998, 230-232).

4.2 Carothers' Revised Transition Paradigm applied to Shevardnadze

After having analysed the presence of factors that fit the presidential power theory during Shevardnadze's terms in office, it is time to see to what extent factors that might help, or impede democratic progress, according to Carothers' revised transition paradigm, were in existence in that same period.

According to Carothers, one often overlooked factor, that is essential to having a chance of successful democratisation, is state-building. Under Shevardnadze the president had large executive power. This might seem to suggest that, with such a focus on presidential power, the state itself would also be powerful.

In reality Georgia was not (Chiaberashvili, and Tevzadze 2005, 188-189). While the government did not devolve power, it did not attempt to strengthen the state by implementing a detailed state-building strategy either. The policies of the Shevardnadze administration led to a very weak state, that was not able to perform its basic tasks. Education was of poor quality and unregulated. Health care facilities lacked proper supplies and equipment. Towards the end of Shevardnadze's time as president, services like running water and electricity were barely available, or not provided at all. Roads and bridges were not maintained.

Most importantly, public safety was not guaranteed. Since the police force did not get paid regularly, it became susceptible to bribes and corruption (Mitchell 2009, 171-173). Security forces, such as the police, are vital institutions in successful state-building. Also important to the strength of the state, and maybe even more so than having a reliable police force, is the presence of a properly functioning army. Just like the police force, Georgia's army had become weakened and corrupt, resulting from lack of payment (Mitchell 2009, 173). It seems fair to conclude that the policies of the Georgian government under president Shevardnadze did not result in the construction of a well-functioning, strong state. Carothers' state-building factor, a requirement for democratic progress (Carothers 2002, 16-17), was not present in Georgia at this time.

Besides a focus on state-building, structural conditions play an important role in Carothers' revised transition paradigm. One of these conditions is the level and the concentration of wealth. Wealthier countries, and especially those where wealth is not overly concentrated in the elites, have a higher chance of becoming a consolidated liberal democracy (Carothers 2002, 15-16). Throughout the nineties, and up until the Rose Revolution in 2003, Georgia's GNI stagnated, and remained relatively low compared to other European and Central Asian developing nations (The World Bank 2012). The little wealth available, was concentrated in the economic elites. Especially in the first half of the nineties the formerly prominent communists party members were effective rent-seekers. They accumulated their money from the state (Chiaberashvili, and Tevzadze 2005, 194-195). As regards the level and concentration of wealth in Shevardnadze's Georgia, the structural condition that would lead to an increased chance of democratisation in Carothers' revised transition paradigm was far from met.

Experience with and support for democratic values and institutions, are also considered to be strong indicators for increased chances of democratic transition (Carothers 2002, 15-16). The only experience that Georgia had with being a democracy was between 1918 and 1921, when Georgia enjoyed a short period of independence from Russia (Wheatley 2005, 98). Virtually no Georgians had any experience with democratic values and institutions when their country became independent in 1991. Most of the people that lived in Georgia in the beginning of the nineties, were born under Soviet rule (Wheatley 2005, 54).

Lack of experience does not necessarily mean that popular support for democracy is low. Research has shown that the public in the Soviet Union, just before its collapse, supported democratic norms and institutions in high numbers (Duch, Gibson, and Tedin 1992, 341-344).

The strongest predictor of democratic attitudes, was level of education (Duch, Gibson, and Tedin 1992, 359). At first glance it appears this might have made the Georgian people relatively negative in their support for democracy compared to other Third Wave countries in Eastern Europe and Asia, since school enrolment levels collapsed in Georgia in the Shevardnadze years (The World Bank 2012). However, the collapse happened only after Shevardnadze came to power. At the beginning of his rule the educational level played no negative role in support for democracy. The attitude towards democracy was high in all former Soviet Union nations, including Georgia (Duch, Gibson, and Tedin 1992, 341-344).

Among the sociocultural traditions that are determining factors in Carothers' revised transition paradigm, is the relationship between the body politic and citizens. When access to political actors and state resources has been historically possible without bribery, patronage or clientelism being involved, this has a positive effect on the chances of democratisation (Carothers 2002, 15). In the Soviet Union rent-granting was commonplace. This led to rent-seeking behaviour and corruption Rosefielde 2005, 4-10). This aspect of the Soviet system was continued in Georgia under president Shevardnadze. The relationship between the executives and their supporters, instead of being based on ideology, was consequently built on rent-seeking. Access to public services was achieved through bribery and personal connections (Spirova

2008, 79-80). By 2003, the year that marked the end of Shevardnadze's rule, Georgia was one of the most corrupt countries in the world (Spirova 2008, 79-81).

Carothers' revised transition paradigm can explain the stagnation of democratic progress during Shevardnadze's terms in office. Georgia, in that period, did not meet the conditions for successful democratisation. According to the theory this then led to the country not progressing towards a liberal democracy, but in the words of Carothers, Georgia was stable in the grey zone, between autocracy and liberal democracy (Carothers 2002, 17-20). It follows that it should be possible to assign Shevardnadze's Georgia to either the feckless pluralism or the dominant power politics category. Even though dominant power politics is said to be more common in former Soviet countries, at least in this period, Georgia is more aptly described by feckless pluralism. The country had an ineffective system of pluralism, while at the same time the public enjoyed ample political freedoms, e.g. freedom of association and freedom of the press (Mitchell 2009, 174). Elections were held regularly, but were tainted by electoral fraud. A large majority of the public thought of almost all public officials as being corrupt (Spirova 2008, 80). The weakness of the state was obvious, since it could not perform its most basic tasks, as already described earlier (Mitchell 2009, 171-173). The only feature of feckless pluralism that was not found in Georgia is the alternation of power between different political groupings. Shevardnadze was in power from 1992 until 2003, without interruption, while enjoying support from a majority in parliament (Wheatley 2005, 67; 190-205).

4.3 Presidential Power after the Rose Revolution

After the fraudulent presidential and parliamentary elections of 2000 and 2003, Eduard Shevardnadze was forced by popular revolt to resign as president of Georgia (Mitchell 2009, 174-175). The leader of the opposition, Mikheil Saakashvili, led the peaceful protest, now known as the Rose Revolution. In January 2004, after hastily organized elections, Saakashvili was chosen as Georgia's new president with an overwhelming majority of 96 percent of the vote (Tatum 2009, 156-157). The new government announced to fight, amongst others, the widespread corruption and fraud, which were ever present in the country, and to make Georgia a westward-facing country. Saakashvili claimed he wanted his country to be modelled on European and

North-American democracies, to such a degree that it would be able to join both NATO and the EU (Asmus 2010, 56-57). It seems that this was an ambition the new administration sincerely held, since Georgia actually attempted to join NATO. Its membership application was officially decided on in 2008 in Bucharest, where the member states promised, but postponed Georgian NATO membership (Asmus 2010, 111-140).

However, even though NATO members seriously considered granting membership, Georgia's democracy score has not shown significant improvement in the period after Shevardnadze was ousted from public office (Freedom House 2012).

Unlike might be expected from a self proclaimed democrat, Saakashvili did not limit the executive power that the president possessed. If anything, he increased the executive power his office held. Constitutional changes, that were implemented shortly after the 2004 elections concentrated formal power in the president, even more than before. He attained the right to appoint a multitude of officials, ranging from all cabinet members, to university administrators (Mitchell 2006, 672). It must be noted here that informally Shevardnadze already had these powers (Chiaberashvili, and Tevzadze 2005, 196-198).

That being the case, Saakashvili also attained powers that his predecessor never had. The president gained the power to, in certain situations, disband parliament and call for elections (Mitchell 2006, 672). The president sometimes bypasses the parliament altogether and rules by decree on any key subject (Mitchell 2012, 98). The amount of formal executive rights that the Georgian president received and still has at his disposal is so vast, that some characterize the situation as "superexecutivism" (Tatum 2009, 160).

When parliament demanded the constitutionally mandated parliamentary elections in 2008, the opposition parties were hoping to increase their numbers. They wanted a more powerful legislative, in order to keep a better check on the executive branch. By first quickly organising presidential elections, Saakashvili gave the opposition less time to organize, and he gave himself a head start for both elections (Tatum 2009, 163-164). It appears that Saakashvili uses the superexecutive powers he has to retain his position in a way that lets him have informal control of the legislative branch of government.

Some mitigating factors, that counterbalanced the negative effects on democratisation of the presidential power factor when Shevardnadze was president, have changed since the transfer of power to president Saakashvili. Of the three regions that were part of the Georgian territory, but not under full Georgian control, one is back under the influence of the central government. While still being somewhat autonomous, Achara, a part of the country close to Turkey, where about ten percent of the Georgian population live, is no longer under separatist rule. Soon after taking office, the Saakashvili administration regained control of the region (Mitchell 2009, 177-178).

The same cannot be said about the two other separatist regions, Abkhazia and South-Ossetia. From the start Saakashvili's government had no control over these two territories (Mitchell 2009, 171). In 2008 a five day war was fought between Georgia and the two regions, who were supported by Russian troops. Georgia, that used to have peacekeeping forces on the ground in the two regions, now has none (Asmus 2010, 171-188). The war has resulted in a situation where Abkhazia and South-Ossetia are recognized as independent countries by Russia, that backs the two regions militarily and politically (IISS 2008, 1-2). For all intents and purposes Abkhazia and South-Ossetia can now be considered as fully independently functioning regions. No longer is it possible to see the level of autonomy of the two local governments as a kind of decentralisation of Georgia's central governmental power.

The electoral system in Georgia underwent changes since the Rose Revolution. First of all, parliament downsized. Of the 250 seats that made up the parliament under Shevardnadze, now only 150 remain. Which MPs are chosen for 73 of the seats is determined by single mandate district majority voting. The remaining 77 seats are voted for via a party-list proportional representation system, for which the threshold has been raised from four to five percent (Civil Georgia 2012).

Lowering the number of seats, while almost half of the seats are decided via a non proportional method, decreases the proportionality of representation in parliament. Moreover, the size of the different constituencies varies from 6,000 to 150,000 voters, further reducing proportionality of the electoral results (Civil Georgia 2012). The way the electoral system was set up after Saakashvili came to power, does not seem to help counterbalance the presidential power with a strong, proportionally chosen legislative. This point is emphasised by monitors of the Council of Europe who

concluded that the shortcomings of the Georgian system need to be addressed, since the election code is not in line with European standards for proportionality (Civil Georgia 2012).

It appears then, that presidential power theory does offer an explanation for the stagnation of democratic progress in Georgia since 2003. While under Shevardnadze presidential power was already strong, after the Rose Revolution it has remained formally as least as extensive as before. Moreover, the factors that mitigated the negative effects on democratic progress before diminished profoundly in strength. Of the three regions, whose level of autonomy could be considered as *de facto* decentralisation, none is still in that situation. Two have practically separated from Georgia, while one has come under stricter central rule. Also, the electoral system and the amount of seats in parliament have changed in a way that decreases the proportionality of representation.

4.4 Carothers' Revised Transition Paradigm after the Rose Revolution

The reason Saakashvili chose to keep large power at the office of president, was a strong focus of his administration on state-building, rather than on democratic principles or on decentralisation of governmental powers (Kalandadze, and Orenstein 2009, 1410). At the start of his first term as president, Saakashvili inherited a very weak state, that could not perform its most basic tasks (Mitchell 2009, 171-173).

Immediately prioritising the restoration of the strength of the state seems to have worked. Where access to a sanitised water supply was as low as 60 percent at times during Shevardnadze's rule, by 2010 that figure had risen to 96 percent. Since Shevardnadze left office, school enrolment went up approximately 30 percent (The World Bank 2012). The higher education system was reformed and improved (Mitchell 2009, 177). Where the road network was barely maintained before, now 94 per cent of all streets are paved (The World Bank 2012).

The most prominent failure of the Georgian state used to be that it could not guarantee the safety of its citizens, because both its police and military forces were functioning poorly, due to a lack of payment and because of widespread corruption (Mitchell 2009, 171-173). In order to address these problems, Saakashvili simply fired all traffic

police officers, since they were seen as the most corrupt of all. He then hired a new, better trained, police force and started paying them decent wages (Mitchell 2009, 177-178).

The result of this radical step by the new administration was a properly functioning police force. Georgia also spent millions of euros on rebuilding its military apparatus (Mitchell 2009, 177-178). This effort was supported by the United States via the 64 million dollar costing "Georgia Train and Equip Programme", that the Americans started just before Saakashvili came to power. The improvement in performance was enough, to enable Georgia to send troops to Iraq (Grant, and Leonard 2004, 4) and to contribute to the NATO ISAF mission in Afghanistan (NATO 2012). The aggregate of the aforementioned improvements in state strength led to the conclusion that Carothers' necessary democratisation condition of state-building has been met under Saakashvili's presidency.

Before Saakashvili became president, Georgia was a relatively poor country. The little wealth that was available, was concentrated in the economic elites. This was a result of rent-seeking behaviour (Chiaberashvili, and Tevzadze 2005, 194-195). When it comes to wealth, Georgia is still relatively poor. Since the Rose Revolution, however, its economy is growing at a rapid rate. Even during the current worldwide financial crisis, the GDP growth has been relatively high every year, except for 2009. The most recent figure, from 2010, shows an increase of 6.4 percent. During the same years the GNI also steadily rose (The World Bank 2012). While GDP and GNI improved, the distribution of income did not. It even slightly deteriorated (CIA 2012). While Carothers' structural condition of the level, and distribution of wealth is not fully met, the situation has partly improved.

According to Carothers, experience with, and support for democratic values and institutions, are strong indicators of increased chances of successful democratisation (Carothers 2002, 15-16). However flawed the pluralist system was under Shevardnadze, in the years since independence the Georgian people had lived in a country with some democratic institutions. Even though they were fraudulent, elections were held. Moreover, people did have the right of political association (Mitchell 2009, 174-175). Opposition parties were tolerated by the regime, and

eventually the opposition led the protests that ended Shevardnadze's rule (Spirova 2008, 76-78).

Georgian people have an increased experience with democratic institutions, while their favourable opinions of democratic values are still present. In a nationwide opinion poll, conducted in 2010, a formidable majority expressed the view that having a viable political opposition is important (Iri 2010, 23). Strengthening the parliament, so it can act as a check on the executive branch, can also count on support (Iri 2010, 28). Under Shevardnadze endorsement of democratic values was most likely high, but experience with democratic institutions barely existed. In Saakashvili's Georgia both of these conditions are met.

After the Rose Revolution the relationship between the body politic and citizens has changed in some aspects. One of the cornerstones of the new administration's policy was to eradicate the corruption that Georgian citizens had to deal with on a daily basis. In a sense, this plan has had great success. Most Georgians say corruption is no longer a part of their everyday life (Mitchell 2009, 176). The corruption at low level political and state institutions indeed decreased dramatically. At the higher level, however, corruption and patronage did not decrease at the same rate. Both are still a problem, though the level of corruption among high ranking government officials, as perceived by the Georgian public, did decline substantially (Spirova 2008, 87-86). The ubiquitous nature of rent-seeking behaviour has vanished since the Rose Revolution. Although the situation is certainly not perfect, the relationship between the body politic and citizens should no longer prove to be an obstacle in the process of democratisation.

Under Saakashvili's rule Georgia has barely moved on the democratisation continuum scale (Aprasidze 2011, 215), while indicators of most of Carothers' factors that should increase the chances of successful democratic progress were present. His theory then offers no viable explanation for the Georgian case since 2003. The state-building agenda of the Saakashvili administration was implemented, resulting in an overwhelming success (Mitchell 2009, 171-178). GDP and GNI have grown and the level of corruption in post-Shevardnadze Georgia, has dramatically decreased (Spirova 2008, 87-86), while the everyday experience of the Georgian people has improved (Mitchell 2009, 176). Experience with democratic institutions increased,

and support for democracy and its principles remained high (Iri 2010, 23-28). While Georgia is still stuck in the grey zone, feckless pluralism, that for a large part described the Georgian situation under Shevardnadze, does not seem to fit the changed circumstances, and neither does dominant power politics. In a country that can be described as having the features of the latter system, the state is as dysfunctional as it is in feckless pluralism (Carothers 2002, 11-14). Saakashvili's Georgia clearly is not.

5 Conclusion and Discussion

In the Georgian case the explanatory value of the two theories differs for the periods under president Shevardnadze's rule and under that of president Saakashvili. In general it can be concluded that Carothers' revised transition paradigm better explains the stagnation of democratic progress in Georgia in the Shevardnadze era, while presidential power theory is better at explaining that stagnation in the period since the Rose Revolution.

In the period when the country was under the leadership of president Shevardnadze, the influence of the presidential power factor was mitigated by several other factors. The president did have large executive power, and also some special legislative rights, especially on economic policy. While local leaders were appointed by the president, extensive autonomous rights that local governors were given decreased the president's powers. The Georgian central government's lack of full control over its country diminished the effects of the presidential power factor, since the situation where three regions had semi-autonomous rule can be seen as a form of decentralisation. Research conducted in the Shevardnadze period, in post-Soviet countries, found no systematic relationship between having a large executive power vested in the office of president, and the stagnation of democratic development.

Indicators of factors that lead to democratic stagnation in the grey zone, between autocracy and liberal democracy, according to Carothers' revised transition paradigm, were abundantly present when Shevardnadze was president. In order to have a high chance of democratisation, Carothers claims it is necessary to focus on state-building, rather than on the devolution of power. The Shevardnadze regime was unsuccessful in

building a strong state. During this time the government of Georgia failed to perform its most basic tasks. Another factor, important in Carothers' theory, is the support for and experience with democratic values and institutions. Shortly after independence the support for democracy was high, but experience with democratic institutions lacked. Moreover, Georgia was a poor country, with rent-seeking economic elites. The relationship between the body politic and the Georgian citizens was a factor that hindered the chances of successful democratic development. Access to public services was achieved through bribery and personal connections. Georgia, in the years of Eduard Shevardnadze's presidency can be described as mostly functioning in accordance with the feckless pluralism syndrome.

During the second period, in which president Saakashvili was, and still is in power, the indicators of mitigating factors that could balance the effects of large presidential power, according to presidential power theory, were no longer present, while the office of president remained as powerful as ever. The president even attained some new formal executive and legislative rights, and manipulated the timing of elections in his favour. The situation of unintentional decentralisation ceased to exist. Georgia's electoral system underwent changes that decreased the proportionality of representation below official European standards.

In the era of Saakashvili's rule, Carothers' conditions for successful democratisation were largely met. Saakashvili chose to keep large power concentrated in the office of president, and focus his policies on state-building, rather than on democratisation or decentralisation. This strategy was highly successful. A stronger state was built. The structural condition of an enhanced level and distribution of wealth has not been fully met, but the situation did improve, and continues to do so. When it comes to experience with, and support for democratic values and institutions both conditions have been met. Lastly, the relationship between the body politic and Georgian citizens should no longer prove to be an obstacle in the process of democratisation, because of lowered levels of corruption.

The presence of factors that make up Carothers' revised transition paradigm state-building explain stagnation of democratic progress under president Shevardnadze. These factors are (1) the lack of focus on effective state-building policy, (2) the low

level of wealth and uneven spread thereof, (3) the lack of experience with democratic institutions, and (4) the corrupted relationship between the body politic and citizens.

The Georgian case since the Rose Revolution is best explained by presidential power theory. Here the main factor that caused the stagnation of democratic progress is the amount of power vested in the office of president, formally and informally, in both the executive and legislative branches. While the office of president remained powerful, no indicators of the two mitigating factors decentralisation and proportional representation in parliament were found.

During this most recent period Carother's conditions for successful democratic progress were met, yet the country did not democratise. It appears that, while state-building, wealth, experience with democratic institutions, support for democracy, and a healthy relationship between the body politic and citizens are all important factors, when met they are not enough to ensure democratic progress. If state-building is necessary, centralising the executive power and some legislative rights at the president can be effective, as the Saakashvili administration has shown. However, after a state with properly functioning institutions has been built, large presidential power prevents democratic progress. In order to be able to democratise it is necessary to decrease the presidential power, e.g. through decentralisation and increasing the power of the legislative.

6 The Future of Democratisation in Georgia

What will the future now hold for Georgia? The large amount of executive power, and the rights in the legislative branch that the president has, are currently the biggest obstacles preventing a movement towards liberal democracy. When the distribution of wealth is improved, and the remaining corruption at higher levels of government is lowered, all of Carothers' conditions for successful democratisation will be met.

A positive development is that the Georgian constitution will change after the elections of 2013. A significant amount of power will be transferred from the president to the prime minister. The Georgian form of government will change from a presidential system into a mixed parliamentary system (Mitchell 2012, 99). The prime minister and his cabinet will be chosen by a majority of the parliament. The

parliament itself will still remain relatively powerless (Crisis Group 2012). These changes, nonetheless, are an improvement and might help move Georgia in the democratic direction. Much of Georgian democratic prospects will depend on Mikhail Saakashvili. He is responsible for creating a state that is now strong enough to be a viable candidate for democratisation. At the same time he kept such a large amount of power at his disposal, that it prevented raising the chances of movement towards liberal democracy. If after his last term as president he decides to run for the office of prime minister, and succeeds in winning the election, the same problems of large, concentrated executive power might remain when his policies do not change (Crisis Group 2012).

There are signs that Saakashvili will not try to become the new prime minister, even though the president has not publicly declared his departure from high office. The authorities publicly realise it would be damaging to the democratic image of Georgia. Vladimir Putin became prime minister after completing his terms as president of the Russian Federation a few years earlier, probably based on a desire to stay influential. Being compared to Putin, the most powerful man in the country Georgia went to war with in 2008, will not seem appealing to Saakashvili, since it would harm his reputation within and outside of Georgia (Crisis Group 2012).

Another factor that might play a role in preventing Saakashvili from becoming prime minister is that his approval ratings have been steadily declining. In an opinion poll conducted in 2010, only a small majority said that they would support Saakashvili as prime minister (Iri 2010, 27). This does not only mean that his chances of becoming prime minister are decreasing, but also that the concentrated executive powers might be the subject of debate. Presidential power, or in this case prime ministerial power, largely depends on public support (Sumbadze 2009, 185). Shevardnadze experienced this truth in 2003 when he was ousted as president. On top of the lowered amount of power caused by lack of public support, the diminished popularity of Saakashvili might lead to his party losing seats in the parliamentary elections of 2012 (Mitchell 2012, 97-98). A stronger opposition in parliament should lead to a more effective check on the executive, by the legislative branch. If the elections in 2012 and 2013 bring new politicians in office, and most importantly, new policies in place, Georgia could be on the move towards liberal democracy.

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