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SCIENCES

# Understanding Post-Soviet Party Systems:

A comparative analysis of Georgia and Moldova

Paulina Sałek

Thesis submitted for assessment with a view to  
obtaining the degree of Doctor of Political and Social Sciences  
of the European University Institute

Florence, 26 June 2020



European University Institute  
**Department of Political and Social Sciences**

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## **Thesis abstract**

Almost three decades of post-Soviet party research still leave important gaps in our understanding of the intra-regional variation in political development. This is mostly due to its focus only on a few cases and priority given to studies concern with the role of informality in structuring the political outcomes. To contribute to filling these lacunas, this study pursues two distinctive, yet intertwined research objectives: firstly, it investigates the patterns of party development and potential stabilisation in two, significantly under-explored post-Soviet republics, namely Georgia and Moldova. Secondly, it attempts to assess the role of formal institutional variables – the regime type, the electoral system, and the party funding regulations – in this process. The thesis is composed of seven chapters, each based on its own analytical framework and focus.

The key finding of my research project is that party and party systems' development in Georgia and Moldova followed different trajectories and produced different outcomes, thus confirming that the Eurasian polities should not be treated as a uniform universe of cases. The study demonstrates that the Moldovan parties developed greater organizational stability, deeper linkage with society, and higher electoral continuity than the Georgian ones, even though parties remained quite weakly institutionalized in both countries (Chapters 2 and 3). It also challenges the conventional argument about the similarity of the Eurasian party systems by showing that Georgia embarked on a steady path towards power concentration, while in Moldova it remained more dispersed, despite a period under one-party domination (Chapter 4).

The thesis confirms the role of institutional factors in shaping these diverging political outcomes, although their effects neither aligned entirely with the theoretical predictions nor were always unidirectional. Furthermore, even though originated from political elite, their consequences not necessarily met the expectations of their crafters. Along this line, the study finds that the president-oriented systems of government in Georgia were less conducive to the development of institutionalized parties and contributed to higher party system concentration than the parliament-oriented regimes in Moldova (Chapter 5). It also reveals that electoral law yielded mixed political consequences depending on the country-specific correctives (Chapter 6) – the mixed electoral design in Georgia enhanced one-party domination, but also allowed smaller formations to gain representation in single-member districts; by contrast the PR in Moldova contributed to party system fragmentation (limited to a few stabilising parties) but also helped establishing one-party dominance between 2001 and 2009. Equally importantly, the thesis emphasizes that the mainstream parties in both countries have systematically manipulated party funding regulations and employed them as tools against their political opponents, which significantly affected the political competition (Chapter 7). These findings warn against disregarding the structuring role of the formal-legal order in favour of informality.

My study also demonstrates that the politico-institutional order emerged from a combination of historical legacies and contingent factors in early phases of transition (Chapter 1) were of crucial importance in determining the future political developments in both countries. Finally, by highlighting specific limits of traditional analytical tools, my findings suggest the need for a further methodological and analytical refinement of the conventional toolkit employed in post-Soviet party research.

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I must admit that the idea of writing a PhD thesis in a sort of solitary confinement in the library, surrounded only by ever-growing piles of books, sounded quite appealing when I embarked on this path. However, along the way, I quickly realized how lucky I was to be surrounded by continuous friendship, support, and wisdom of many people who rendered the burden of this lonely endeavour not only much lighter, but also significantly more enriching.

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Investigating the politics of someone else's country comes with opportunities offering different perspectives on certain events and phenomena, yet it is often confined by limited contextual understanding. That is why I am very thankful to all the Georgian and Moldovan experts who have contributed to broadening my knowledge about these two countries. In particular, I am forever indebted to the late Ambassador Dr. Alexander Rondeli who made my fellowship in Tbilisi possible and whose readiness to share his vast expertise and connections significantly strengthened my interest in his country. I am also very grateful to my Georgian friends – Gio, Kristina, Sandro, Ana, and especially Ika and Shalva – who helped me to understand all those nuances and shades of their language and culture that I would have otherwise overlooked as an outsider. Without Natalie, my time in Georgia would not have been half so remarkable.

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## List of Abbreviations

### Georgia

APG	Alliance of Patriots of Georgia
CDMG	Christian-Democratic Movement
CP	Conservative Party of Georgia
CPG	Communist Party of Georgia
CUG	Citizens Union of Georgia
DM-UG	Democratic Movement – United Georgia
DUR	Democratic Union for Revival
FD	Free Democrats
GD	Georgian Dream coalition
GD-DG	Georgian Dream – Democratic Georgia
GYLA	Georgian Young Lawyers Association
IWSG	Industry will save Georgia
LPG	Labour Party of Georgia
MUG	Movement for United Georgia
MfG	Movement for Fair Georgia
NDI	National Independence Party
NDP	National Democratic Party
NF	National Forum
NM-D	National Movement – Democrats
NRP	New Rights Party
PP	People’s Party
RP	Republican Party of Georgia
SRP	Socialist Revolutionary Party
UGT	Union of Georgian Traditionalists
UNM	United National Movement
UD	United Democrats
UO	United Opposition (National Council/Rights)

### Moldova

ADR	Alliance for Democracy and Reforms
AIE	Alliance for European Integration
AMN	Our Moldova Alliance
APDCF	Alliance of Popular Democratic Christian Front

ASDM	Social-Democratic Alliance of Moldova
BEAB	Electoral Block Braghis Alliance'
BMD	Electoral Bloc Democratic Moldova
BȚI	Bloc of Congress of Intellectuals
CDM	Democratic Convention of Moldova
CI	Congress of Intellectuals
CPM	Communist Party of Moldova
MACpR	Civic Alliance for Reforms
MNP	Moldovan National Party
PAS	Party of Action and Solidarity
PCRM	Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova
PDAM	Democratic Agrarian Party of Moldova
PDM	Democratic Party of Moldova
PDSF	Social Democratic Party "Furnica"
PF	Popular Front
PFĐ	Party of Democratic Forces
PL	Liberal Party of Moldova
PLDM	Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova
PLR	Liberal Reformist Party
PMDP	For a Democratic and Prosperous Moldova
PNL	National Liberal Party
PPCD	Christian Democratic People's Party
PPCF	Christian Democratic People's Front
PPDA	Dignity and Truth Platform Party
PPEM	European Popular Party
PR	Party of Reforms
PRCM	Party of Rebirth and Conciliation of Moldova
PSM	Socialist Party of Moldova
PSL	Social-Liberal Party of Moldova
PSMUE	Socialist Party of Moldova and the Movement Unity'
PSRM	Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova





## **Introductory remarks**

### **I. Rationale of the study**

The nature of Soviet rule puzzled Western scholars for decades. Yet, despite quite a robust body of literature, Western Sovietologists seemed unable to fully understand the political and institutional developments behind the “iron curtain”. Their failure to predict the collapse of the USSR further confirmed the impression that “in the field of Soviet studies (...) one is never right; he is only wrong to varying degrees of vulnerability” (Raymond Bauer in Remington 1992). The major criticism advanced towards the Sovietologists concerned their tendency to “[misinterpret] the realities of the Soviet system by forcing them into the rationalistic and optimistic categories invented by Western social science” (Remington 1992, 239). Almost three decades after the disintegration of the USSR, the scholarly approach to studying the political and institutional developments in the post-Soviet region seems to suffer from a similar proclivity.

The collapse of the communist order triggered a significant academic interest towards party systems' origins, development, and institutionalization, yet the rich literature that emerged from this curiosity suffers from an important regional bias. While a great effort has been made to understand political developments in the Central and Eastern European (CEE) region, our knowledge of similar phenomena in former Soviet republics (FSR) is still quite limited. Furthermore, the post-Soviet party research has also remained focused only on a few cases (notably, the Baltic republics, Russia and Ukraine), which considerably constrains its analytical and empirical contribution. Indeed, not much progress has been made in this respect since Andrey Meleshevich remarked that the field “would be greatly enhanced if social scientists would pay more attention to all nations that achieved their independence following the collapse of the Soviet Union” (2007, 3).

The tendency to indiscriminately apply generalizations derived from idiosyncratic experiences of a few post-Soviet polities to the whole universe of Eurasian cases<sup>1</sup> is misleading as it conceals important intra-regional variation in political development trajectories (Stykov 2016). Indeed, if examined more carefully, for instance through the degree of power alternation and systemic competitiveness, these differences become more evident. Accordingly, the Eurasian party systems are either one-party systems when no parties, except for that of the ruling leader, are legally allowed and the alternation of power does not take place like, e.g. in Turkmenistan until 2012 or hegemonic when the ruling party can be challenged by the opposition, yet their success in this endeavor is virtually impossible like in Kazakhstan and Putin's Russia (Kubicek 1998; Jones Luong 2002; Cummings 2004; Ahrens and Hoen 2012; Usov 2008; Manaev 2000). Furthermore, when the alternation of power is possible in principle and practice, party systems can differ in terms of the degree of power concentration/fragmentation producing predominant (like in Georgia since 1999 and Russia prior

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<sup>1</sup> From now on the term Eurasia will be used with reference to post-Soviet republics, excluding the Baltic states.

2000) or multiparty systems (like in Moldova, except between 2001 and 2009, and Ukraine) (Fish 1998; 2001a; Meleshevich 2007; Kuzio 2008; Wyman et al. 1995; Wheatley 2005; Cernencu and Boțan 2009; Miller et al. 2000).

The limited curiosity of the mainstream political research towards the divergent trajectories of post-Soviet political development is not only puzzling but also regrettable as the comparative studies aiming to explain intra-regional variation are still quite scarce. With a few exceptions (Meleshevich 2007; Rafałowski 2014; Stykow 2016), the existing studies have been focused on a single case/dimension or have been published under a form of collections of multi-authored cross-country chapters (S. Berglund et al. 2013; Dawisha and Parrott 1997b; 1997a; 1997c). Hence, we still lack convincing explanations for some intriguing riddles such as why some of the Eurasian party systems have a multiparty character despite the general regional pattern of political predominance. Furthermore, there are still some gaps in our understanding of differences in the organization of power and the structure of political competition in the region.

Secondly, while scholars of post-communist politics have explored thoroughly the development of parties and party systems in CEE countries from various perspectives, the literature on post-Soviet politics has not only been less voluminous but also narrower in scope. Many early studies examined institutional and party-building processes through the lenses of their democratization progress (Isaacs 2014; Carothers 2002). Yet, the persistence of the FSR in a “‘grey zone’ between democracy and autocracy” (Stewart et al. 2013, 10), confirmed by empirical studies (Dawisha and Parrott 1997a; 1997c; Kulik and Pshizova 2005), contributed to a conceptual shift. As such, the blend of democratic and authoritarian elements in Eurasian political regimes has been either defined as ‘hybrid’ (Bogaards 2009; Gilbert and Mohseni 2011; Guliyev 2012; McKensie 2014) or placed along the democracy/autocracy continuum with labels such as ‘competitive authoritarianism’ or ‘electoral democracies’ identifying their distance from the two ideal-types (Levitsky and Way 2010; Way and Levitsky 2002; Way 2015).

Concomitantly, scholars increasingly explored the particular nature of post-Soviet political order in which the periphery is prevented from accessing resources by the strong center managing the state as a “private possession” and in which informal networks based on clans and family ties are “reproduced in the modern political and economic relations” (Fisun 2019, 82). In other words, almost everywhere in the Eurasian region, the political process has been organized through a hierarchical chain of power – “power vertical” (Gel’man and Ryzhenkov 2011) – usually headed by strong presidents playing the central role in decision-making and holding the monopoly over resource distribution through informal channels of patronage, clientelism, and corruption (Hale 2014; Gel’man 2016). Consequently, the “political game” in electoral and legislative arenas has been dictated by the ‘party of power’ – an executive born organization supporting the presidential rule – while other parties remained either irrelevant or secured the persistence of the incumbent

(Fisun 2019). Likewise, the role of the cabinets and premiers (if envisaged by the constitutional design) has been reduced to mere execution of presidential decisions, thus bearing a technocratic stamp (Fisun 2012).

As a result of these studies, scholars have concluded that the Eurasian polities assumed a form of neopatrimonial state in which the patrimonial political process organized “primarily around the personalized exchange of concrete rewards and punishments through chains of actual acquaintance” (Hale 2014) is “complemented, complicated and sometimes conflicted by impersonal institutions that have some existence independent of individual political actors” (Robinson 2012, 299–300). As such, the FSR political developments have been mostly analysed through the neopatrimonial approach – rooted in the Weberian notion of authority in traditional societies (Weber 1978) and rediscovered in several studies of political transition in post-colonial Africa (Lemarchand 1972; Bratton and van de Walle 1994; Bach and Gazibo 2012).

Given its versatility in investigating the interconnection between private/personal (informal) and the public/impersonal (formal) politics (Erdmann and Engel 2007), neopatrimonialism has become a kind of ubiquitous concept in Eurasian political research conflating a variety of research agendas and analytical levels (Gel'man 2016; Robinson 2012; Fisun 2012; 2019; van Zon 2008; Kunysz 2012; Ishiyama 2002). Accordingly, it has been applied to studies investigating party evolution, including the ‘parties of power’ (Gel'man 2006; Robinson 2012; Makarenko 2012; Ishiyama 2008), regime types (Ishiyama 2008; Kunysz 2012; D. Lewis 2012; Ishiyama 2002), political and economic governance (Peyrouse 2012; Gel'man 2016; Gel'man and Starodubtsev 2016; Robinson 2011) and the effects of control over natural resources in supporting autocratic regimes (Franke, Gawrich, and Alakbarov 2009). This universality comes, however, at some important costs.

Firstly, neopatrimonialism encompasses several different configurations blending the “traditional personalism, bureaucracy and economic organization” (Robinson 2012, 300). This renders its operationalization quite difficult leading frequently to a certain “analytical disorder” and concept stretching (Isaacs 2014, 230), particularly when used as an equivalent of regime type (Stewart et al. 2013). Secondly, although the access to information on the informal political dimension is limited, scholars have systematically privileged this sphere over the formal one in discussing the dynamics of ‘patronal politics’ in the context of regime survival and change (Hale 2014). This approach emphasizes how the informal channels distort the functioning of the ‘formal-rational’ political and economic process (Gel'man 2016; Voell and Kaliszewska 2015; Polese and Rekhviashvili 2017) or unveil the informal mechanisms of power (Kálmán 2019; Magyar 2019). Although undoubtedly insightful, this stream of research often overlooks the fact that informal politics takes place at different levels, including the regime, government or local administration and assumes different forms such as norms, practices or customs (Isaacs 2014) and, thus, requires an “approach from different levels of analysis” (Guliyev 2011, 575).

Secondly, the excessive concern with the informal dimension of political dynamics has led many scholars to take as given its superiority over the formal institutional structures. Yet the relationship between the two is not only “mutually accommodative” (Erdmann and Engel 2007, 105), but also complex, unstable and not easily lending “to elegant theorising” (Whitmore 2010, 1002–3), especially as the clear-cut boundaries between the two are quite difficult to set empirically (Isaacs 2011). Consequently, the informal sphere does not always take precedence over the formal (Collins 2007), but we still do not fully understand the logic of this relationship, often determined by the context-specific circumstances.

Thirdly, although, it is undeniable that all the Eurasian states have been affected by patrimonial politics, I have already highlighted the important differences between them concerning the role of parties in the political process as well as the structure of political competition (Styckow 2016). The neopatrimonial perspective distinguishing post-Soviet regimes based on the “model of elite consolidation”<sup>2</sup> is not entirely useful in tracking these dissimilarities. Furthermore, this approach usually studies political parties either as channels through which the incumbents in authoritarian states seek legitimization (Isaacs 2014) or through the role played by the ‘parties of power’ (Lavery 2015) in sustaining the predominant or hegemonic types of party systems across the region. Only a few studies have discussed the role of the opposition in the Eurasian regimes (Gel’man 2005; L. March 2006) and even less attempted to examine party landscapes more comprehensively and outside the neopatrimonial perspective (Kulik and Pshizova 2005; Nodia 2006).

Although it is undeniable that the post-Soviet parties remain weakly institutionalized and un-programmatically oriented, empirical evidence suggests a greater variation in this respect than it can be drawn from the limited literature. Indeed, it appears that not all the ruling parties are, actually, ‘parties of power’ in the strict sense of the definition, and not everywhere in Eurasia parties are ephemeral and lacking ideological character. Finally, while the majority of political formations do serve as vessels of private interests and instruments through which patron-client networks distribute resources (Hale 2014), at the same time some of them do also exercise, at least partially, the functions normally attributed to parties, i.e. the aggregation and representation of citizens’ interests.

Hence, I believe that post-Soviet research would greatly benefit from more interest in these variations in political outcomes as well as in the role of the legal-rational sphere in structuring and sustaining it. Indeed, as one can learn from many notable contributions (Meleshevich 2007; Marat 2012; Moser 2001a; 1998; Whitmore 2010; Goodnow 2013; Colton 1995; Morgan-Jones and Schleiter 2004; Ishiyama and Kennedy

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<sup>2</sup> Following Fisun (2019, 91–92), the neopatrimonial approach distinguishes between neopatrimonial regimes such as sultanistic (a form of personal regime like in Turkmenistan), oligarchic (a regime controlled by rent-seeking economic/regional groups like in Russia and Ukraine during the early post-independence stages), bureaucratic (with centralized power like in Putin’s Russia, Georgia and Belarus) and neopatrimonial democracies (with divided power like in Ukraine and Moldova).

2001; Fish 2001b; Fisher 2002; Roper 2008b; 2002b; Crowther and Roper 1996; Crowther 2011; Holmes 1994; Robinson 2012), formal institutions are not simply a “window-dressing that serves to mask informal politics” (Whitmore 2010, 1000) nor should be viewed as mere façades (Fisun 2019) or a “shell” concealing the informal political ‘core’ (Gel’man 2016, 459). In other words, it remains useful asking “what is the neo in neopatrimonialism?” (Isaacs 2014, 234) and what is its role in structuring political outcomes, even though the answer to this query may remain context-dependent.

Accordingly, in authoritarian Eurasian states, formal institutions are used by the ruling elite to maintain power and minimize the risks of regime change (Gel’man 2016; Svulik 2012). They can also be employed by incumbents to legitimize and support their authority (Isaacs 2014; Pepinsky 2014; Matveeva 2009; Gel’man 2006; Robinson 2012). In more competitive post-Soviet polities (such as Georgia and Moldova), formal institutions affect also the strategic behavior and expectations of political actors and determine the role of parties in political competition. They also streamline inter-actor relations by setting the principles regulating the distribution and access to power. This research avenue was pursued during the initial stages of Eurasian party-building, yet it has been somehow forgotten recently, leaving important lacunas in our knowledge of post-Soviet political orders.

#### **a. Research objectives**

Against this backdrop, this thesis aims to contribute to the post-Soviet party research by pursuing two objectives. Firstly, it seeks to keep alive the debate on post-Soviet party development by putting two significantly under-explored post-Soviet republics – Georgia and Moldova – on the map of comparative politics. To fulfil this objective I investigate the trajectories of party and party systems’ evolution in both countries from the outset of post-Soviet transition until the 2016 Georgian parliamentary elections. I believe this to be a useful contribution to the literature, considering that the most comprehensive studies on political actors in Georgia and Moldova are monographs that either go too far back in time (Nodia 2006), or are written in languages other than English, which significantly limits their accessibility by a larger academic community (Cernencu and Boțan 2009; K. Kandelaki 1999; Protsyk, Bucătaru, and Volentir 2008; Sikora-Gaca 2013b; 2013a). Nevertheless, the analytical input of such an endeavour would remain rather scant.

Therefore, the second and more analytical contribution of this research project derives from the assessment of the impact of formal institutions on political developments in Georgia and Moldova. As they both underwent similar political transformations during the transition, yet differed in terms of the degree of power concentration, my intuition is that these explanatory variables may have contributed to this variance. However, my analysis departs from the mainstream neopatrimonial research that examine the formal-legal order from a normative perspective, i.e. how its functioning is distorted by the informal political dimension (Fisun 2012). Instead, by following the spirit of the neo-institutional debate, I examine their structuring impact

by reconstructing the stages of institutional engineering and linking them to political outcomes and dynamics from a longitudinal perspective. I also pay attention to their role in sustaining the specific configurations of power.

Besides presenting empirical evidence from the idiosyncratic experiences of the two post-Soviet republics, this analytical part seeks also to contribute to the broader theoretical debate on the institutional constraints of party and party systems development in post-authoritarian polities. Building on the assumption that political outcomes can be shaped through institutional crafting, it explores whether the mechanisms and consequences of institutional reforms followed the patterns predicted by the traditional party research. Therefore, this study provides additional arguments to the debate on the limits and opportunities of political crafting outside the context of established democracies. It also discusses the potential advantages and disadvantages of applying the traditional party research agenda to the post-Soviet context.

## **II. Research design**

### **i. Analytical framework**

To fulfil its research tasks, the dissertation is positioned within a broader comparative political literature and makes use of the analytical tools employed in similar studies. Nevertheless, considering the peculiar nature of the structural and historical context in which the Eurasian political systems emerged, the research framework requires some important adjustments to be fruitful. The following section will provide a few conceptual and methodological clarifications that warrant emphasis.

#### **a. Defining party and party systems**

The present study is based on the underlying premise that political parties in Georgia and Moldova do play a role in the political process. I also assume that they are ‘strong’ politically, but ‘weak’ socially (Ágh 1994) or, in other words, that ‘party in public office’ overshadows the other two ‘faces’, namely that of party central organization and, in particular, that ‘on the ground’ (Katz and Mair 1994). I also expect the parties in both countries to have gradually become the major formal channels through which various networks seek representation and influence over the political process, even though their role in structuring political competition may not be exclusive. In this context, the traditional way of defining parties does not seem particularly well-suited, especially considering the initially confused nature of various politically oriented formations. Inspired by similar studies (Casal Bértoa 2011; Rafałowski 2014), I rely on the Sartorian definition of political party understood as “any political group that presents at elections, and is capable of placing through elections, candidates for public office” (Sartori 1976, 64).

The second crucial clarification pertains to the concept of party system traditionally understood as “the *system of interactions* resulting from inter-party competition” among a plurality of political parties

(Sartori 1976, 44). At this point, a legitimate question arises on where do these relations take place. A theoretical perspective suggests that this is determined by a set of internal country-level divisions (vertical, horizontal and functional), yet most of the scholarly attention has focused on the governmental (Mair 2001; Casal Bértoa and Mair 2012) and electoral arenas (Sartori 1976) at the national level.

Against this backdrop, if one agrees that the nature of parties in the post-communist region differs from that encountered in established, western-type democracies, it appears rational to expect that similar differences between the two contexts will be also reflected at the systemic level. It was quite a common belief that post-communist party systems were void of *systemness* (Mair 1998, 175) considering that their “parties (were) ‘labels’ (forming) loose coalitions of notables that often changed at each election and tended to dissolve from one election to another” (Sartori 1976, 284). In this context, Sartori argued that the political arenas in some Latin American countries did not dispose of sufficient attributes to be classified as party systems (Sartori 1976, 185).

This quite radical position was, however, rejected by the scholars of regional politics who, instead, argued in favour of some crucial conceptual adjustments (Mainwaring, Bizzarro, and Petrova 2018; Mainwaring and Torcal 2005). Firstly, they have advocated for an alternative definition according to which a “set of parties that interact in *minimally* patterned (i.e., regular, stable, predictable) ways” (Mainwaring, Bizzarro, and Petrova 2018) is sufficient to be analytically treated as a party *system*. Likewise, and without denying the importance of the governmental arena, several recent studies have suggested that focusing exclusively on the competition for government is too narrow to fully capture the dynamic of inter-party interactions. In fact, in many of the emerging democracies, the mono-party government is more frequent than not, yet parties still do relate to each other in regular ways. Accordingly, it has been suggested to focus instead, or at least equally, on the legislative arena and, especially, on electoral competition as it “directly determines who controls the executive, and strongly shapes government formation” (Mainwaring, Bizzarro, and Petrova 2018). This is the approach I follow in this dissertation.

## **b. Measuring the evolution and stabilization**

Having established the conceptual basis of this research, the second crucial step is to decide how to determine what type of parties and party systems emerged in Georgia and Moldova as well as how to capture the degree of their cross-temporal stabilisation. My approach to these research problems is explained in more detail in the respective chapters (2 and 3 for the analysis of political parties and 4 for the discussion of party systems). Hence, it suffices here to sketch a general analytical design underpinning my thesis.



In explaining political developments in not fully democratic, yet competitive political contexts<sup>3</sup> scholars have relied on the concept of institutionalization (Hicken and Kuhonta 2015; Mainwaring and Torcal 2005; Mainwaring, Bizzarro, and Petrova 2018; Meleshevich 2007) understood as “the process by which organizations and procedures acquire value and stability” (Huntington 1968, 12). Despite a general confusion surrounding this multidimensional concept and its operationalization<sup>4</sup>, the most widely applied framework is based on four dimensions: the entrenchment of parties in society, the strength of their organizational structures, the “legitimacy of the electoral process and parties” and the stability of inter-party relations measured through the fluctuations of electoral volatility (Mainwaring and Scully 1995, 5–6).

Nevertheless, the Mainwaring and Scully’s perspective conflates the institutionalization of individual parties with that of their mutual relations, which, are “neither the same thing nor necessarily and always mutually compatible” (Randall and Svåsand 2002, 6). Furthermore, electoral volatility is not an ideal indicator of party system stability, considering that it relates more to party-voter than to inter-party relations (Toole 2000, 441). Therefore, while still useful for investigating the potential consolidation of individual parties, the institutionalization model is not useful in determining either the type of party systems in Georgia and Moldova or the degree of their overtime stability.

In doing so, I draw inspiration from the Sartori’s (1976) approach combining party system format with the degree of ideological polarization. His typology is particularly advantageous as it includes the predominant type of party system capturing well the patterns of power concentration, quite frequent in the Eurasian region. Sartori’s conceptual framework, however, requires some adjustments to the post-Soviet context. Hence, the format of party systems is determined by the index of ‘effective number of parties’ (ENP) developed by Golosov (2011)<sup>5</sup> since the Sartori’s criterion of party relevance may be of difficult applicability. Although I assume that the weak programmatic positions of parties in both countries undermine the role of ideological polarization, I still find it useful to investigate whether other dimensions of political competition play a role in channelling parties’ mutual relations. The final aspect worth considering is the pattern of power alternation – a latent variable in Sartori’s framework, which helps to differentiate between the one-party, hegemonic, and the predominant party system types (Nwokora and Pelizzo 2018).

Finally, I seek to understand and explain the patterns and dynamics of inter-party relations by qualitatively discussing the structure of the political competition and the respective “structural position (of parties) within the overall system” (Styckow 2016, 10). I also emphasize the possible stabilization of their

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<sup>3</sup> As is the case of the two countries under examination, which are generally classified as not fully democratic, yet competitive, even though scholars assigned them somehow discordant labels such as electoral democracies or competitive authoritarianisms (Way 2015).

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed overview refer to Casal Bértoa (2018).

<sup>5</sup> See Chapter 4 for a detailed explanation of the specific methodological choices.

party systems in line with the argument that in the absence of consolidated political structures, the “predictability (...) becomes a surrogate of structuration: the more predictable a party system is, the more it is a system as such, and hence the more institutionalized it has become” (Mair 2001, 38).

### **c. Explaining the evolution and consolidation**

The final step consists in a more detailed justification behind the choice of the analytical approach. In searching to explain what determines party systems’ structure, scholars have traditionally employed two perspectives based on distinctive – sociological and institutional – analytical paradigms. In the cleavage-based theory<sup>6</sup> (Rokkan and Lipset 1967), the persisting stability of Western European party systems is associated with the strength of cleavages stemming from their deep social rootedness (Bartolini and Mair 1990). The stability of cleavages leads to the ‘freezing’ of political competition (Enyedi 2008) and party system change can only occur through structural or behavioural dealignment (Bornschieer 2009; Lachat 2007) caused by profound alteration of social structures.

However, since “(T)he concept of cleavage is the product of a very specific transformation that took place in Western Europe exclusively” (Caramani and van Biezen 2007, 7–8), its transplantation to the contexts outside western-type democracies where the “social structure-collective identity-organization linkage” is much more difficult to track, has encountered considerable obstacles (Bornschieer 2009). In post-Soviet polities, the presence of both – the malleable social structures and fluid political actors – cleavages have rarely become “long-term representations of social structural conflicts” (Bornschieer 2009). My intuition, based also on empirical observations, is that the social divisions (often well-defined)<sup>7</sup> in former USSR republics can hardly be considered as determining “stable patterns of alignments” (Mair 1998, 182–83). On the contrary, they frequently serve as a basis of short-term political strategies in the intra-elite struggle for power. That is why this thesis is based on the assumption expressed by the ‘neo-institutional’ school that party system “is not a natural, spontaneous or inevitable mirroring of social cleavages” (Dahl 1971, 223), but can be “steered and shaped” through political engineering (Sartori 1968, 272). Finally, as rightly pointed out by scholars of post-Soviet politics, at the initial phases of transition “political actors and political institutions (...) shaped the direction of mass preferences” (Gel’man 2005, 227) and not the other way round, while social divides remained “secondary to institutional factors, since these (were) manipulated by leaders to maximise the support” (Robinson 2012, 301).

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<sup>6</sup> To be defined as ‘cleavage’ a political divide has to embody three components: “(1) A social-structural element, such as class, religious denomination, status, or education, (2) an element of collective identity of this social group, and (3) an organizational manifestation in the form of collective action or a durable organization of the social groups concerned” (Bartolini and Mair 1990, 213–20).

<sup>7</sup> In fact, at least at the initial stages of transition, those divides in post-Soviet polities were largely missing the basic properties to be analytically defined as cleavages outlined in *fn.4* (Bartolini and Mair 1990).

The political transformation of post-authoritarian polities throughout the 1980s has generated the ‘re-discovery’ of institutional determinants of political outcomes, until then leaving “only a modest imprint” on comparative party research (Baylis 1996), long overshadowed by the cleavage-theory. A whole body of literature emerged from practical (Di Palma 1990) and theoretical (Sartori 1994) debates on political crafting, in particular concerning the consequences of the regime and electoral system types for political outcomes. Indeed, as demonstrated by several insightful studies (Meleshevich 2007; Marat 2012; Moser 2001; 1998; Whitmore 2010; Goodnow 2013; Colton 1995; Morgan-Jones and Schleiter 2004; Ishiyama and Kennedy 2001; Fish 2001b; Fisher 2002; Roper 2008b; 2002; Crowther and Roper 1996; Crowther 2011; Holmes 1994) the formal institutions do play an important role in shaping political outcomes in more competitive Eurasian polities by affecting the choices and expectations of political actors in “routinisation of their informal personal power” (Isaacs 2014, 237). Furthermore, although rather context-dependent, the mechanisms of this relationship are often similar to those occurring in other post-authoritarian regions, but not necessarily in line with the theoretical expectations formulated for established democracies given the less structured political environment (Isaacs 2011; Robinson 2012).

The frequent tinkering with the formal primary (constitutions) and secondary (electoral and/or party legislation) rules by the incumbents in framing and legitimizing their power further confirms the relevance of formal structures. This is particularly true for the more competitive political regimes such as Georgia and Moldova, where the personal dimension does not necessarily take precedence over the formal one. Hence, by emphasizing the structuring effect of institutions, which goes beyond the common instrumental perception of simply channelling actors’ preferences and strategies (Elgie and Moestrup 2008, 249), the institutional approach appears well suited to the analysis of parties and party systems in both my case studies.

In line with my research goals and with the neo-institutional agenda, the interpretative variables that I employ in my research are the regime type, the electoral system, and the party funding regulations. The specific hypotheses on the political outcomes that each of these variables is expected to generate are explained in more detailed in respective Chapters 5, 6, and 7. Here it suffices to mention that the structuring ability of the first two is well justified on theoretical and empirical grounds, while the latter variable appears to have gained particular relevance in shaping the political competition in political settings without strong linkages between parties and voters.

To be more comprehensive, the analysis of the relationship between formal institutional variables and political outcomes requires close attention to “the context of changing institutional influence” (Robinson 2012, 299). At this point, it is worth mentioning the difficulty of the neo-institutional school to unambiguously settle the issue of the institutions’ origins. Several alternative solutions have been proposed, among which two – the rational-choice (RCI) and the historical institutionalism (HI) appear particularly interesting

(Rafałowski 2014). The RCI follows the logic of the rational-choice theory in considering the institutional choices as conscious and purposeful designs reflecting the actors' endogenous preferences, hence independent of its surrounding context. Contrarily, the HI approach emphasizes the role of structural-historical context in shaping the immediate strategic choices of political actors, including their reproduction over time. This approach gained impetus when, contrary to what had been commonly believed by the early scholars of post-communist transition, the institutional re-building and structuring of the political competition were nothing close to “rebuilding the boat at open sea” (Elster 1993). Indeed, empirical studies have demonstrated that political developments in the region, at least at their initial stage, were strongly influenced by historical, structural and cultural legacies of the past (Elster, Offe, and Preuss 1998; Kitschelt et al. 1999; Kopstein et al. 2003; Offe 1991).

I share the HI perspective on the crucial importance of the historical-structural context, but I integrate it with an additional element, namely the impact of the immediate-strategic opportunities generated by the transition mode. Consequently, my analysis is built on the core assumption that both these factors have not only influenced the initial strategies and choice of political actors in Georgia and Moldova but have also provided a framework for their continuous adjustments “in response to new opportunities or constraints presented by the situation they confront” (Jones Luong 2002). Although the ultimate focus of my research is on political outcomes that institutional choices have generated in Georgia and Moldova, the understanding of their origins and evolution is a crucial step in reconstructing the entire sequence of this relationship.

My enthusiasm for exploring the role of the institutional variables in structuring party development does not imply, however, that I completely neglect the agency factor and the informal political dimension. After all, self-motivated gains maximization has been identified as the main cause of institutional engineering (Benoit 2007), and there is no reason to believe that political actors in Georgia and Moldova behaved otherwise. Hence, it is quite safe to assume, especially if confronted with empirical evidence, that with the unfolding of transition from the Soviet rule, they have capitalized on political learning in pursuing their own goals through institutional manipulation. In line with this logic, some scholars have noted the alleged difficulty in analysing the institutional determinants as “constituent assemblies tend to have (or to arrogate for themselves) what the Germans call *Kompetenz-Kompetenz*—the power to determine their own powers” (Elster 1996, 63) while constitutional engineering (Sartori 1994) proved to be a battleground for constant struggles of power (Elgie and Zielonka 2001). Nevertheless, I believe that the endogenous nature of institutional choices does not nullify the impact they have on shaping political outcomes and that the ‘endogeneity trap’ should not be as overemphasized. Three good reasons support these claims.

Firstly, as suggested by Elster et al. (1998), the nature of the institutional choices is not determined by the very fact of being crafted by political actors, but rather by the circumstances surrounding their design.

In other words, outside authoritarian political contexts the content of political engineering – rather than being a deliberate design of the ruling elite – is an outcome of inter-party bargaining or is dictated by external circumstances such as a military conflict or pressure from international organizations. Hence, it can be argued that the fact “that institutional choice is endogenous to participants’ preferences does not imply that the institutional effects are endogenous as well” (Shvetsova 2003, 207). Secondly, even if it is true that electoral design in post-Soviet polities has, to a great extent, reflected the interests of their crafters, the level of uncertainty concerning the real-world outcomes surrounding institutional engineering is already a sufficient reason for rejecting the endogeneity of its consequences (Taagepera 2002). Indeed, even though institutional designs have mirrored the interests of the political elite, the uncertainty generated by power asymmetries and the fluid political context (Jones Luong 2002) means that “these interests may not always be best served by the changes that they induce” (Robinson 2012, 301).

Thirdly, usually, the choice of a specific institution is dictated by its anticipated consequences, which “confirms rather than mitigate” its independent effects (Benoit 2007, 369; see also Birch 2003). Putting it differently, institutional outcomes “can be (...) predicted and determined” (Sartori 1994, 29) – and the very fact that lawmakers, ultimately, “end up adopting the system that in their own understanding is perceived as being in their own immediate advantage (...)” is a very clear consequence of this belief (Sartori 1994, 29). The validity of this claim is confirmed by the widespread and “strong belief in the influence of institutions, (which) led most political actors (in the post-Soviet region) to the conclusion that instead of a change in their behaviour, an amendment to the constitution might pose a solution to the political problems” (Protsyk 2006). All in all, to fully account for the political consequences of the institutional choices one should be “comprehensively looking at the dynamic interplay between the forces exerted by political institutions on political parties and forces exerted by parties to reshape institutions” (Benoit 2007, 370).

### **III. Case selection and methodology**

This thesis seeks to provide insights into the trajectories of party and party system development in two post-Soviet republics – Georgia and Moldova and the role of formal institutional variables in the process. I must admit that, at first, the idea of including the two countries within a common research project was born out of my broader intellectual curiosity, yet there are a few analytical reasons, which render this choice fruitful from a scientific perspective.

Firstly, both countries are commonly overlooked by post-communist comparative politics. This does not mean that no scholar has ever engaged in studying Georgia or Moldova; yet, they are usually included in multi-authored volumes of a more general profile (S. Berglund et al. 2013; Kulik and Pshizova 2005) or large-N – and often quantitative – studies of some narrowly defined aspects of party development in the region (Bader 2010; Birch 2003; Elgie and Moestrup 2008; 2016; Stykow 2016; 2019). There are also a few, but

very informative studies on early stages of political transition in both countries (Chinn and Roper, 1995; Crowther, 1997, 2007, 2014; Jones, 1996, 2012; Nodia and Pinto Scholtbach, 2006; Roper, 2002a, 2008a, 2008b; Wheatley, 2005). Yet, to my knowledge, no comprehensive, up-to-date discussion on their political developments in English is currently available and I have frequently come across certain misinterpretations of their political experiences. This academic disregard for Georgia and Moldova is regretful not only because we still lack in-depth knowledge of the mechanisms of their party evolution, but also because both constitute interesting micro-laboratories in which traditional theoretical and methodological approaches can be tested.

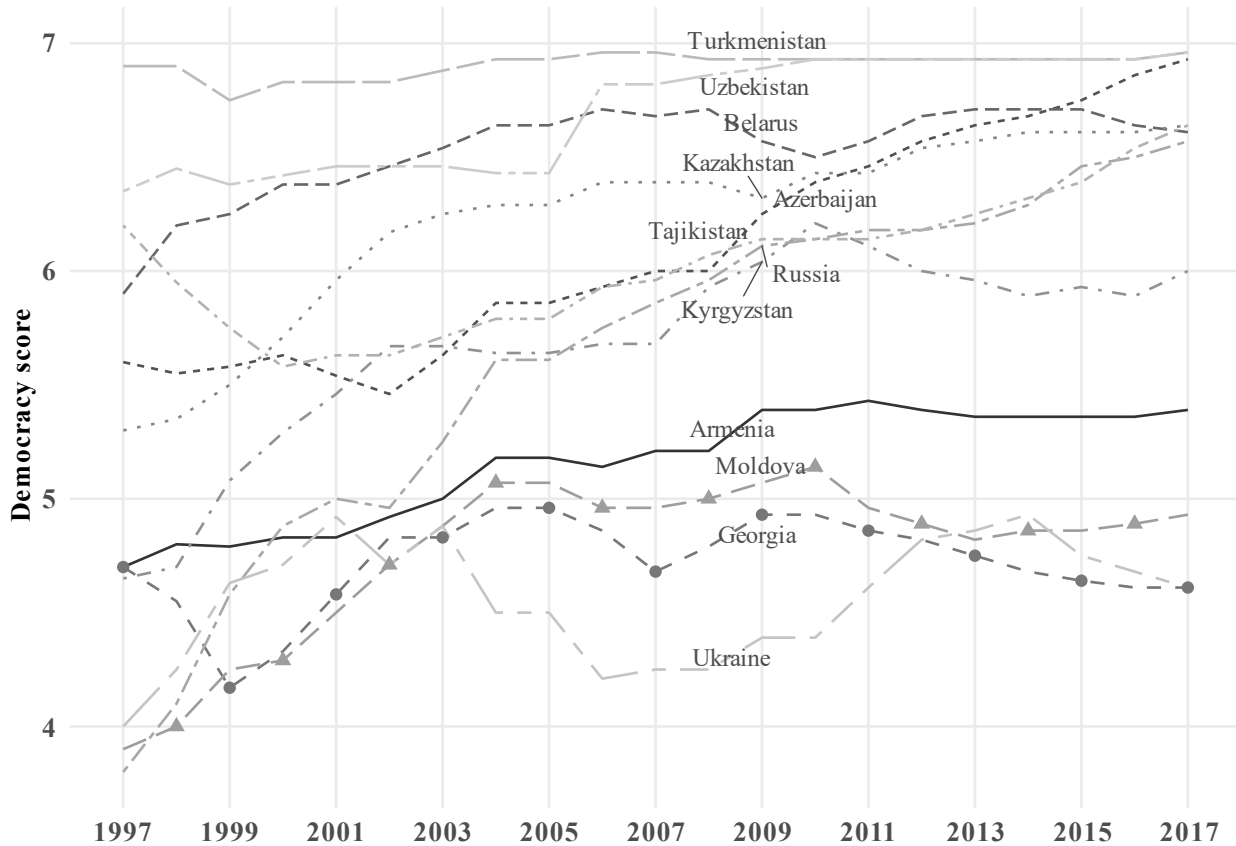
Secondly, the selection principle followed the logic of the “optimal combination of similarities and differences” (Bunce 1995, 95). More specifically, besides being comparable in terms of size and population, including the presence of minorities, the two countries share analogous historical legacies, both being part of the Russian Empire firstly and the Soviet Union subsequently. Furthermore, both lacked any substantial pre-communist multiparty, democratic experience on which newly emerging political actors could inspire themselves. Likewise, as the Soviet Union republics, both countries had transplanted an identical vertical political structure, despite differences regarding how power was organized. Furthermore, in both countries, the crucially relevant organized mass social movements opposing the communist rule were missing until at least the mid-1980s while the violent ethnic clashes in the aftermath of the Soviet Union collapse led to the loss of control over parts of their territories.

Finally, even though neither has reached full democratisation both republics are party-based and – along with Ukraine – among the most competitive political regimes in the region as demonstrated by figure 1<sup>8</sup>. Nevertheless, contrary to Ukraine (and several other FSRs), the scarcity of natural resources in Georgia and Moldova prevented the emergence of powerful economic actors who might have exerted considerable influence over their political development, in particular during the most fragile initial stages.

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<sup>8</sup> Both polities are frequently described by using several quasi-democratic denominators, including transitional governments, hybrid regimes, partly free polities, competitive authoritarianism or electoral democracies (McKensie 2014; Way and Levitsky 2002). They also obtain similar scores in international rankings such as the Bertelsmann Transformation Index and Polity5, besides the “Nations in Transit” depicted in figure 1.

**Figure 1. Democracy scores in Eurasia (1997-2017)**



Source: own elaboration based on data retrieved from “Nations in Transit” reports by Freedom House

Both countries, politically fragmented at the outset of transition, underwent similar transformative processes and developed a multiparty character of their polities. Nevertheless, the trajectories of their political development diverged: while Georgia embarked on a steady path towards power concentration, Moldova remained more inclined towards power dispersion, despite a period under one-party domination. Furthermore, after the first chaotic stages of party development, the political competition in Georgia mostly revolved around one strong party and a constellation of smaller, weakly consolidated formations. By contrast, in Moldova it was progressively organized around several increasingly stabilizing parties.

Hence, the third rationale behind the case selection is that the experiences of my two case studies appear to be particularly beneficial for a qualitative, interpretative analysis of the potential role of institutional variables in shaping these divergent political outcomes. Indeed, not only they adopted different solutions at the outset of transition from Soviet rule, but their institutional arrangements have also undergone at least a few formal changes throughout the period under examination. Such a unique condition labelled by political scientists as “natural experiment” (Casal Bértoa 2012) offers a good opportunity “to see precisely which

treatments – and which preexisting conditions – are associated with which patterns” (Hale 2014, 6) and to test the role of formal institutions in this process.

As far as methodology is concerned, the study undertakes a ‘small N’ design characterized by the ‘in-depth’, comparative study of two cases. In understanding the “*process* of party system formation and stabilization” (Ibenskas 2016) in Georgia and Moldova over time as well as the potential role of institutional variables in it, I rely on the congruence method. This approach fits well my research objectives for two reasons. Firstly, the congruence method is well suited for ‘small-N’ case studies entrenched in macro-political theories (George and Bennett 2005). From a theoretical perspective, my research objective is to “test the performance of the deductive theories in question” and determine their explanatory power through assessing the “degree of consistency between (their) predictions and the observed values of the dependant variables” (George and Bennett 2005, 199–200).

Secondly, I agree with the argument that the cases selected for ‘small-N’ qualitative studies should not necessarily constitute a “representative sample” nor that findings from such studies “must be capable of projecting a valid probability distribution of outcomes for the entire universe” (George and Bennett 2005, 200–201). This is consistent with the underlying assumption of research exploring neo-patrimonial Eurasian cases, according to which the relationship between formal institutions and political outcomes as well as the structuring power of formal over the informal dimension is highly context-dependent (Isaacs 2011). As such, my primary interest is to understand “whether and how” the institutional variables mattered in Georgia and Moldova, and not “how much they did” (George and Bennett 2005, 24). In other words, my research is concerned with providing “good historical explanations of particular cases” rather than necessarily “making generalizations that apply to broad population” (George and Bennett 2005, 22).

This thesis is based on a variety of sources. While I rely on secondary literature, given the limited country-specific research, the study is foremostly based on primary sources. To this aim, I consulted the regulatory frameworks, reports, party legislation as well as newspaper articles in original languages (where applicable) in addition to electoral results and extensive surveys (electoral, public opinion, etc.). Furthermore, as both Georgia and Moldova are frequently overlooked by large-N quantitative studies of parties and party systems institutionalization, I construct my own indexes and indicators based on primary data. Finally, some data were collected during the fieldwork conducted in both countries, which allowed me to better understand their broader socio-political contexts.

The small-N qualitative comparative analysis – if concentrated on less explored case studies – has a distinctive advantage of allowing a significant degree of investigative profundity in exploring the potentially structuring relationship between the intervening variables and expected outcomes. Yet what constitutes its main strength can easily be transformed into its main flaw. Indeed, it strongly encourages the temptation – to



which I must admit having fallen constantly in the process of working on this thesis – to focus excessively on the individual idiosyncratic experiences of the case studies while losing the sense of a broader, comparative picture. That is why, while there is still much more to be said about the political developments in Georgia and Moldova, the ultimate content of this research project represents a compromise between these two perspectives.

#### **IV. Structure of the thesis**

To fulfil the research tasks outlined in the previous sections, the thesis consists of seven chapters. The first chapter explores the origins of party systems by reconstructing structural, political, and social factors, thus setting the background for the subsequent analysis of party development and actors' institutional preferences. The discussion focuses on three periods: the pre-Soviet period (including the geopolitical conditions, social structure as well as the nature and role of political movements); the Soviet era (focusing on the impact of the Soviet rule on the structure of local governments as well as the degree of political mobilization and the process of transformation of the social structures); and the transition from Soviet rule leading to founding elections (highlighting the nature of regime change and the origins of the crucially important first institutional choices).

The analysis relies on two assumptions suggested by a large body of post-communist research: first, that the early initial institutional preferences of actors were considerably influenced by a set of important legacies (Elgie and Moestrup 2008), but also by “the critical role that chance plays in politics” (Hale 2004, 169); second, that the “(D)ecisions concerning patterns of institutional interaction and links between constituents and legislators established in the initial period of a legislature's existence have a disproportionate weight in determining what follows” (Crowther and Roper 1996, 149).

The following three chapters provide a general characteristic of political actors and party systems that emerged in Georgia and Moldova and discuss the degree of their possible stabilization in a cross-temporal, comparative perspective. Here, the main assumption is that the trajectory of party development does not necessarily follow a linear path. The focus on determining the possible cross-country and cross-temporal variation relies on several concepts and operational indicators commonly applied in institutionalization research. More specifically, Chapter 2 analyses how deeply parties have become rooted in their respective societies while Chapter 3 discusses the stability of their organizational structures.

Chapter 4 has two major objectives. Firstly, it establishes what types of party systems have emerged in both countries and to what degree they have stabilised over-time. This taxonomic exercise is conducted through the readjusted typology developed by Sartori (1976) and includes a theoretical discussion justifying this choice. Secondly, it reconstructs the dynamics of inter-party relations to determine the similarities and

differences between the two countries. By anchoring the analysis in broader Eurasian party research, the study highlights the variation in the degree and nature of power concentration/dispersion and the structure of political competition in both countries.

The core analytical and interpretative part of the thesis is contained in the subsequent chapters devoted to resolving its main research puzzle, namely, what is the role of institutional variables in the process of party development and stabilisation in Georgia and Moldova. Since both countries have undergone several comprehensive institutional reforms, I employ a configurative-interpretative framework to investigate this change over time.

To this aim, Chapter 5 explores the opportunities and constraints of the regime type through the lenses of two core aspects – the discipline of executive support for the government and the autonomy of the president to manipulate and control the support for political parties. Chapter 6 investigates the role of the electoral systems in the process of party development by examining how favourable (or not) they have been to the consolidation of party systems. Finally, Chapter 7 examines the impact of a less explored institutional factor, namely the party funding regime. Here the emphasis falls on assessing how friendly the financial regulations have been to different kinds of political entities (i.e. mainstream parties and new entrants) and to what extent they affected the patterns of inter-party competition. All three chapters offer insights into the cross-temporal evolution of the institutional variables and briefly discuss the motivations behind political reforms altering the status-quo.

The concluding part provides a comparative assessment of party system development in Georgia and Moldova in the context of its possible stabilisation and the potential role of institutional variables in this process as well as highlights the main lessons that can be drawn from this study.



## Chapter 1. Historical legacies and party system development

In their seminal study on the origins of institutional design in post-communist polities, Elster and colleagues have outlined a few key ways in which past legacies can condition the present, including the influence on “values, beliefs, habits, and frames of the peoples”, constraining strategic behaviour of political actors, providing models – positive and negative – for institutional arrangements and providing “a repertoire of arguments that can be used in political discourse” (Elster, Offe, and Preuss 1998, 60). The empirical evidence from the post-communist party research strongly suggests that these shadows of the past have continued to loom over the political developments in the post-communist region throughout the three decades of party development (Hausner, Jessop, and Nielsen 1995; Nodia 1996; Pop-Eleches 2007; Roper and Fesnic 2003). However, the exact nature and mechanisms of these legacies proved uneasy to capture and some scholars have also suggested to consider the “critical role that chance plays in politics” (Hale 2004, 169, see also McFaul 2001; Gel’Man 2008a).

In line with the analytical approach inspired by historical-institutionalism, the main aim of the present chapter is to track the sequence of events that constituted historical-structural and immediate-strategic contexts for the institutional choices of political actors in Georgia and Moldova in the aftermath of the collapse of Soviet rule. Then, the analysis seeks to investigate how these choices influenced the earliest phases of party development in both countries. Finally, the broader implicit goal of this exploratory inquiry is to position the process of party and party systems’ evolution within a broader socio- and geopolitical settings. All this will be particularly helpful in evaluating whether, and to what extent, political developments in both countries have been contingent on past legacies as well as on the early institutional arrangements.

Time and space limitations do not allow me to discuss the political history of both countries in a comprehensive way, hence the focus of this chapter rests on reconstructing the crucial structural, political and social factors, which I believe to have played a major role in shaping the political developments in both countries. To fulfil these research tasks, the empirical discussion is divided into three parts corresponding to the pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet historical periods. The pre-Soviet era is analysed through the lenses of the geopolitical conditions, the social structures, as well as the nature and role of political movements. The crucial factors under the Soviet regime are the nature of the communist rule, the extent of political mobilization as well as the transformation of the social structures caused, *inter alia*, by forced migration and/or industrialization. The final part of the analysis concentrates on the role of crucial events and critical junctures surrounding the collapse of the Soviet rule in determining the initial institutional choices. It then discusses the conjoint role of these factors in shaping the early stages of political developments in both countries. The conclusive part of the chapter provides a summary of the main findings in a comparative perspective.

## 1.1. Pre-Soviet period

### 1.1.1. Historical synopsis

#### *Georgia*

Prior to its incorporation into the Russian Empire in the wake of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Georgia had little statehood experience as its territories were united in the Kingdom of Georgia only between 1008-1490<sup>1</sup>. Following the Turco-Mongol occupation in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, the Kingdom disintegrated into three smaller, sovereign entities<sup>2</sup> characterized by distinguished administrative systems, which, together with several other principalities, roughly covered the territory of contemporary Georgia. These regional identities would play an important political role in the first years of post-Soviet Georgia.

The country's position, strategically located in the Transcaucasian region sandwiched among three powerful neighbours (the Russian, Ottoman, and Persian Empires), triggered intense competition for its exclusive control during the late 17<sup>th</sup> and early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Unable to successfully defend themselves and fearing incorporation into the Muslim empires, the Orthodox Christian rulers of the Imereti and Kartli-Kakheti kingdoms had no choice but to ask for protection from the Russian tsar. However, this decision, taken in the wake of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, proved fatal for the independence of the Georgian kingdoms and principalities. Despite the initial reassurances on upholding their autonomous statuses, all Georgian entities were eventually incorporated into the Russian Empire and remained under the tsarist rule for more than a century (1801-1921)<sup>3</sup>. The absorption was accompanied by the *de facto* aggregation of the Georgian territories and their distribution among the two provinces (*guberniyas*), Tiflis<sup>4</sup> and Kutaisi, further integrated with the two additional administrative districts of Adjara and Artvin (Hille 2010).

Under the rule of the Russian Empire, intellectual and political life in Georgia focused mostly on painless survival in tsarist Russia. In this context, the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the emergence of three distinctive movements: firstly, on the right side of the political spectrum, a small circle of intellectual elite, loyal to the Tsar and focused on nostalgic nationalism, organized around the founding “fathers” of Georgian

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<sup>1</sup> The Kingdom was reigned from the Middle Ages until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century by the Bagrationi dynasty, one of the oldest extant Christian ruling dynasties in the world. After the disintegration of the Kingdom of Georgia at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the dynasty remained in power in the three breakaway kingdoms of Kakheti, Kartli and Imereti until forced into exile by the Russian authorities. The restoration of the Bagrationi dynasty would, later on, become one of the political claims made by the 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> century liberation movements opposing tsarist rule in Georgia (Mikaberidze 2007).

<sup>2</sup> Respectively, the Imereti, Kakheti and Kartli kingdoms. The Kakheti and Kartli kingdoms merged into a single Kartli-Kakheti one in 1762.

<sup>3</sup> Starting with the the Kartli-Kakheti kingdom's incorporation into the Empire tsar Alexander I's decree in September 1801, followed by the Kingdom of Imereti (1804) and the remaining Principalities of Guria (1812), Mingrelia (1813), Abkhazia (1864) and Svanetia (1858).

<sup>4</sup>The capital city of Georgia re-named to Tbilisi in 1936.

intelligentsia, Princes Alexandre Chavchavadze (1786-1846) and Grigol Orbeliani (1800-1883). With the second generation of intellectuals led by Iliia Chavchavadze (1837-1907) and Niko Nikoladze (1843-1928), the nationalist groups became more pragmatic – by assuming more anti-imperialist positions, they focused on the promotion of the Georgian culture and language among the masses, especially in the countryside, during the harshest period of russification<sup>5</sup>.

The split within the nationalist group gave rise to a new, reformist liberal stream inspired by progressive liberal and socialist ideas. The group called *meore dasi* (“second generation”) and led by Nikoladze and Akaki Tsereteli (1840-1915) imprinted its ideological line on reforms, including the introduction of state-regulated capitalism. *Meore dasi* remained highly critical of the oppressive imperial bureaucracy, yet it was cautious in openly antagonizing the regime since its success in implementing its flagship reforms depended entirely on the Russian administration. Similar to the nationalist ideas, liberalism did not appeal to the lower strata of the society and its social basis remained limited to urban centres (Muskhelishvili, Samsonadze, and Daushvili 2012). During the course of the 1870s the younger liberal generation became gradually absorbed by populist movements that originated in Russia and united into an All-Russian Social Revolutionary Organization established in 1875. Their main objective was to regain independence through revolutionary means, yet, at least until the 1880s, the populist movement did not manage to gain substantive support from neither the peasantry nor the emerging working class.

By the turn of the century, nationalists, liberals and populists were well-organized and ideologically diverse, but lacked the capacity to successfully appeal to masses. This was promptly exploited by the “third-generation” wave (*mesame dasi*) of Georgian intellectuals who launched an organized social democratic movement in the early 1890s (Mikaberidze 2007). Besides spreading the Marxist’s ideas in Georgia, the main political objective of *mesame dasi* led by Noe Zhordania (1868-1953) and Filipp Makharadze (1868-1941), was to overrule tsarism. Marxism proved particularly appealing to Georgians by offering “both an analysis of their contemporary situation and the solution to it” (Suny 1994, 145). It appeared to endow the Georgian working class, for long largely unnoticed by the major political movements, with a clear roadmap on how to take over the control over Georgia. In this way, unlike in other colonies of the Russian Empire, the liberation movement was not led by the nationalists but by socialist groups<sup>6</sup>.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, all of the discussed movements consolidated and transformed into political parties, mostly linked to the Russian organizations of similar ideological profiles – the

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<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, despite its persistency in emancipating peasants through culture, the nationalists movement did not succeed in acquiring large social following and remained circumscribed to a rather restricted circle of cultural elite (Jones 2005, 37) .

<sup>6</sup> For an excellent account of the history of the Georgian Socialism see Jones (2005).

nationalists formed the National Democratic Party while the liberals became part of the Constitutional Democratic Party (Kadets)<sup>7</sup> remaining mainly supported by the bourgeoisie. The populists established a local committee of the Russian Socialist Federalist Party<sup>8</sup> appealing mainly to the moderately nationalist intelligentsia and students. Finally, as a local branch of the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party<sup>9</sup> of Menshevik type, the Social Democrats enjoyed the broadest social basis composed of the working class and peasantry (Mikaberidze 2007).

By the time of full independence declared on 26<sup>th</sup> May 1918<sup>10</sup>, following the Bolsheviks' seizure of power in 1917, Georgians had a strong national consciousness and a well-organized political elite. Being aware of the unstable geopolitical situation in the region, the leaders of the newly independent country posed themselves three major goals: pursuing nation- and state-building inspired by the European constitutional orders, maintaining good relations with the Bolshevik Russia as well as obtaining international recognition for their newly emerged state. The failure to fulfil their last objective proved to be of crucial importance for the future: lack of Western support for the Georgian case<sup>11</sup> posed the end to its short-lived statehood experience by leaving the Bolshevik Russia unconstrained in invading Georgia in February 1921 as well as incorporating it into the USSR in 1922 (G. Kandelaki 2014).

Despite its very short life, the first independent Georgian republic left some important legacies. The elections to the Constituent Assembly were held in February 1919 according to the party-list proportional representation in a single nationwide district based on a quite progressive universal suffrage<sup>12</sup> – fifteen parties run for 130 mandates<sup>13</sup>. The results clearly confirmed the domination of the Social Democrats led by Noe

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<sup>7</sup> The Constitutional Democratic Party was founded in 1905 as a centre-right political organization with clearly liberal ideology. Their program included, *inter alia*, full citizenship for all of Russia's minorities as well as a liberal economy.

<sup>8</sup> The Russian Socialist Federalist Party was founded in 1904 in Geneva. Their political program included autonomy for all nationalities within the Russian Empire and a federal form of state. It was committed to revolution against Russian absolutism.

<sup>9</sup> Political party formed by Lenin in 1898 in Minsk of left-wing profile based on Marxist ideology.

<sup>10</sup> The first step towards independence was taken together by the leaders of the three Transcaucasian republics, namely Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia which formed the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic in late April 1918. Nevertheless, the experiment failed only a month and four days later, in May 1918 (Świętochowski 2004; Saparov 2015).

<sup>11</sup> A series of treaties were signed between Soviet Russia and Western powers (such as the Anglo-Soviet Treaty, March 1921) as well as Kemalist Turkey (Kars Treaty, November 1921) in order to reassure the non-interference of international actors in Transcaucasia. Furthermore, concomitantly, the League of Nations rejected Georgian application in December 1920 (Suny 1994, 23).

<sup>12</sup> Allowing the participation of men and women above twenty years old under the decree adopted by the National Council already in November 1918 (Papuashvili 2012b).

<sup>13</sup> Obtaining the following results: Georgian Social Democratic Labour Party (established in 1918 by Georgian Mensheviks) with 109 seats (81 percent of votes), the Georgian Socialist-Federalist Revolutionary Party and National Democratic Party each with eight seats (6.7 percent and 6.1 percent respectively) while Socialist-

Zhordania on the political scene which – with 102 mandates (out of 155) held a clear mandate to form a government (Nohlen, Grotz, and Hartmann 2001).

In three years the Parliament passed more than a hundred legislative bills on a variety of issues (Jones 2014, 9), but a more important achievement was the adoption of the first democratic Constitution in February 1921. The ultimate shape of the basic law<sup>14</sup> was an interesting mix of solutions inspired by Swiss and French models (Papuashvili 2012b, 334) coupled with social-democratic ideas of the ruling party<sup>15</sup>. In 149 articles arranged in seventeen chapters, it envisaged a democratic order that could not be challenged by any future government (art. 1) based on the parliamentary system of government<sup>16</sup> – the legislative powers were conferred to the parliament, elected for three years through the proportional electoral formula and universal suffrage. As a legislative organ, the Assembly controlled the executive through the election of the head of government (for a one-year term, limited to two terms) and disposed of the right to exercise the censure motion. The government could neither dissolve the parliament nor dispose of the legislative initiative while the judicial branch was to be regulated by specific legislative acts. Finally, the popular control over the legislative and the executive branches was assured through instruments of direct participation such as the election of representatives, legislative initiative (on the request of 30 thousand electors) and referendums<sup>17</sup> (Papuashvili 2017; Matsaberidze 2014).

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Revolutionary Party won five seats (4.2 percent). The electoral result of Bolsheviks who received only 779 votes (out of over 550 000) clearly indicated their failure in seeking support among Georgian working class. In the by-elections held in spring 1919, the number of seats of social democrats decreased to 102 in favour of the Armenian Revolutionary Party and the Georgian National Party. See Nohlen et al.(2001).

<sup>14</sup> The entire text of the Constitution of 1921 can be consulted in (Papuashvili 2012a)

<sup>15</sup> Including a number of provisions on human and social rights (rather advanced for the period in which it was drafted), including, *inter alia*, the abolishment of the death penalty (art. 19), freedom of belief and conscience (art. 31), separation of state and church (art. 144), freedom of speech and printed media (art. 32), freedom of assembly (art. 33), right to strike (art. 38), free obligatory primary education (art. 110), a 48-hours working week (art. 123), violation of labour laws punished by criminal law (art. 127) as well as regulation of property rights (art. 114).

<sup>16</sup> Interestingly, the presidential system was rejected as potentially destabilizing for the Georgian democracy (Papuashvili 2012b).

<sup>17</sup> Although the authors of the Constitution considered the direct popular democracy of the Swiss type as being superior to a traditional representative one, they combined the principles of both to avoid potential threats from the autonomous regions to the Georgian territorial integrity. In this regard, even though the Constitution established that Georgia was a unitary state, the principle of self-government was seen as the best way to assure the control of the central authorities on the decentralized administrative structures and quiet down any potential ethnic tensions (Jones 2014).



## *Moldova*

Historically, the territory of contemporary Moldova – known as Bessarabia and located between the rivers of Prut and Dniester<sup>18</sup> – constituted an integral part of the Principality of Moldavia<sup>19</sup> whose strategic geographic location remained of constant interest to the neighbouring Russian, Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian Empires. While the latter contented itself with the annexation of the northern part of the Principality (known as Bukovina) in 1775, the dominance over the rest of the Principality of Moldavia was eventually established by Imperial Russia under the 1812 Treaty of Bucharest ending a series of Russian-Ottoman wars (Boldur 2016b).

Prior to that, the Principality, along with that of Wallachia, remained under the rule of the Ottoman Empire since 1523 from which it enjoyed a large autonomy with regard to its internal affairs, including – unlike in other Ottoman colonies in the Balkans – freedom of religion<sup>20</sup> (Clark 1927, chap. 2), in exchange for tributes. Nevertheless, since the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the internal opposition to the Sultan's rule was on the rise leading to gradual rapprochement between the Moldavian and Wallachian princes with the Russian Tsar Peter the Great (ruling between 1682-1725)<sup>21</sup>. The Sultan response to these acts of insubordination consisted in the installation of the Phanariotes regime<sup>22</sup>, which marked the end of the two Principalities' autonomy and severely hindered their development (Boldur 2016b).

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<sup>18</sup> Traditionally, Bessarabia used to denominate a much smaller portion of its land, but since the Russian annexation in 1812, the name was extended to the entire territory, which lay between the Prut and Dniester. At the time of Russian incorporation the territory of the contemporary Republic of Moldova roughly corresponded to two-thirds of the historic Bessarabia, which also included today's Ukrainian province of Budjak located between the Dniester and Danube rivers in its south as well as a small inland territory in its north. In this chapter I use the term Bessarabia as equivalent to the contemporary Republic of Moldova (Brezianu and Spânu 2010).

<sup>19</sup> A political entity established in 1359 covering the territories between the Eastern Carpathians and the river Dniestr. The Principality of Moldavia included the regions of Bessarabia and Bukovina. The most flourishing period in the history of the Moldavian Principality can be dated between 1457-1504 when, under prince Stephen the Great (Ștefan cel Mare), it successfully defended independence of his land from more powerful neighbours, especially Turks (Brezianu and Spânu 2010).

<sup>20</sup> The inhabitants of Moldavian and Wallachian provinces were generally of Christian Orthodox belief.

<sup>21</sup> This tightening relationship was manifested by the increasing requests of some of the Princes for the Tsar's protection from the Ottoman Empire based on the religious, Christian Orthodox, proximity, but going also beyond the symbolic gestures – in fact, one of the Princes, Dmitrie Cantemir participated at the Tsar's side in the Russo-Turkish war (1710-1713). Nevertheless, as the conflict was lost by the Russian forces, Moldavia and Wallachia remained under the Ottoman control for another century.

<sup>22</sup> During the Phanariotes regime (1711-1812), the local rulers (*Hospodars*) were largely replaced by members of the Greek community originally from the quarter of Istanbul called Phanar. Generally, their mandate acquired through generous contributions to the Sultan's coffers was rather short (on average lasting approximately two years) and mostly aimed at the accumulation of personal wealth. The general lack of interest of the Phanariotes princes for the fate of the lands and peoples under their rule resulted, with very few exceptions, in inefficient administration and regional underdevelopment (Brezianu and Spânu 2010; Vintilă-Ghițulescu 2009).

The long-awaited liberation from the Ottoman rule brought by the 1812 Treaty of Bucharest certainly did not turn out as expected by the Moldavian princes: as a result of the peace agreement the eastern part of the Principality, i.e. the Bessarabia, was *de facto* separated from the rest of its lands and incorporated into the Russian Empire (Nistor 1939). Furthermore, the continuous risk of subversive movements fostering the reunification with the rest of the Principality led the Tsar to revoke the autonomous status of Bessarabia in 1829 leading to its complete absorption into the imperial political and administrative structures (King 1993).

This historical moment is crucial for understanding the political and identity-related tensions in contemporary Moldova and its relationship with neighbouring Romania. While Bessarabia remained under the Russian rule, the western part of the Principality of Moldavia unified with that of Wallachia into the United Principalities – the core of the modern Romanian state – led by a common leader, Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza. In 1878 The United Principalities gained independence from the Ottoman Empire and formed the dynastic Kingdom of Romania in 1881, but the efforts in reclaiming its missing Bessarabian part never ceased (King 1994).

The political life in Bessarabia under the Russian rule was relatively inactive until the 1905 Revolution and concentrated around three major ideological camps (Cernencu and Boțan 2009, 52). The first was represented by liberals and national-oriented activists, mostly of noble origins, loyal to the Russian Emperor. A more “radical” stream began to emerge towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century as a response to increasing policies of cultural assimilation carried out by the Imperial administration at the expense of the local population. The most influential among these groups, the pan-Romanian organization ‘Bessarabian Countrymen’ (*Pamantenia Basarabeana*), was established by Bessarabian students at the University of Dorpat (Tartu). Upon his return to Chișinău in 1905, one of its leaders, Ion Pelivan (1876-1954, the future minister of foreign affairs of independent Bessarabia), launched another organization, the Society for Moldovan National Culture (*Societatea pentru Cultura Națională*) advocating for the autonomous status of Bessarabia within the Empire based on the recognition of Moldovans as the titular ethnic group as well as the introduction of Romanian as the language of instruction and public administration (King 2000, 40; see also Danu 2015)<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Members of the Society, such as Pelivan, Constantin Stere (1865-1936), Ion Inculeț (1884-1940) and Pan Halippa (1883-1979) (all future leaders of the country), launched the first Romanian-language newspaper, ‘Bessarabia’, which gathered the most prominent intellectuals of that period, in 1906. The journal was soon closed down and replaced by a more moderate ‘Bessarabian life’ (*Viața Basarabiei*) – also soon outlawed by the local Russian governor who forced its founders into exile (Danu 2015). Concomitantly, Romanian nationalists had been gradually exposed by increased pressure from the Russian nobility and the Russian Orthodox Church to withdraw from the Bessarabian religious and cultural institutions. The second, more “moderate” group, concentrated around the ‘The Moldovan’ (*Moldovanul*) journal, pursuing economic reforms and support for national culture. However, as the circle consisted mostly of nobility loyal to imperial rule, it was much more moderate in requests related to

The second major group concentrated around young intellectuals who formed a local branch of the Russian Socialist Revolutionary Party influenced by the radical ideas emerging in Russia. The group was acting mainly through terroristic means – between 1902-1911 its members launched two hundred attacks aimed at establishing a temporary revolutionary dictatorship. The party postulated for a broad autonomy of Bessarabia within the Russian democratic republic based on the self-determination principle, laic state, eight-hour working-day, the prohibition of using minors as the working force and the right to form trade unions (Cernencu and Boțan 2009, 70–72).

Finally, the unconditionally loyal tsarist supporters, mostly of Russian origins transplanted in great number from the mainland to the Bessarabian province, united at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in a far-right Patriotic League of Bessarabia (*Liga Patriotică Basarabeană*) led by Pavel Aleksandrovich Krushevan. The main aim of the League was to promote Russian nationalism and racist sentiments, in particular towards the Jewish population<sup>24</sup>, while the core points of its political program included the preservation of the Russian Empire, promotion of the Christian Orthodox faith as the dominant religion as well as maintaining the status of the Russian language as *lingua franca* without relating in any way to the issue of Moldovan identity (Brezianu and Spânu 2010).

Following the instauration of the conservative administration elected to the Russian Duma in February 1907 who strongly opposed concessions to the colonies, all the main national Bessarabian movements were forced to retreat, only to re-emerge a decade later following the revolutionary turmoil in Russia (Hitchins 1994, 249–50). To this end, as early as 1914, former members of the Society for Moldovan National Culture in exile in Switzerland launched the Moldovan National Party<sup>25</sup> advocating for the autonomous status of Bessarabia including the independent legislative assembly – transformed into the request of independence once Bolsheviks seized the power in 1917 – and introduction of Romanian as the official language (King 2000). The party gained significant support from the local population as well as from the Romanian sympathizers who sponsored the printing of their journal, ‘The Moldovan word’ (*Cuvânt moldovenesc*) and setting up of the University of Chișinău (Moldova Liberă 2018).

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Bessarabia’s autonomy. The group ceased to exist after just one year since its foundation; nevertheless, it stimulated an intense and fruitful debate among political and cultural elite on the question of national identity (Boldur 2016a; King 2000; Țurcanu 2012).

<sup>24</sup> The League of Bessarabia was responsible for the pogrom of Jews in the Bessarabian capital, Chișinău launched in 1903. During the two-day anti-Jewish riot, forty-seven people were killed and around six hundred injured. Another pogrom was organized in 1905, however to a lesser extent (19 Jews were killed and 56 injured). For more details see Zipperstein (2018).

<sup>25</sup> In general terms, the Moldovan National Party was a union of the two most important political streams: Ion Inculeț was a former Socialist Revolutionary Party member who maintained close links with the Provisional Government in Russia, while Pan Halippa was a representative of the Moldovan Bloc, part of the pan-Romanian movement (Boldur 2016a).

The liberation wave triggered by the 1917 October Revolution inspired the two central Bessarabian organizations – the Moldavian Central Soldiers Committee of All Bessarabia together with the Peasants' Congress<sup>26</sup> – to establish the National Council of Bessarabia (*Sfatul Țării*)<sup>27</sup>, which announced the creation of the independent Moldavian Democratic Republic in February 1918 (Boldur 2016a; Țurcanu 2012).

During its first constitutive meeting Sfatul Țării decided upon the political structure of the country and elected its executive body, the Council of Directors General composed of nine members (seven Moldovans, one Ukrainian and one Jew)<sup>28</sup> while the President of the Assembly Ion Inculeț was, at the same time, appointed as the President of the Republic. However, contrary to the Georgian experience, the ultimate objective of the Moldavian leaders was not the sovereignty of the newly created state, but the unification with the Kingdom of Romania<sup>29</sup>. The reunification was sealed under the Act of Union adopted on 9<sup>th</sup> of April 1918<sup>30</sup> based on a number of preconditions, including the autonomous status, the right to maintain a separate legislative chamber and the control over the local administration as well as the participation of Bessarabian representatives in the executive (two representatives) and legislative (proportional to population) bodies (Hitchins 1994).

Yet the long-awaited historical reunion with the 'motherland' proved much less idyllic than expected. In fact, on the one hand, the economic and social conditions of the province improved due to investments made by the Romanian authorities, which considered Bessarabia an integral part of the Kingdom. By the same token, the restoration of Romanian-language education significantly increased the literacy rate among Bessarabia's inhabitants. On the other hand, however, the reorganization of local administration reduced the

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<sup>26</sup> Both bodies were created at the beginning of 1917 to gather the representatives of the local population, earlier concentrated in the respective administrative and political structures of the Russian Empire.

<sup>27</sup> Sfatul Țării was composed of 150 deputies elected indirectly through various elective councils of which forty-four were elected by soldiers' councils, thirty-six by the Peasants' Congress, twenty-one by county and communal commissions, sixteen by professional and ethnic associations and only ten members by political parties. Seventy percent of its members was of Moldavian ethnicity while the remaining thirty percent comprised the representatives of the national minorities, including Russians, Bulgarians, Jews, and others, who disposed of twenty-nine seats. For more details see (Clark 1927, chap. XVII; Nistor 1939, 281).

<sup>28</sup> The nine Directorate Generals regarded the following issues: agriculture, internal affairs, education, finance, railroads, armed forces, justice, industry and trade, and foreign affairs. In addition, an Executive Clerk Office of the Council of Directors General was set, in order to facilitate their daily activities (Clark 1927).

<sup>29</sup> The quest for re-unification was inspired not only by the historical factors but also by some more trivial, practical reasons. More concretely, the infant Moldavian statehood was unable to suppress the internal disorders such as continuous peasant attacks on the noble estates as well as to effectively protect its citizens from external threats such as Russian soldiers under the Bolshevik influence who, retreating from the Carpathian front after the end of World War I, were sacking and terrorizing the local population (King 1993).

<sup>30</sup> The Union of Bessarabia with the Kingdom of Romania was adopted by eighty-six favourable votes against three contrary and thirty-six abstained (mainly among the ethnic minorities) and conditioned upon the recognition of the Bessarabian local autonomy and the continuation of its legislative and executive bodies. The Union was reconfirmed at the Paris Peace conference in 1920 (Hitchins 1994).

accessibility of Bessarabians to public services while students from the province were objects of constant repressions as suspected Bolshevik agents (King 2000). Furthermore, the Romanians remained irrespective of the rights of ethnic minorities – only in the 1930s the Russian-speaking population was granted the right to education in its native language (Skvortsova 2002).

Likewise, from the political perspective, the re-unification was quite disappointing for the Bessarabian leaders as their equal status granted in the Union Act was generally not respected<sup>31</sup>. They could also hardly adapt to the Romanian political culture based on personal, clientelist networks and court intrigues (Hitchins 1994). During the general elections held in the re-united Kingdom of Romania in 1919, the main Bessarabian political formation, the Moldovan National Party – renamed to Bessarabian Peasants' Party (or Moldavian National Democratic Party) in 1918 – won almost the totality of regional votes and emerged as the third political force obtaining seventy-two seats (out of 568) in the Assembly and thirty-five mandates (out of 216) in the Senate (Nohlen and Stöver 2010). However, with time, the common Bessarabian front started to crumble and, eventually, disintegrated into smaller factions, mostly absorbed by the Romanian political parties – e.g. the remains of the Bessarabian Peasants' Party merged into the Romanian National Liberal Party in 1923.

On the other front, the re-unification of Bessarabia with the Romanian kingdom constituted a significant loss for the Bolshevik (and later Soviet) Russia which never came to terms with it. However, unlike in the Georgian case, its international approval at the Paris Peace Conference in 1920<sup>32</sup> successfully prevented the Red Army from an immediate military takeover. Instead, Bolsheviks concentrated their efforts on winning the Bessarabian population through other means: in 1919 the Bessarabian Soviet Socialist Republic (Bessarabian SSR) was established in Odesa (contemporary Ukraine) for the purpose of preparing a future military invasion of the province. However, the Bessarabian SSR was dismantled shortly after the end of the Russian civil war (1917-1922).

The second Bolshevik attempt proved more successful and resulted in the foundation of the Moldavian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (MASSR) in 1924 on the territory of the contemporary Transnistrian region located on the Western bank of Dniester along with several districts divested from the Ukrainian SSR. The capital of Bessarabia, Chişinău, was chosen as the capital of MASSR in order to underline the allegedly illegal annexation of the province by the Romanian Kingdom. Despite its name, the newly established republic had little in common with Bessarabia – its lands had never related to the province

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<sup>31</sup> In fact, once becoming an integral part of the Kingdom of Romania, the Bessarabian political structures were completely absorbed by the Romanian ones.

<sup>32</sup> The reunification was endorsed by France, Italy, United Kingdom and Japan, yet rejected by the US and the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, as Japan failed to ratify it, the treaty did not enter into force.

while its inhabitants were mostly of Ukrainian and Russian origins, migrated to the region as a result of intense industrialization<sup>33</sup>. Nevertheless, since its establishment, the MASSR served as a point of departure for the systematic preparation of the re-annexation of Bessarabia which, eventually, took place in August 1940 under the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact (Sută and Agapie 1997). As it will be discussed a bit further in this chapter, the relationship with the region of Transnistria will play a crucial role in setting the context for the early stages of institutional and political developments in independent Moldova.

### **1.1.2. Societal structure**

#### *Georgia*

In the course of the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries the Georgian society remained highly stratified and hierarchical (Jones 2005, 5), based on servitude and almost unlimited authority of princes over their lands and serfs<sup>34</sup> (Sunny 1994, 65). There are two important aspects that warrant emphasis. Firstly, the Georgian rural population was strictly patriarchal and organized in communities linked by closely-knit kinship ties while the control over the “everyday” life of the villages was preserved by their wisest members – the elderly – elected by the entire community. However, the highest authority was represented by noble landowners towards whom peasants had several obligations such as payment of duties (Sunny 1994, 81). Secondly, until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the urban population in Georgia did not form a cohesive, distinct social class, mainly due to pronounced ethnic, religious and linguistic differences while the urban artisans and merchants, mostly of Armenian origins, were left at the margins of the Georgian economy dominated by agriculture.

Interethnic conflicts were infrequent in Georgia under the imperial rule – the tensions regarded mostly the relations between Georgians and Armenians living in the capital city, Tiflis<sup>35</sup>, while the clashes among the Georgian, Abkhazian and Ossetian populations were rare until the Soviet period. Moreover, and in sharp contrast with the Moldovan experience, the migration of the Russian-speaking population to Transcaucasia was rather limited and regarded mostly public officials as well as – from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – military forces (Jones 2005).

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<sup>33</sup> According to some data in 1928 only about six-hundred workers out of 14 thousand were of Moldovan origins (Nistor 1939).

<sup>34</sup> The relations of feudal type were codified by King Vakhtang VI (r. 1716–24) and had the force of law until the 1840s when the Georgian feudal system was reorganized according to the Russian model. Furthermore, unlike in Europe, citizens of almost all of the urban social categories were serfs to the royal family, noble class or clergy. By the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century 77.3 percent of the urban population was serfs, around 7 percent belonged to the noble class and around 15 percent was constituted by free manufacturers or other classes (Sunny 1994, 86).

<sup>35</sup> As a result of the various administrative reforms implemented by the tsarist regime, which allowed for foreigners to accumulate power, until the 1890s Georgians did not play an important role in the city’s political life, conversely to the Armenian bourgeoisie. The Armenian domination intensified even more when in 1892 tsar Alexander III carried out a municipality reform according to which only the most wealthy citizens were allowed to run for Duma membership (Jones 2005).

The main legacy of the Russian empire with regard to the social structures was the eradication of the Georgian seigneurial system. As a result, the royal family was forced into exile and the local princes lost most of their political influence as the structure of local government was immediately changed by Russians – the governors were now nominated by the tsar while the privilege to inherit public office was revoked. Another imperial measure, introduced through a series of rural reforms carried out from 1832 onwards, limited the ownership of serfs exclusively to the noble class and transformed the traditional, rather informal relations between the nobility and peasants into a more strict and formal system<sup>36</sup>.

This alternation of the traditional social structures lies at the heart of the success of the social-democratic movement in the leading Georgian liberation campaign at the expense of the noble-based, nationalist groups whose status increasingly depended on the tsarist regime. Furthermore, the general disinterest of the nobility for the peasantry's resistance towards the oppressive Imperial policies encouraged “a massive revolutionary peasant movement under socialist direction” (Suny 1994, 111).

### *Moldova*

The society of the Principality of Moldavia was also hierarchically structured, even if with a few important differences with respect to the Georgian case. Firstly, the highest title in the Moldavian society – the *hospodar* (equivalent to the title of Prince)<sup>37</sup> was not hereditary, but acquired through elections by the second noble circle, the *boyars*. This, along with the fact that the choice was usually made among the legal and illegal descendants of *hospodars*, proved to be constraining enough for a single monarchic dynasty to emerge. *Hospodar* was a chief of administration responsible for appointing public officials, however, once Bessarabia lost its autonomous status within the Russian Empire in 1829, the role of the supreme administrator was assumed by a governor – a Tsar's representative with full discretionary powers.

Furthermore, peasantry (the largest class of the Moldavian society) was not in the relation of servitude with the local nobility: in fact, despite not being entitled to possessing their own land, peasants worked plots obtained under a sort of hereditary lease from monasteries or landlords in return for duties while retaining personal freedoms<sup>38</sup>. Villages were self-governed in accordance with traditional rules and practices by the elderly who, at the same time, were responsible for collecting taxes and duties as well as implementing the

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<sup>36</sup> In particular, the flag Emancipation Reform launched by the tsarist rule in 1861 turned out to be a “*disaster in both social and economic terms*” as it altered the traditional points of reference of Georgian peasantry by (Suny 1994, 111).

<sup>37</sup> With an exception of the Phanariote regime when the *hospodars* were nominated by Sultan in exchange for a high amount of money (Boldur 2016b).

<sup>38</sup> As a result, and contrary to the Georgian experience, the Emancipation reform of 1861 had little effects on Bessarabia composed mostly of free peasants: on the eve of the emancipation, serfs represented about 12 per cent of the rural population in central Bessarabia, most of which imported from Russia for non-agricultural activities (Hitchins 1994, 241).

instructions from the central authorities. The land property rights were eventually granted to peasants by the 1868 agrarian reform contributing to greater social stratification in the villages (Hitchins 1994, 242).

But what is of utmost importance in the context of this study is that since the period under Imperial Russia, Bessarabia was the object of an intense ethnolinguistic reshuffle. Its consequences will be of crucial importance during the political turmoil in the wake of Moldovan independence from Soviet rule. In fact, the complex issue of Moldovan ethnic identity and language constituted the key tool in the geopolitical battle between Romania and Soviet Russia in claiming their respective rights to the Bessarabian region: while the first underlined insistently the linguistic and cultural ties between Bessarabia and the Kingdom of Romania, the latter pursued an extensive propagandistic campaign in order to prove the distinctive ethnic identity of the Bessarabian population.

The annexation of the province and its forced separation from the remaining part of the Principality of Moldavia confronted the Russian Empire with a pressing necessity to prevent the local population from organizing any kind of reunification movement. There were two main pillars of this policy: on the one hand, the massive importation of population from other parts of the Empire to alter the ethnic composition of the local community; on the other hand, an intensive Russification aimed at cutting ties with the rest of the Principality as well as homogenizing the province culturally and linguistically (Boldur 2016a).

With regard to the first element, the censuses carried out by the imperial public officials revealed the constant decrease of the number of the native, Moldovan/Romanian speaking population<sup>39</sup>: according to estimations in 1817 it accounted for 86.9 percent of the total number of inhabitants, dwindling to 66.4 percent in 1858 and to 47.6 percent in 1897 (Brezianu and Spânu 2010). While the rural areas remained populated mostly by ethnic Moldovans, the urban centres were predominantly inhabited by foreigners<sup>40</sup>. Furthermore, although relatively underdeveloped and focused mostly in small, food processing factories, the industrial sector was also dominated by non-Moldovans: as reported by Hitchins “(a)s of 1902, 49.3 percent of the workers in enterprises employing 6 to 50 persons and 74.8 percent in enterprises with 50 to 500 persons were from Russia and Ukraine” (1994, p. 243).

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<sup>39</sup> The language spoken by the native inhabitants of Bessarabia is the same as that spoken in the rest of Principality of Moldavia, and, later on, in the Kingdom of Romania. It should be, thus, considered as Romanian (Ciscel 2007). Throughout this thesis I define the language spoken in Bessarabia and the contemporary Republic of Moldova as Moldovan/Romanian, unless otherwise specified.

<sup>40</sup> According to the census conducted in 1912 among the 14.7 per cent of the urban population, 37.2 percent was of Jewish origin, 24.4 percent of Russian, 15.8 percent of Ukrainian, and only 14.2 percent of Moldavian. The largest Bessarabian city, Chişinău, was a rather provincial one: in 1861 it counted only around 87 thousand inhabitants, increased to 128 thousand by 1915 (Hitchins, 1994, p. 243).



Secondly, the policy of Russification was executed through several channels, but most importantly since the 1860s Russian – being then the official state language in Bessarabia – became also the main language of education (the last Moldovan/Romanian grammar book was published in 1865)<sup>41</sup>. Consequently, the illiteracy rate among the native Bessarabian population was alarmingly high – among 15.4 literate inhabitants in 1897, only 6 percent was constituted by ethnic Moldovans (King 2000, 23). Finally, the cultural life in the province was in stagnation: in 1899 there was no book in Moldovan/Romanian at the Chişinău public library (King 2000, 22). Further Russification was exercised through the Eparchy of Chişinău remaining under the complete control of the Russian Orthodox Church since 1813: the clergy of Russian origins was systematically deployed to Bessarabia in order to promote Orthodox conservatism while all the subjects at the Chişinău seminary were taught exclusively in Russian (Țurcanu 2012).

At the eve of reunification with the Kingdom of Romania (1917-1918), Bessarabia became the object of intense Romanization: new schools and cultural institutions were established in order to awake the national spirit among Bessarabian peasants and reverse the effects of the centenary exposure to Russification. However, this grassroots work turned out to be much more complicated than expected – in fact, as the region remained for long isolated from the most important cultural trends from the ‘motherland’, its spoken language did not follow the same evolutionary path<sup>42</sup>. Consequently, the Romanization turned out to be “less a matter of resurrecting a lost identity than building one from scratch” (King 2000, 32).

On the other hand, after Bessarabia was lost to the Romanian Kingdom, Soviet Russia launched an intense propaganda machine to win back Bessarabians in view of a possible re-incorporation. The efforts were directed particularly to prove the existence of a separate Moldavian ethnicity – as a result, the Latin script used for the written Romanian language was replaced by the reformed Cyrillic one (in use until 1989)<sup>43</sup>. Another argument used in this battle pertained to class-based contrast: Moldovans would not constitute a separate ethnic group, but rather a distinctive class derived from free peasants as opposed to Romanian bourgeois landlords.

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<sup>41</sup> By the mid-1860s in Bessarabia there were around 400 schools with 7,000 pupils, but in 1880 only 23 schools remained. The eparchial congress of the clergy decided only in 1894 to introduce bilingual textbooks, however this was not followed in practice (Mitrasca 2002, 245).

<sup>42</sup> Consequently, even if the literacy rate increased substantially – from around nineteen to 55 percent – the Romanization agenda was not as successful as planned. For instance, by 1930 there were five different daily Russian-language daily newspapers and only two weekly in Romanian (King 2000).

<sup>43</sup> As a result, what the Soviet linguists would claim as a distinctive Moldovan language, was, in fact, Romanian written in Cyrillic.

Finally, as in other constituent republics, the Soviet authorities carried out a program of *korenizatsiya*<sup>44</sup> – a useful tool used for enhancing the participation of Moldovan peasants into the structures of the Communist Party as well as increasing the number of ethnic Moldovans in MASSR’s public institutions. The policy of sponsoring ethnic Moldovans ceased once the goal of re-incorporating Bessarabia into the USSR was achieved in 1940<sup>45</sup> (Ciscel 2007) and this would bear important consequences for its political future.

## 1.2. Soviet period

Georgian Bolsheviks were long prepared for Tbilisi’s capture by the soviet hand in April 1921<sup>46</sup> – as soon as the invasion was completed, they immediately set up a revolutionary committee (Revkom) as well as extended authority of the Kavburo (the Caucasian Bureau of the Russian Communist Party) over Georgia. However, the fate of the Transcaucasia caused a deep division among the Russian Communists leaders: while Lenin urged caution in proceeding with the ‘Sovietization’ of Menshevik Georgia, a faction led by Stalin, (an ethnic Georgian himself) and supported by another Georgian hardliner communist, Grigol Ordzhonikidze (1886-1937)<sup>47</sup>, urged a forced removal of Mensheviks from the Georgian state structures (Jones 2005).

In March 1922, following the proposal advanced by Lenin, the three Transcaucasian republics were united into a single entity, the Federative Union of Socialist Soviet Republics of Transcaucasia, and subsequently incorporated into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR)<sup>48</sup>. In December of the same year, at the First Congress of Soviets<sup>49</sup>, the Federative Union was transformed into the Transcaucasian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic (TSFSR): although formally the three constitutive republics maintained their autonomous status, they shared both the executive (Council of People’s Commissars) and the legislative

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<sup>44</sup> Literally “putting down the roots” – a policy carried on between the mid-1920s to the mid-1930s and consisting in promoting representatives of titular nationalities into administrative posts.

<sup>45</sup> For a more complete discussion on the Moldovan ethnic question see, *inter alia*, Ciscel (2007) and King (1994, 2000).

<sup>46</sup> Following the incorporation of Azerbaijan in April 1920 and Armenia a few months later, in December 1920.

<sup>47</sup> Grigorij Kontantinovich Ordzhonikidze, known as “Sergo” was a Georgian Bolshevik, later member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union’s Politburo and close associate of Joseph Stalin.

<sup>48</sup> In 1922 Stalin envisaged a plan according to which the Federative Union was to be incorporated into the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR), but Lenin rejected this idea: instead, he proposed the creation of the USSR in which all of the six republics (Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Armenian, Azerbaijani and Georgian) would participate on an equal basis.

<sup>49</sup> A legislative branch of the USSR created in 1922 and reuniting the representatives of the local councils. Officially, the Congress of Soviets drafted laws and elected the government of the Union, namely the Council of People’s Commissariat, but in practice it was executing the instructions coming from the Central Committee of the Communist Party, especially after Lenin’s death (Zemtsov 1991).

(Central Executive Committee<sup>50</sup>) bodies as well as a territorial bureau of the Communist Party. The incorporation of the TSFSR into the Soviet Union was confirmed by the Soviet Constitution adopted in 1924 – however, in 1936 the TSFSR was dissolved and its three constitutive republics continued to be integral, but separate parts of the USSR until 1991.

### *Moldova*

In August 1939 under the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact the Third Reich officially recognized the USSR claims to the Bessarabia territory. A year later, the Soviet government issued an ultimatum to Romania requesting the cession of Bessarabia (along with the northern part of its another province, Bukovina) on the basis of the distinctive Moldovan identity as well as the illegitimacy of the 1918 annexation of the province by Romanian forces. The Soviet demand was supported by the Romanian World War II allies, i.e. the Nazi Germany and Italy, which left the Romanian king Carol II with no choice. The entry of the Soviet troops in June 1940 was followed by the establishment of the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR) comprising Bessarabia, the former MASSR (contemporary Transnistria) and Bukovina. From that moment onwards, the term Bessarabia would no longer be officially used if not with a clear, pre-Soviet historical reference (Constantiniu 1991). The battle over Bessarabia, returned under the German-Romanian control in July 1941, was definitely over in 1944 with the Soviet military takeover of the province, reduced to the shape of the current Moldovan Republic<sup>51</sup>. Under the 1947 Paris Peace Treaty, the MSSR was incorporated into the USSR and remained its integral part until 1991.

#### **1.2.1. The nature of the communist rule**

The seizure of power by Bolsheviks in Russia and the subsequent incorporation of Georgia and Bessarabia into the USSR implanted a total hegemony of the Communist Parties on their political lives. Nevertheless, the structure of the communist rule in both countries bears some important differences.

The emergence and development of the Georgian Communist Party established in January 1922 can be roughly divided into three periods. The initial phase (from 1922 until Stalin's complete seizure of power in 1927) was marked by two crucial problems. The first pertained to an internal struggle for leadership between the Tbilisi based Georgian communists led by Filip Makharadze (1868-1941) and Polikarp "Budu" Mdivani (1877-1937), supported by Lenin and the more radical Moscow-based party wing headed by Stalin and Grigol Ordzhonikidze. Only with Lenin's progressive marginalization, the XII Congress of the Russian Communist Party held in April 1923 resolved the conflict in favour of Stalin and his vision of eradicating

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<sup>50</sup> The highest governing body in the Soviet Union outside the Congress of Soviets' sessions.. All the federative republics had one in addition to the one set at the all-Union level, i.e. the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet Union, gathering the representatives of all the Republics(Zemtsov, 1991).

<sup>51</sup> The northern province of Bukovina and the southern part were incorporated into the Ukrainian SSR.

Social Democrats from the Georgian political life<sup>52</sup>. The second fundamental issue regarded the lack of social anchorage of the Communist Party – in fact, although Social Democrats were officially outlawed in 1923, they still enjoyed quite high support from the working population<sup>53</sup>.

The second phase of the Georgian Communist Party's development coincided with the period of Stalinism (late 1920s-1953). By that time the Party had already significantly expanded its social basis: by the end of the 1920s it counted 33 thousand members composed by workers (33 percent), peasants (28 percent) and state officials (25 percent) (Suny 1994, 235). The period under Stalin's rule was marked by his incessant efforts to assure and maintain the unquestionable leadership position, which he exercised through two main channels. Firstly, the complete centralization of the decision-making process by the end of 1929 transformed the regional administrative and political branches of the Central Committee in Moscow into mere executors of the centralized orders, particularly in the economic domain<sup>54</sup>. Secondly, and most importantly, the Stalinist period was characterized by intense political repression, in particular against the oppositionists, denominated as 'enemies of the people' (*vragi naroda*). Despite the ethnic proximity with the Soviet leader, the wave of purges did not bypass Georgia, especially considering that most Georgian communists remained faithful to the moderate line even after Lenin's death in 1923.

If Stalin's political opponents were initially relegated to insignificant positions, since the beginning of the 1930's they fell victim to systematic terror and purges by the hand of the new first secretary of the Georgian Communist Party, Lavrentiy Beria (1899-1953) – another ethnic Georgian and the future chief of the Soviet security and secret police apparatus (NKVD). The systematic cleansing brought to physical elimination or exile to forced labour camps around 25 percent of party members along with numerous representatives of the cultural and intellectual elite (Lang 1962), replaced by the one trained through a comprehensive educational reform carried out between 1928 and 1931. Consequently, by the end of the 1930s, the integration of the Georgian bureaucratic-administrative structures into the Soviet system was complete. Importantly, once the task of creating a large mass of loyal regime supporters was accomplished,

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<sup>52</sup> The prompted enactment of Stalin's plan of aggressive 'Sovietization' encountered a fierce opposition from the Georgian anti-Bolshevik parties, which formed a secret Committee for the Independence of Georgia (DAMKOM) aimed at organizing an armed rebellion against Bolsheviks. The uprising took place in August 1924 but was immediately crushed by the Red Army. Once its leaders were executed or sent to work camps in Siberia, the Bolshevik revolution could proceed with no obstacles (Lang 1962, 238–40).

<sup>53</sup> Despite some progress in penetrating the working class, especially in Tiflis, as well as gaining moderate support from Armenians and Russians, at the beginning of the 1920s GCP counted around 9 thousand members, however only around 13 percent were representatives of the working class (Suny, 1994, p. 214).

<sup>54</sup> The centralized chain of command frequently led to disastrous outcomes such as famine caused by forced grain collection resulting in estimated 3.3 to 7.5 million of victims in Ukraine, but also in Bessarabia. For a comprehensive discussion on this issue consult, *inter alia*, Applebaum (2017). Furthermore, by the end of 1934 Stalin drafted a plan of "command economy" and during the years 1936-38 a brutal intervention of state into agriculture was carried out (Zemtsov, 1991).

Stalin enacted the *korenizatsiya*<sup>55</sup> policy to promote Georgian language and culture as well as the presence of ethnic Georgians in the state's administrative and political structures.

The death of Stalin in 1953 marked the beginning of the last stage of development of the Georgian Communist Party which lasted until the declaration of independence of the Georgian Republic in 1991. Contrarily to the Moldavian SSR experience, following the decentralization program introduced by the Communist First Secretary Nikita Khrushchev in the mid-1950s, “even if Georgia’s political institutions followed the standard Soviet pattern, Georgian elites, especially outside Tbilisi, were able to administer their offices semi-independently” (Jones 2012, 5). In other words, the state institutions were “Soviet in form, but Georgian in content” (Jones 2012). Furthermore, since the 1970s the Georgian political elite could use state institutions at their discretion providing they did not oppose the Soviet rule openly. This approach had a twofold consequence: on the one hand, the decentralization process allowed the local Communists to expand their power basis relying on informal networks and widespread corruption; on the other, as the Soviet state was unable to successfully penetrate and, thus, control the Georgian society, it ultimately ended up reinforcing the “Georgian patronage system, regional bosses, and networks” (Jones 2012, 9).

### *Moldova*

The Communist Party of Moldova was established in August 1940 based on the MASSR Regional Committee's structures. Initially, the two main Soviet goals in Moldova were quick Sovietization and collectivization, which proved particularly oppressive towards the local population. The process of forced grain requisition between 1946-1947 led to a widespread famine causing death to around 150 thousand peasants. Another campaign conducted between 1947-1951 resulted in deportations of around 16 thousand families of Moldovan ethnicity – during just two days in July 1949 over 11 thousand people were exiled. Still in 1955 around 40 thousand ethnic Moldovans were induced to “voluntarily” populate the collective farms in Siberia and Kazakhstan (King 2000, 93–96)<sup>56</sup>.

This attitude of systematically downplaying the importance of the local population aimed at preventing the emergence of any centrifugal movement pursuing reunification with Romania was also reflected at the political level. In fact, as opposed to the Georgian case, the Moldovan Communist Party had for decades remained dominated by the non-Moldovan *nomenklatura* comprising predominantly

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<sup>55</sup> See fn. 44.

<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, between 1941-1947 the ruthless extermination of Jewish and Gypsy population was systematically carried out. During this period over 120 thousand Jews were deported or killed – if in Bessarabia in 1930 there were over 204 thousand Jews and over 13 thousand Gypsies, in 1959 the numbers were, respectively 9 and 7.2 thousand (King 2000).

functionaries of Russian, Ukrainian and Transnistrian provenience. This trend, which made of Moldovans the least represented nationality at the all-Union level (King 2000, 98) is well illustrated by table 1.1.

**Table 1.1 Ethnic composition of the Moldovan Communist Party (1940-1989)**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>1940</b> (percentage)	<b>1989</b> (percentage)
Moldovans*	17.5	47.8
Ukrainians	52.5	20.7
Russians	11.2	22.2

\* including the territory of contemporary Transnistria. Source: Crowther (1990, pp. 148–149)

Given the peripheral location of Moldova, the control from Moscow was less frequent and allowed for the development of party elitism based on personal networks and corruption, even though, until the mid-1980s, Moldovans from Bessarabia were systematically and deliberately excluded from this process. In fact, almost for the entire duration of the MSSR – with an exception of a brief period immediately prior to the disintegration of the Soviet Union – none of the first secretaries of the Moldovan Communist Party was of Bessarabian origin<sup>57</sup>. The increasing internal rivalry from the 1980s within the Moldovan Communist Party between the hardliner wing composed of non-Bessarabians and the Bessarabian reformist-wing would play a crucial role during the transition from the Soviet rule leaving an important imprint on the early stages of party development in independent Moldova.

### **1.2.2. Society and political movements**

Prior to the *perestroika* and *glasnost*<sup>58</sup> period announced by Gorbachev in the mid-1980s, the mass organized national liberation movements in the USSR republics were scarce<sup>59</sup>. In fact, popular mobilization increased only after 1985: as reported by Beissinger (2002) in the period between 1987-1992 the number of participants per capita in popular demonstrations accounted for 665 (for 1000 inhabitants) in Moldova and 809 in Georgia, which was among the highest figures in the Soviet Union.

<sup>57</sup> Including those who served the longest, i.e. the Ukrainian Ivan Bodiul (1961-1980) and Transnistrian-born Semion Grossu (1980-1989). Laying at the periphery of the USSR, the MSSR became a sort of “training ground” for the future first secretaries in Moscow – including, *inter alia*, Leonid Brezhnev who served as First Secretary of the CPM in Moldova between 1950-1952 (see King 2000).

<sup>58</sup> The *perestroika* and the *glasnost* projects were launched in the mid-1980s by the last First Secretary of the Communist Party, Gorbachev through, *inter alia*, the introduction of the multicandidate elections, withdrawal from a central planned economy and greater sensitivity to national questions.

<sup>59</sup> In Georgia, the two largest demonstrations were organized by students: one in 1956 in favour of the preservation of the cult of Stalin and one in 1978 in defence of the Georgian language, which was about to lose the status of official language in the new constitution of the USSR drafted by Brezhnev in 1977 (Alexeyeva 1987, 111).

## Georgia

The crucial characteristic of the Georgian society under the Soviet rule was its attachment to the traditional values and kinship ties: remaining mostly rural (56 percent of the population in 1989), it considered loyalty towards family and friends as a matter of honour (Jones 2012). The promotion of cultural activities eventually reinforced the Georgian national identity and contributed to creating a sense of cultural superiority over its ethnic minorities (Wheatley 2005). Therefore, as noted by Jones, by 1991 the Georgian nation was “not civic or political, but a cultural one” (2012, 16).

The emergence of the Georgian national liberation movements began with moderate requests for independence from the Helsinki Watch Group set up in 1977 by Zviad Gamsakhurdia (a prominent intellectual and son of the Georgian poet Konstantine) and Merab Kostava. This elite-based organization, however, lacked larger public support and served mostly as a channel to promote the elite interests through state institutions (Suny 1994, 308). Another stream of culturally oriented movements emerged from the Orthodox Church-inspired groups leading to the establishment of two underground political parties: the Republican Party (RP) led by Davit and Levan Berdzenishvili in 1978 and the National Democratic Party (NDP) led by Gia Chanturia<sup>60</sup> in 1981. The political projects of both included the liberation of Georgia – “the land of God” – from the Soviet rule (Wheatley 2005).

The second phase, characterized by more pressing demands for freedom of speech and assembly, initiated in the mid-1980s with the wave of more courageous street protests following the success of one of them in blocking the construction of the Caucasian Mountain Railway<sup>61</sup>. In this context, the first legal political organization – the Ilia Chavchavadze Society – was established in 1987<sup>62</sup> while in 1988, following the introduction of *glasnost*, the First Secretary of the Georgian Communist Party, Jumber Patiashvili, promulgated a bill according to which citizens became authorized to openly discuss the legislative proposals of the government (Jones 2012).

Finally, by the end of 1988 Georgia witnessed the alignment of various opposition movements in two, distinctive camps: a more moderate, intelligentsia-based Popular Front, inspired by similar movements in the Baltic states, which supported the idea of the national emancipation through participation in the Soviet political structures; and a radical, dissident camp composed of a few organizations emerging from the internal split of the Ilia Chavchavadze Society, including the National Independence Party (NIP), the Society of St.

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<sup>60</sup> The party was inspired by the legacy of the National Democratic Party established at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>61</sup> In 1988, thirty-eight street protests were organized, among which only four were officially authorized (Jones 2012, 28).

<sup>62</sup> As a response the Georgian Communist authorities set up the “Rustaveli society” with an aim to counterbalance the activities of the society in the domain of cultural promotion.

Iliia the Righteous led by Gamsakhurdia himself and the NDP<sup>63</sup>. Those radical groups assumed implacable positions towards the Soviet regime advocating for completely independent state structures, including the legislative National Congress (Wheatley 2005, 42).

As this latter, radical movement was growing in strength, the central authorities in Tbilisi encouraged by the support from Moscow did not intend to lose their grip: on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1989 a detached arm of the Soviet Army launched an attack on unarmed demonstrators gathered in Tbilisi by the radical opposition and demanding independence from the Soviet rule. As a result, twenty people, mostly girls and women, were killed, more than 100 protesters injured, and the main opposition leaders arrested. This event has been deemed as the single most crucial moment of the modern history of Georgia as it initiated a sequence of events and decisions consequential for its political future (Jones 2012; Wheatley 2005).

In his excellent book on the early phases of political development in Georgia, Wheatley pointed out four of such consequences (2005, 44–45). Firstly, the most tangible immediate effect of the 9<sup>th</sup> April massacre was the further radicalization of the two opposition camps as none of them could even remotely consider any sort of compromise with the significantly discredited Communist Party. Secondly, it generated a substantial increase in support of the Georgian population for independence from the USSR<sup>64</sup>. Thirdly, it led to absolute domination of the radical, nationalist grouping of Zviad Gamsakhurdia, relegating all the other opposition movements to the role of the “second fiddle”. Finally, as most of the 9<sup>th</sup> April massacre victims were women, the Georgian attachment to traditional values and honour, triggered an increased adherence to anti-Soviet, pro-independence and nationalist paramilitary organizations – the most powerful of which was the *Mkhedrioni* (Horsemen), led by a former criminal converted into theatre critic, Jaba Ioseliani. Their role in the future political developments in Georgia would be of fundamental importance.

This increasingly nationalist spirit of the population and opposition groupings had also another, related effect, namely the intensification of ethnic tensions, almost totally absent prior to the Soviet rule<sup>65</sup>. In fact, by the late 1980s when Georgia began its path towards independence, the authorities of autonomous Abkhazia and South Ossetia, encouraged by the Soviet authorities in Moscow, intensified their efforts in seeking separation from Georgia<sup>66</sup>.

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<sup>63</sup> For a detailed discussion of all the groupings consult, *inter alia*, Aves (1992).

<sup>64</sup> In September 1989, as much as 89 percent of Georgians supported the independence, compared to only 64 percent of Estonians, 55 percent of Latvians, 52 percent of ethnic Moldovans and 17.3 percent of Armenians (Beissinger 2002, chap. Four).

<sup>65</sup> With an exception of a brief conflict that emerged between Georgia and South Ossetia agitated by Bolsheviks between 1919-1921. For a full account see, *inter alia*, Hille (2010).

<sup>66</sup> It is useful to recall that at the moment of the Red Army invasion of Georgia in 1921, the Bolshevik government granted South Ossetia – never before a separate entity – the autonomous status (South Ossetian Autonomous Oblast) while Abkhazia was granted a status of a separate Abkhaz Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic within



## Moldova

During the Soviet period, the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic (MSSR) remained mostly of multi-ethnic character as the total number of representatives of the titular nation, i.e. ethnic Moldovans decreased over time (see table 1.2), following the mass deportations discussed in the previous section.

**Table 1.2 Ethnic composition of society in the Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic (1941-1989)**

<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>1941</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1989</b>
Moldovans	68.8	64.6	64.5
Ukrainians	11.1	14.2	13.8
Russians	6.7	11.6	13

Note: The table contains only the three major ethnic groups. The data should, however, be taken carefully as the exact numbers differ according to different sources. Source: King (2000)

There are two additional important aspects pertaining to the MSSR's societal structure. Firstly, it remained mostly rural – the second largest in USSR after Kyrgyzstan – while agriculture continued to be the main economic basis of the tiny republic<sup>67</sup>. Nevertheless, the Soviet era witnessed also the growth of urban population increasing from 22 percent in 1959 to 39 percent in 1979 and to 47 percent in 1989, mainly due to external and internal migration. The latter is especially important as the influx of ethnic Moldovans from the villages to the cities significantly altered their ethnic composition<sup>68</sup>. Yet these demographic changes were not accompanied by the improvement of the titular nation's status in the economic sphere – in fact, by January 1989 Moldovans occupied the penultimate position, just ahead of Kazakhstan, in terms of their presence at the managerial level (I. Munteanu 2002).

The second crucial point is that the slow, yet steady, industrialization process was mostly concentrated in the Transnistrian region, which, since the early stages of its creation in the 1920s, received a significant flux of workers of Slavic origins (mostly Russians and Ukrainians). Consequently, the difference between

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the Georgian SSR. Some scholars have argued that that South Ossetians earned their autonomous status from the Soviets as a reward for their support in repressing the Democratic Republic of Georgia – considering that the region – conversely to Abkhazia – had never existed as a separate entity prior to the Soviet invasion (Jones 2014).

<sup>67</sup> Accounting for only 0.2 percent of the territory of the whole Soviet Union, it was delivering around 10 percent of its canned foods, 4.2 percent of vegetables and 8.2 percent of wines. Yet both the intensive industrialization and mechanization of agriculture resulted in serious health problems of the Moldovan population: by the late 1980s MSSR registered the highest infant mortality rate as well as the lowest life expectancy (lower only in Central Asia). In fact, the introduction of environmental protection measures would be later included into demands of the opposition movements (King 2000, 99).

<sup>68</sup> While the urban centres were traditionally dominated by Jewish and Russian populations, the share of ethnic-Moldovans increased from 28 percent in 1959 to 46 percent in 1989. Moreover, from the 1970s onwards Moldovans constituted the single largest ethnic group in the cities of MSSR (King 2000).

Bessarabia – mostly ethnically Moldovan and rural – and the Slavic-populated, urbanized and industrialized Transnistria became even more visible (King 2000, 100).

In this context, the emergence of the national liberation movements was significantly constrained by the historical factors: firstly, most of the intellectual elite of Bessarabia was either eliminated through purges or exiled to Romania during the first stages of the Soviet occupation; secondly, the local Orthodox Church – for over a century dominated by the Russian Patriarchy – could not effectively serve as a channel of the national awakening. However, the cultural policies adopted by the central Soviet authorities increasingly stimulated the consciousness of the problematic national identity among the Moldovan population. In fact, once the aim of re-incorporating Bessarabia into the Soviet political project was accomplished, the Communist Party in Moscow found less use in the continuous insistence on the distinctive Moldovan identity. Consequently, from the 1960s onwards it pursued a more liberal approach regarding the national culture, which allowed to establish some ties with the Romanian literary movements.

This timid rapprochement between the two cultures evidenced more clearly that the difference between the Moldovan and Romanian languages, except for the transliteration system – Cyrillic for the first and Latin for the latter – were really minor. As a result, the standardized Romanian was taught at schools and by the end of the 1980s a distinct Moldovan standard culture was more stipulated than cultivated” (King 2000, 111)<sup>69</sup>. Nevertheless, the long-term politics of Russification launched already by Imperial Russia as well as the intense importation of Slavic minorities left a conspicuous imprint on the Moldovan population – as revealed by the polls conducted in 1989, Moldovans were the third most Russified nation (after Ukraine and Belarus) as almost 89 percent of ethnic Moldovans would indicate Russian as their second language while only 11.2 percent of ethnic Russians reported the fluent knowledge of Moldovan/Romanian as a second language (Ciscel 2007).

Against this backdrop, the issue of language and identity constituted the single major factor of mobilization of the nationalist liberation movements. In the mid-1980s two distinctive trends emerged in MSSR. Firstly, the intensified cultural activities aimed at the promotion of Bessarabian culture and history gave birth to two, informal movements, the Moldovan Movement in Support of Restructuring and the Alexei Mateevici Literary-Musical Club<sup>70</sup> composed of prominent representatives of the younger generation of the intellectual elite. These informal groups used the issue of the national language as a springboard to advance more substantive demands such as the transformation of the USSR into a federative union of sovereign states,

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<sup>69</sup> The correct usage of the Moldovan language, which was, in fact, the standardized Romanian was encouraged by state institutes such as the Institute of Language and Literature established in 1957 as well as was the Moldovan Academy of Science founded in 1961 (King 2000).

<sup>70</sup> Named after the famous writer Alexei Mateevici (1888-1917), the pillar of the Bessarabian cultural renaissance of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

the introduction of the market economy, respect for human rights and environmental protection. However, their core requests revolved around the linguistic issues and included the recognition that Romanian and Moldovan are the same languages, declaration of Moldovan as the only state language as well as the reintroduction of the Latin alphabet (Holtmark, Neumann, and Westad 2016)<sup>71</sup>.

The *perestroika* and *glasnost* opened some concrete opportunities for the Moldovan informal groups to conduct public debates on national identity. The two also gained more visibility after the elections to the Soviet Unions' Congress of People's Deputies in March 1989, which, according to the directions of the General Soviet Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev, allowed the limited participation of the opposition movements. Winning ten out of 16 districts, races in which they could take part helped the two Moldovan cultural movements to gradually build up their political capital (Ciscel 2007).

In August 1989, the representatives of the two informal groups formed the Popular Front (PF) modelled on the Baltic experience together with members of some minor organizations. The constitutive meeting gathered two hundred delegates, including the representatives of ethnic minorities – hence the eventual modification of the original Moldovan Popular Front name – with an aim to elect the executive committee and a coherent program. The heart of the activity of the PF continued, however, to revolve around the linguistic issue: in response to the growing opposition from the ethnic minorities, the PF members emphasized that “the rebirth of the Moldovan people would necessarily come at the expense of those who had long oppressed them” referring to the Russian-speaking community (King 2000, 138).

But the PF was not the only formation emphasizing the importance of the language and the national identity issues. In fact, both these themes soon become exploited by the younger, reform-oriented communist elite of Bessarabian origins in the internal struggle for power against their systematically privileged, non-Bessarabian hardliner colleagues. This reformist group, including many of the future top political figures of independent Moldova, spoke Moldovan/Romanian and maintained links with the Bessarabian population, contrary to their counterparts, mostly Russian speakers of Transnistrian origins. To achieve its political end of ousting the hardliner communists from power, the group co-opted, rather than confronted, the opposition – in fact, its representatives, and in particular, the future Moldovan President Mircea Snegur were instrumental in the eventual approval of the language postulates advanced by Popular Front (King 2000).

The third major group with political ambitions was constituted by the representatives of the ethnic minorities: the Gagauz Halki (Gagauz People)<sup>72</sup> movement established in May 1989 out of a cultural group

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<sup>71</sup> As the issue of language gained salience, the leaders of the MSSR decided to establish in 1988 a special Interdepartmental Commission of the History and Problems of the Development of Moldova to examine the history, alphabet and status of the Moldovan language (Ciscel 2007).

<sup>72</sup> An ethnic group of Turkish origins living mostly in the southern part of Moldova.

formed in Comrat, the capital of the Gagauz province and the Edinstvo (Unity) organization<sup>73</sup> gathering the Russian speaking minority of Slavic origins (mostly Russians and Ukrainians). Although the representatives of Gagauz Halki participated in the PF's founding congress, the irreconcilable stands on the language issue of the latter proved an insurmountable obstacle for a fruitful cooperation between the two. In this context, the ethnic minorities' demand to declare Russian as the second state language could hardly be met.

The language-based mobilization culminated in a massive protest in late August 1989, which gathered around 500 thousand people outside the building of the Moldovan Supreme Soviet reunited in a session to debate, *inter alia*, on the language issues. On 31<sup>st</sup> August 1989 it agreed to the three PF's core language-related demands – the recognition that Moldovan and Romanian are the same language, the declaration of Moldovan as the state language and the reintroduction of the Latin alphabet. The victory of the PF, however, had two fundamental consequences: on the one hand, it soon appeared that the movement was composed of distinguished groups united only for a brief period and uniquely for the purpose of “securing their own positions in the tumultuous politics of the Gorbachev era” (King 2000). As soon as its main goal was achieved, an internal tension emerged between a more radical wing pushing for significantly more far-reaching demands of reunification with Romania, and a more moderate one, in favour of a less contentious Moldovan independence. In other words, what united the various factions under the umbrella of the Popular Front prior to the collapse of the Soviet rule, i.e. the issue of Moldovan identity, became the main dividing line right after the regaining of independence serving as an ideological basis for newly established political parties.

Secondly, the decision of the Supreme Soviet to recognize Moldovan/Romanian as the only state language further alienated ethnic minorities. Consequently, both autonomous regions – Transnistria and Gagauzia – broke away from the Chişinău authorities and launched their way towards secession, which would intensify even further in the following few years<sup>74</sup>.

### **1.3. Towards founding elections: continuity or change?**

At the initial stage of transformation, scholars emphasized a few key traits of the communist heritage common to the post-communist republics that influenced party development in the region<sup>75</sup>. Yet, if the argument on a

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<sup>73</sup> A local branch local branch of all-union Interfront unifying minorities against the increasing dominance of titular nations in Soviet republics.

<sup>74</sup> It appears worth mention, however, that the citizenship law, adopted by the Moldovan authorities in 1991, was among “the most liberal in eastern Europe, allowing all persons living in the republic on the date of the declaration of sovereignty (23rd June 1990) to become citizens regardless of ethnicity, language, length of residence, or other criteria” (I. Munteanu 2002).

<sup>75</sup> Including the “a) history of “backwardness”, victimization, and intolerance; b) absence of established successor elite; c) weak party systems with shallow roots in society; d) interrupted process of nation-building; e) continued persistence of institutions established under the old regime, and the f) legacy of the centralized state and command economy” (Crawford & Lijphart, 1995). The economic aspect includes also, *inter alia*, vertically integrated

common communist legacy was correct, then how the differences in the institutional and political developments among the post-communist polities could be explained? In seeking to answer this puzzle legacy-oriented scholars have argued that – contrary to the wide-spread belief of Western scholars – the communist rule was not a monolith (Smith 2013), and this variation of its nature led to diverging mechanisms in determining the “pattern of party structuration in the post-communist period” (Kopstein et al. 2003, 239).

Along this line, the most influential typology of communist regimes was constructed by Kitschelt (1995; 1999) on the basis of two criteria: the structural characteristic of the communist administrative and political apparatus (i.e. whether it was exercised through bureaucratic, formal rules or informal, personalistic networks) and the way in which social masses were mobilized (i.e. through repressions or co-optation). In this way it distinguishes between the bureaucratic-authoritarian, national-accommodative and patrimonial communism<sup>76</sup> – all resulting from distinctive pre-communist structural conditions and all exerting a different weight on early phases of party development in the post-communist region. Nevertheless, and despite its seminal influence on post-communist party research, the legacy-based approach still contains some gaps in accounting for cross-country differences.

An alternative analytical approach has been proposed by those scholars who argue that while historical legacies constituted “tools of political discourse and mobilization in the competitive political process” (Crawford and Lijphart 1995, 176), it was the immediate structural context of transition that determined institutional choices and provided “conditions under which past legacies would or would not play a role in shaping the direction of regime change in post-Communist societies” (Crawford and Lijphart 1995, 196). In other words, its proponents argue that “new institutions can be crafted and new international pressures can be brought to bear that shut out the negative influences of the past” (Przeworski 1991). Hence, following this line of reasoning, it can be quite safely assumed that the difference in transition mode produced important variations in terms of institutional and political outcomes (Terry 1993).

Against this backdrop, according to the typology constructed by Kitschelt (1995, 1999) mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, both Georgia and Moldova fall within the category of patrimonial communism. Its main features included, *inter alia*, vertical power chains exercised through tight informal networks by a narrow ruling elite in which formal rules had a very limited role in structuring the relations of power. Patrimonial communism emerged in traditional agrarian societies with little or no prior democratic experience in which industrialization was inextricably linked to the highly oppressive communist rule.

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conglomerates and division of labours as the only focus of social life constituting an important obstacle for the development of a market-oriented culture (Åslund 1991).

<sup>76</sup> In the subsequent sections of this chapter I will discuss in more detail the patrimonial type as both Georgia and Moldova fall within this category.

Finally, in this context, the transition occurred through reform triggered by the internal fragmentation of the communist elite while the new institutional order often appeared as a democratic façade for the old elite continuity.

The theoretical arguments of the legacy-based approach would suggest that the collapse of the patrimonial communism led to the initial political configuration dominated by the post-communist and post-opposition nationalist parties with a very narrow niche left for liberal-democratic formations. In terms of the institutional choices, the preference was given to the majoritarian electoral systems or PR with open lists coupled with the presidential form of government, rather weakly counterbalanced by the national assembly (Rafałowski 2014, 37). Finally, political competition was predominantly of a clientelist, rather than a programmatic, nature with the strong periphery and weak centre – thus similar to the centrifugal model in Sartorian terms (1976).

Nevertheless, as it could be sensed from the previous sections of this chapter, the nature of the communist rule in Georgia and Moldova was far more nuanced than the patrimonial type would suggest. Furthermore, both countries differed in terms of social structure and critical events surrounding the transition period. But were these differences reflected by the early institutional choices? The following section will attempt to briefly address this puzzle.

### **1.3.1. Georgia**

There are three main aspects, which in my view appear crucial for a comprehensive understanding of the context in which Georgia found itself at the outset of transition from the Soviet rule. Firstly, the Georgian society, despite an increased migration towards the urban centres, remained very attached to the traditional values, in particular, the family honour and “family-type networks” based on the principle of helping own’s kind (Mars and Altman, 1983). This cultural factor proved particularly constraining for social penetration of the centralized Soviet institutions, which had to rely on informal networks to exercise its power. In other words, “a parallel informal state existed alongside the official state structures as clientelism, corruption and patronage networks flourished” (Wheatley 2005, 19)<sup>77</sup>. Another important aspect of the Georgian societal structure pertains to the persistence of several, alternative centres of power, including an extended network of criminal professionals – *vory-v-zakone* (thieves in law) – controlling not only most of the Georgian formal

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<sup>77</sup> In this context, Georgians remained rather distrustful towards state institutions and the Communist Party and this is reflected by an apparently paradoxical phenomenon: in fact, the GCP enjoyed one of the highest membership rates at the all-Union level (826 out of 10 thousand inhabitants while Moldova had only 316 out of 10 thousand). Yet, as pointed out by scholars of Georgian politics, this was mainly motivated by pure pragmatic reasons – party membership could bring several benefits, including career prospects (Wheatley, 2005). This explanation may also be useful in understanding the success of clientelist ruling parties, which will dominate the Georgian political scene in the years to come.

and shadow economy but also the entire prison system (Kupatadze 2012). Having a particular appeal among the younger generation of Georgians, especially due to its attachment to the traditional value of honour it continued to be one of the most powerful informal networks in the early years of independent Georgia (Wheatley 2005).

Secondly, in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, there were three major political players, namely the Communist Party, the Mkhedrioni paramilitary organization and the highly fragmented opposition divided into two conflicting camps: the radical dissidents and the moderate intelligentsia. The radical group, initially united in the common front boycotting the Soviet Supreme elections<sup>78</sup>, further split into a moderate wing and an even more radical one led by charismatic, yet highly nationalist Zviad Gamsakhurdia who, in the meantime, emerged as a sort of national saviour leading Georgians towards the long-awaited freedom<sup>79</sup>. All in all, at the outset of transition from the Soviet rule, the Georgian context was characterized by a high number of leader-oriented, dispersed formations loosely linked to a weak civil society (Jones 2012).

Thirdly, and most importantly, the critical event of the 9<sup>th</sup> April massacre was a crucial watershed in the political developments of that period (Goldenberg 1994; Slider 1997): it further radicalized the dissident camp and, in this way, precluded the formation of a common opposition front, but also discredited the Communist Party which, being afraid of totally losing political control, was much keener on granting concessions to the opposition demands than only a few months earlier<sup>80</sup>.

In this context, two elections were held in Georgia in 1990: the September, unofficial one to the parallel National Congress organized by the dissident National Forum<sup>81</sup> and the multiparty contest to the

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<sup>78</sup> The National Forum was established in view of preparation for alternative elections to parallel assembly, the National Congress. The only two non-Communist organizations, which showed some reluctance in joining the boycott were the Rustaveli Society (established by the CPG), which initially expressed its support, but ultimately took part in the electoral contest to the supreme soviet and the intelligentsia-led Popular Front, which eventually advocated for its postponement (Wheatley 2005).

<sup>79</sup> The position of Gamsakhurdia was reinforced by the death of another leader, Merab Kostava, in a car accident in October 1989 (Wheatley 2005).

<sup>80</sup> Interestingly enough, only a year before, in March 1989, on the occasion of elections to the Soviet Congress of People's Deputies held in 1989, the Georgian authorities did not display any openness, contrary to other USSR republics including Moldova, towards the participation of independent candidates in the contest. Indeed, following the wording of the pre-electoral monitoring prepared by experts from IFES, "in 43 out of 75 races the (Communist) candidates ran unopposed, and elsewhere the pairings were manipulated as in the past" (IFES 1992). The monopoly of the Communist Party of Georgia was thus maintained, considering the plural character of these 'elections'; with an exception of Tbilisi where the opposition managed to win three seats.

<sup>81</sup> The September 1990 elections to the parallel National Congress, contested by the formations united under the umbrella of the National Forum, including the NDP and NIP parties, did not trigger substantial support among the Georgian citizens. In fact, the Congress's ambition of being an alternative legislative body, in opposition to the Supreme Soviet, was soon abandoned due to a modest and discouraging electoral turnout (50.8 percent after three rounds) in favour of becoming an important opposition centre advocating for immediate liberation of Georgian from the Soviet rule (Jones 2012: 49).

Supreme Soviet organized in October as demand by Gamsakhurdia-led, radical opposition. This latter official contest was held under the negotiated electoral laws<sup>82</sup>, which envisaged for a mixed system integrating the double-ballot majoritarian component with 125 district-level, single-member mandates and the proportional one for the remaining 125 deputies to be elected from party lists in one nation-wide constituency. The threshold for the proportional (PR) tier was set at four percent while the run-off rounds between the two best-placed candidates in single-member districts (SMD) were to be organized in case none of them obtained the absolute, 50 percent majority of votes (IFES 1992a; 1992b)<sup>83</sup>.

The participation rate in the October elections reflected the high political fragmentation as the elections were contested by thirty-five parties united in eleven electoral blocs<sup>84</sup>, even though the results left no doubt about the dominance of the Gamsakhurdia camp – his Round-Table/Free Georgia<sup>85</sup> bloc won 54 percent of PR votes and a total of 155 mandates (respectively, 81 seats from PR and 74 in SMD) while the Communists gained 29.6 percent and 64 seats (respectively 44 and 20 mandates) (IFES 1993)<sup>86</sup>. In this way, Georgia became the first and only “republic in the USSR where the *radical* opposition won the first free and democratic elections” (Wheatley 2005, 52).

The Gamsakhurdian era ended in 1992 with his forcible removal from power; yet, despite its shortness, it was marked with a number of crucial decisions and events that cast a long shadow on the Georgian political and institutional future. Firstly, once in power, Gamsakhurdia immediately focused on strengthening his political position – to this end, in December 1990 he was granted by the Assembly with powers of executive president, further formalized by the Law on Presidency adopted in April 1991<sup>87</sup> and by

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<sup>82</sup> The ultimate shape of electoral system for those elections was a compromise between the first-past-the-post supported by the Communist Party and the PR system supported by the opposition (Grotz and Kuchinka-Lančava 2001).

<sup>83</sup> The Georgian electoral design introduced one additional feature, which was unique in the democratizing Soviet republics, namely the prohibition for members of the Communist Party (CP) to participate in the elections on the list of a different party – such a decision led to further marginalization of the CPG (Suny 1994).

<sup>84</sup> Among those the Democratic Georgia uniting some of the former members of Popular Front and National Forum, Iliia Chavchavadze Society and RP with moderate stands on autonomous regions and clear support for complete independence from the USSR, moderate DASI (Democratic Choice for Georgia), as well as Green Movement detached from Rustaveli Society and Social-Democratic Party inspired by the ominous formation, dominant in the short-lived pre-Soviet independent Georgia, besides the already mentioned NDP and NDI party. For a more complete discussion see (Wheatley 2005, 47–51).

<sup>85</sup> Adhered to by a number of smaller formations, including Gamsakhurdia’s own St. Iliia the Righteous and Helsinki Union, the Merab Kostava Society, the Union of Georgian Traditionalists – a splinter from Monarchist-Conservative Party and popular Front/Radical Union detached from Popular Front (Wheatley 2005).

<sup>86</sup> The support for the CP came mostly from the southern regions inhabited by Armenian and Azerbaijani minorities – in fact, in the absence of their own political representatives, in the years to come these groups would consistently land support for the ruling parties.

<sup>87</sup> By virtue of this law, the presidential term was unlimited and s/he was empowered with appointing and dismissing the government (even if the consent of the Supreme Soviet was required, the law did not resolve



the eighty-six percent of support at the May 1991 presidential elections<sup>88</sup>. Nevertheless, despite these formal guarantees, his leadership soon started to crumble due to increasingly authoritarian tendencies<sup>89</sup>.

Secondly, Gamsakhurdia's political moves in the aftermath of the August 1991 Moscow coup<sup>90</sup>, clearly evidenced the impact of the immediate-structural context on actors', not-entirely rational, decisions. The first of these crucially consequential steps consisted of banning the Communist Party, which deprived it of all the assets and parliamentary mandates. The second and perhaps significantly more important was to subordinate the National Guard – the nucleus of the Georgian Army – to the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Wheatley 2005, 55). As a reaction, its head and personal friend of Gamsakhurdia, Tengiz Kitovani, followed by the premier, Tengiz Sigua, broke away from the President and moved large parts of the troops outside the capital Tbilisi. The two soon joined their forces with the leader of the paramilitary Mkhedrioni organization<sup>91</sup> Jaba Ioseliani<sup>92</sup>. Their powerful union was instrumental in ousting Gamsakhurdia from power in January 1992, after some days of intense arms-based confrontations between the National Guard and the government forces (The Washington Post 1992a; 1992c). In the aftermath of the coup, the three leaders set up a Military Council who temporarily took over the guidance of Georgia.

The Gamsakhurdia rule – charismatic, but also authoritarian and paranoid (The Washington Post 1992b) – included the long-awaited declaration of independence adopted on 9<sup>th</sup> April 1991 (second anniversary of the 9<sup>th</sup> April massacre). But most importantly left behind the institutionally and economically failed state plunged into the chaos of three civil wars: one with the supporters of the President (so-called *Zviadists* from the first name of their leader) which lasted discontinuously between December 1991 and November 1993, and two with the separatist regions of Abkhazia (August 1992 – September 1993) and South Ossetia (January 1991 – July 1992), alienated by the extremely nationalist, irreconcilable attitude of Gamsakhurdia towards the issue of their autonomous status within the newly independent Georgia<sup>93</sup>.

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definitively what to do in case of conflict over the issue) as well as dissolving the Assembly in consultation with prime minister. For a more detailed discussion see (Aves 1992).

<sup>88</sup> For more detailed results see Appendix I.

<sup>89</sup> Following the forced dispersal of street protests organized by the NDP, which left four injured, forty-nine Round Table members left its ranks to establish a new formation, Charter '91 (Wheatley 2005).

<sup>90</sup> The August 1991 Moscow coup was organized by hardliner members of the Communist Party and Soviet government with an aim to takeover the control of USSR from Mikhail Gorbachev.

<sup>91</sup> According to various estimates the organization counted between three to five thousand armed men (Slider 1997, 165).

<sup>92</sup> As a supporter of the National Congress, Ioseliani was promptly imprisoned by President Gamsakhurdia in February 1991.

<sup>93</sup> The military conflicts with the two separatist republics resulted in around 250 thousand Internally Displaced Georgians from Abkhazia, 30000 Georgians killed, 1820 killed in Abkhazia, 5000 killed and 20000 wounded on both sides, in addition to around 1000 in South Ossetia (HRW 1995).

In the context of an almost total economic collapse<sup>94</sup>, the extremely fragmented political environment in which none of the parties could prevail over another and the increasing citizens' reliance on informal networks to survive the chaos, the Military Council took two crucially important decisions between February and March 1992. Firstly, it decided to invite Eduard Shevardnadze – the former First Secretary of the Georgian Communist Party and former USSR minister of foreign affairs – to help to restore order in the country. Secondly, they set up the State Council, an interim assembly inclusive of all political forces<sup>95</sup> – except for *Zviadists* – to deliberate on the constitutional set up to replace the temporarily revived pre-Soviet 1921 Constitution (Wheatley 2005).

In this context, the founding parliamentary elections<sup>96</sup> were organized in October 1992 according to the parallel mixed system established in August of that same year (IFES 1992b)<sup>97</sup> with a 2 percent legal threshold for the proportional tier (Grotz and Kuchinka-Lančava 2001) in which all parties, but *Zviadists*, competed for 235 seats. Additionally, to give Shevardnadze the necessary authority, but also to prevent him from running on a party ticket<sup>98</sup>, a separate election for the Chairman of the Parliament (which he won with 96 percent support) was organized with the majority vote in one, nation-wide constituency (IFES 1992b). The inclusive electoral system generated significant interest among the political actors who registered in a great

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<sup>94</sup>According to the official statistics, at the beginning of 1992 seventy-five percent of Georgian families lived below the poverty line, while this number increased to an even more alarming 89 percent towards the end of the same year. The following few statistics can help to comprehend the gravity of the situation – at the beginning of April 1993, the average prices of basic goods (in equivalent to USD) were “meat - USD1.8/kg, eggs - USD.44/10 units, cheese - USD1.2-2.75/kg, (...) and bread - USD.03/kg” against the minimum monthly salary equal to USD2.9 and the average monthly salary equal to USD8-10 (TGC 1993b). The new government tried to face this critical situation through a series of economic reforms – including the provisional currency, the Georgian coupons, as the country left the rouble zone following the Russian refusal to supply rouble notes (TGC 1993a). In order to prevent disorders, queues and supplies shortages, the food was rationed (3 hundred grams of bread a day and three kg of flour a month), likewise electricity was available only for a few hours a day, for several months). In the meantime, throughout 1993, the monthly inflation rate frequently exceeded 100 percent: for instance, on 1<sup>st</sup> of December one USD cost 51.370 Georgian coupons, while on 28<sup>th</sup> December its cost increased to 108.300 coupons. These fluctuations influenced food prices – according to estimates the cost of an average food basket was equal to ±1.6 million coupons (±USD25.1) in the first half of December 1993, but already ±2.45 million Georgian coupons (±USD27.4) in the second half of the month (TGC 1993d). The general macroeconomic indicators were also very discouraging: the GDP was consistently falling with the historic minimum of 44.2 percent reached in 1992, while organized crime was flourishing, with arms frequently shot on the streets (Wheatley 2005, 67).

<sup>95</sup> Comprising more than “thirty parties and twenty social organizations” (Wheatley 2005, 70).

<sup>96</sup> There are different interpretations on which the contest actually should be considered as founding, yet in this chapter I consider the 1995 parliamentary elections as such considering that they were marked by a new and complete institutional set up as opposed to the previous two (of 1990 and 1992), even though both were already free and multiparty.

<sup>97</sup> For a more detailed discussion on the electoral system see Chapter 6.

<sup>98</sup> More precisely the Peace Bloc was composed of former Communist intellectual elite and the Union of Democratic Revival, a party launched by the former Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Adjara and the Deputy Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia (1990-1992, and again between 1992-1995), who exploited the general turmoil in the country to build up his hegemonic position in the region.

number of forty-seven electoral subjects, including individual parties and electoral alliances – as a result, twenty-four parties entered the Parliament<sup>99</sup>.

There were three crucial events in the next three years leading to the adoption of the new Constitution in 1995. Firstly, similarly to the first President, the newly elected Parliamentary Chairman, Shevardnadze, focused his efforts on consolidating power, even though he was significantly more constrained in this endeavour than Gamsakhurdia. More concretely, despite being bestowed with the powers of the Head of State by the November 1992 Law on State Powers going “beyond the executive functions of presidential office” (Curtis 1995, 215), he faced some significant structural and contextual obstacles in assuming full powers. Firstly, from the part of the Military Council, which he only managed to neutralize by Spring 1995 through political manoeuvres, but also thanks to the Georgian defeat in Abkhazia. Secondly, from the extremely fragmented parliament, which, although generally undisciplined and unexperienced<sup>100</sup>, proved a tough opponent to Shevardnadze’s plans on installing a strong presidential executive with wide, discretionary powers<sup>101</sup>. Thirdly, from decentralized power networks, in particular, the *vory-v-zakone*, which continued to control the Georgian shadow economic sector.

All these factors induced the President to adopt a conciliatory position of the above-party arbiter while gradually consolidating power. To this end, after the cabinet reshuffle in September 1993, he assumed the position of the Minister of Interiors with exclusive control over the law enforcement forces – until then exercised by Ioseliani’s associate – which proved particularly useful during the state of emergency that Shevardnadze imposed on the parliament in September 1993. Initially introduced for two months, but eventually lasting until late February 1994, the state of emergency suspended the assembly’s activities and quieted down presidential opponents, including the most powerful among them, i.e. the Mkhedrioni group

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<sup>99</sup> For detailed electoral result see Appendix I while for a more comprehensive discussion on participants and general context of the elections, see Jones (2012) and Wheatley (2005).

<sup>100</sup> According to data provided by local newspaper, only around 60 percent of deputies attended parliamentary sessions regularly. Furthermore, at least half of MPs hold other jobs, which was in clear breach of parliamentary status, even though this could perhaps be explained by the very low monthly salary of deputies (around 15 thousand coupons equivalent to USD10). (TGC, apr 1993)

<sup>101</sup> The radical opposition group, opposing both Shevardnadze and his conciliatory attitude towards Russia, comprised the most critical NIP (whose leader Irakli Tsereteli demanded Shevardnadze’s resignation at the Parliamentary meeting on 3 June 1993) as well as the Union of Georgian Traditionalists, Merab Kostava Society, and a splinter from the ‘Peace Bloc’, the Monarchist-Conservative Party. The more restrained opposition composed of the RP, PF, Ilia Chavchavadze Society and Charter-91 presented milder positions and supported Shevardnadze in some of his policy initiatives. The third group including the NDP, the Green Party, the civil movement Unity and Prosperity linked to the Liberal faction (made of intellectuals elected from the lists of the ‘Unity Bloc’ and ‘Peace Bloc’) and several independent deputies, mostly former communists (as the Neutrals faction composed of 24 deputies) was generally supportive towards Shevardnadze, but divided by its attitude towards Russia.

(TGC 1993c)<sup>102</sup>. While his advantage over other centres of powers began to grow, the instability of parliamentary majority supportive for his initiatives induced Shevardnadze to start to think of his own political base – a founding congress of the Citizens’ Union of Georgia (CUG) which took place in 1993<sup>103</sup> to elect Shevardnadze as Chairman and Zurab Zhvania, the young speaker of the Green Party, as the Secretary General<sup>104</sup>. Yet not all of the pro-Shevardnadze forces decided to join this formation – in fact, “the CUG threatened to become a dividing rather than unifying force in the pro-Shevardnadze camp” (TGC 1994).

In this context, the post-Soviet Georgian Constitution adopted in 1995 (similar to all its subsequent amendments) clearly reflected the surrounding Georgian political context. Despite his institutional dominance, the ultimate shape of the basic law was not deliberately Shevardnadze’s choice, but rather a fruit of two years of negotiation with an extremely fragmented parliament<sup>105</sup> further confined by the requirement for a two-thirds majority necessary for the adoption of constitutional amendments<sup>106</sup>.

The intensity of these negotiations is reflected by the fact that the Constitutional Committee, divided into smaller working groups, presented twelve separate drafts in an effort to conciliate the involved actors’ different interests (Curtis 1995, 218; TGC 1993a). These projects included Shevardnadze’s design – based on the Russian constitutional model – which entailed a strong executive equipped with the prerogative of dissolving the assembly and the cabinet accounting exclusively to the president (TGC 1995). The rationale behind Shevardnadze’s draft was his firm belief that parliamentarism was not suitable for the Georgian context due to its extreme instability and fragmentation (Jones 2012, 101). Yet, despite his conspicuous efforts to find the necessary majority, the Russian model was rejected in favour of the American one, eventually adopted on 24<sup>th</sup> August 1995 with 159 votes<sup>107</sup>.

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<sup>102</sup> Under the state of emergency, Shevardnadze made a few more steps in expanding his power through a number of critically important appointments, including his loyal supporters from former KGB and Soviet military in the positions of ‘power ministers’ (State Security, Defence and Internal Affairs) (Wheatley, 2005) and resorted to Russian assistance in stabilizing Abkhazia, in return committing to the join the Russian-led Commonwealth of the Independent States (CIS).

<sup>103</sup> It was attended by 2500 delegates who claimed to have represented 35 thousand members from the Green Party, the Unity and Prosperity movement, the Tbiliseli society as well as some splinters from Republicans and several smaller movements (TGC 1993c).

<sup>104</sup> At the founding Congress addressed by “former US Secretary of State James Baker III, who called Mr. Shevardnadze his ‘brother’”, the Georgian President outlined the main ideological line of his party inspired by what “was rational in the programs of Democratic and Republican parties of the USA” and announced the intention to maintain power “for a long time” (TGC 1993b)

<sup>105</sup> Indeed, Shevardnadze certainly did not dispose of monopoly of power similar to that of other post-Soviet republics, which would allow him to impose his will on political and institutional matters (Fish 2001a).

<sup>106</sup> As envisaged by the then-in force 1921 Georgian Constitution.

<sup>107</sup> The extent of constitutional changes was large enough to justify the adoption of a new Constitution instead of the more simple amendment of the 1921 text. The two-thirds majority required 148 votes: eight deputies voted against and the remaining 56 abstained (TGC 1993a).

Considering the general turmoil that Georgia was experiencing throughout the first years following the collapse of the Soviet rule, the 1995 Constitution seemed the most plausible choice in order to introduce some, very much needed, institutional order (Wheatley 2005). In this vein, it established a strong executive with extensive legislative and political powers, including the almost exclusive control over the cabinet's formation and functioning<sup>108</sup>, but it also envisaged an important institutional counterbalance to the executive dominance by investing "meaningful power in parliament" (Fish 2001a, 79). In particular, the president did not dispose of the right to dissolve the assembly, which left a significant margin for the parliamentary parties to pursue their own political agendas.

The 1995 parliamentary elections end this first phase of the party and institutional development in Georgia. By this year relative stability was restored along with institutional order, including the presidential regime and the parallel mixed electoral system, amended with an important corrective of the 5 percent threshold for its PR tier. In this context, only three electoral subjects – the CUG, the Abashidze's All-Georgian Union of Democratic Revival and the NDP – managed to enter the Parliament while approximately 60 percent of votes were wasted. If in 1992 no political force dominated, in 1995 Shevardnadze's leadership seemed politically and institutionally well-grounded, but still dependent on a number of formal and informal competing power networks inherited from the chaotic transition period.

### **1.3.2. Moldova**

There are three crucial aspects in which the Moldovan experience differed from the Georgian one. Firstly, the Moldovan transition was much less turbulent: in fact, its regime has been labelled as 'continuist', in a sense that the communist elite maintained significant control over the process<sup>109</sup>. Furthermore, as we shall see in the following chapters of this thesis, for the first, crucial years of independence in Moldova the top political positions in the country were occupied by the main political figures from the late Soviet period. Secondly, the founding elections were held relatively late in time – only in 1994 – and the composition of the Assembly elected under the Soviet rules in 1990 remained unchanged throughout the entire term. Such a long 'incubation' period (Birch 2000) allowed the Moldovan political actors to adapt to the new circumstances without participating in a truly competitive electoral contest. This had an important consequence for their organizational and ideological nature as they became predominantly "shaped by parliamentary and internal politics rather than by popular demands" (Birch 2000, 14). Finally, and perhaps most importantly in the context of this thesis, it granted the Moldovan lawmakers with more time to reflect on their political and institutional preferences. In other words, "Moldovan leaders had recognized the need for legal and

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<sup>108</sup> For details see Chapter 5, section 5.3.1.

<sup>109</sup> In fact, in its first post-Soviet legislative body, approximately 87 percent of deputies came from the formerly ruling Communist Party of Moldova (Crowther 2007, 116).

constitutional reform, but they also understood the implications of those reforms for their own positions of influence” (IFES 1993).

With four major political camps crystalized throughout the last years of the 1980s, namely the PF; the reformed, Bessarabian-born Communists; the hardliner, Transnistrian-born Communists as well as the Edinstvo (Unity) organization representing the minorities of Slavic origins, the first partly-free elections to the Supreme Soviet took place in February 1990<sup>110</sup>. The contest was held under the Soviet electoral system<sup>111</sup>, i.e. the double-ballot majority held in 380 SMD<sup>112</sup> – the important novelty, however, consisted in the fact that, besides the Communist Party, the independent candidates could stand in 373 of these races<sup>113</sup>. Consequently, PF managed to present candidates in 219 districts and a total of 101 deputies were elected from its supported lists<sup>114</sup>. The rapprochement on the language issue between the PF and the reformist Communists translated into a tacit coalition between the two who formed the majority in the newly elected Supreme Soviet<sup>115</sup> and divided between themselves the key political positions – PF had one of its leaders, Mircea Druc, elected as prime minister (Unimedia 2008)<sup>116</sup> while the Communists maintained control over the Presidency taken over by the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, Mircea Snegur.

At the same time, since spring 1991, Moldova was at odds with Moscow and – after having refused to sign the new Union treaty as well as erasing the provision on the leading role of the Communist Party in

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<sup>110</sup> In reality, the CPM displayed certain openness towards independent candidates already in late 1989 by allowing the registration of non-Communist organizations<sup>110</sup> – as a result, in the following two years there were already 130 such organizations, among which fourteen assumed a political nature (I. Munteanu 2010, 21).

<sup>111</sup> Candidates were nominated from “electoral districts in work collectives of at least one hundred persons and from residents’ meetings of at least fifty persons” (Fedor 1995). Furthermore, the Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic’s electoral law had some interesting features; for example, the voter was required to cross out the names until only the preferred candidate was left unmarked. If none of the candidates managed to obtain 50 percent of preferences, the run-offs were to be organized, however with the participation of all the candidates from the first round (IFES 1993).

<sup>112</sup> Electoral districts were established based on the 40 administrative *raions* and 10 municipalities while the district quotas were established by the division of the number of voters by 380.

<sup>113</sup> Furthermore, the opposition candidates had access to official newspapers of the communist system for campaign purposes and could also hold rallies, some of which were attended by high-ranked Communist officials such as the one held in Chişinău in February 1990 with participation of 100000 people and addressed by the First Secretary, Petru Lucinschi (Fedor 1995).

<sup>114</sup> The reformers won fifty-nine contests out of 140 resolved in the first round, even though the total of 115 deputies were elected from the Communist ranks. The run-offs held in March 1990 brought only forty-two out of 237 seats to the PF. Furthermore, “first-round elections returned 91 (65 percent) Moldovans, 21 (15 percent) Russians, 18 (13 percent) Ukrainians, 7 (5 per cent) Gagauz and 3 (2 percent) Bulgarians” (Crowther and Roper 1996, 144).

<sup>115</sup> The institutional relations in the newly elected Supreme Soviet remained formally the same as under the Soviet rule, including the vertical structure of power included the decision-making presidium, the executive body designed to coordinate the legislative affairs and the legislative branch acting as mediator between the executive and constituencies (Crowther & Roper, 1996, p. 150).

<sup>116</sup> On 24<sup>th</sup> May 1990 with 259 favourable votes and only one against from a Transnistrian deputy (Ipn.md 2008).

May 1990, declaring state sovereignty in June 1990 and changing its name to the Republic of Moldova in May 1991 – it proclaimed full independence on 27<sup>th</sup> August 1991. Immediately after, and as a response to the Moscow coup<sup>117</sup>, the Moldovan Communist Party was banned and its assets seized by the assembly (Law № 164, 1991) – the party, though, had already become largely irrelevant, with all the crucial decisions being taken by the alliance of PF and moderate communists. At that point, in order to assure the functioning of Moldova as an independent state, a few institutional rearrangements were deemed necessary: besides formally renaming the Supreme Soviet as the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova, an amendment to the 1978 Constitution of Moldavian SSR introduced direct presidential elections in September 1991 (Law № 720, 1991)<sup>118</sup>. The elections set for the 8<sup>th</sup> of December 1991 were contested by the sole candidate<sup>119</sup>, the incumbent Mircea Snegur who obtained 98.2 percent with a turnout of 84 percent<sup>120</sup>. It is worth to take note of the fact that already at that time the PF-Snegur alliance was virtually non-existent due to their increasingly divergent positions on the direction the country should go, in particular in terms of its geopolitical orientation.

In this context, the political formations in the first post-Soviet Moldovan parliament, unconstrained by party discipline and protected from the public electoral scrutiny, soon delved into an intense intra-elite struggle based on personal rivalries and geopolitical affinities. The first important fracture took place within the PF, which split into a more radical pan-Romanian wing<sup>121</sup> advocating for a complete cultural and political reunification with Romania and a more moderate one supporting a cultural, but not necessarily political union (or at least not in the immediate future) (King 2000, 153). The first group, led by Iurie Rosca, transformed

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<sup>117</sup> See fn. 90.

<sup>118</sup> The main provisions of the law stated that the president would be elected in a majoritarian run-off for a four-year term among the candidates “who must be over thirty-five years old, a resident of Moldova for at least ten years, and a speaker of the state language” (Fedor 1995; Solomon 2001; Tanașă 2007).

<sup>119</sup> After the withdrawal of the other two candidates, writer Gheorghe Malarciuc and the latest first Secretary of the MSS Communist Party Grigore Eremei, as both realized they had virtually no chances to win the contest (Moldova Liberă 2011b).

<sup>120</sup> Popular Front did not present a candidate as Mircea Druc, its leader, did not meet the formal requirement of presidency, but they called instead for electoral boycott. Nevertheless, both the high turnout and the high number of votes cast in support of Snegur indicated clearly that citizens were not very responsive to the PF’s calls. The elections were, however, boycotted in Transnistria and Gagauzia which, instead, organized their own contests on 1<sup>st</sup> December, having Igor Smirnov and Stepan Topal elected as their respective heads of states.

<sup>121</sup> The Romanian authorities were less open to this option, speaking more of a remote possibility of setting up a confederation like the German model. In reality, after the language issue was set and the independence assured, the ethnonationalist, identity-related political slogans lost much of their appeal among the population – as reported by Crowther who conducted a few surveys in 1992, only approximately 10 percent of ethnic Moldovans was in favour of re-unification with Romania, while around 87 percent defined themselves as ‘Moldovans’ rather than ‘Romanians’ when they could choose between the two (Crowther 1994). The radical position of the PPCD also caused some important defections either to other parties or leaving Moldova all-together, including its prominent members and spiritual fathers of PF, such as Ion Hadârcă or Ion Druță. It seems that in this light, Snegur’s decision to distance himself from his PF allies was mostly dictated by political opportunism (Mazo 2004).

into a fully-fledged political party – Christian Democratic Popular Front (PPCD) – in February 1992 while the second launched its party, the Congress of Intelligentsia (BȚI) in April 1993.

The second crucial division took place within the communist camp. The first group comprising initially sixty, reformed communist deputies supported by President Snegur gathered in ‘The Life of the Village’ (*Viața Satului*) faction and transformed into a party – the Democratic Agrarian Party of Moldova (PDAM) – in November 1991. The party presented more moderate stands towards ethnic minorities and a clear preference for maintaining Moldova as an independent state. Using their vast agrarian organizational networks composed of collective farms’ managers, the PDAM soon emerged as the most numerous and powerful parliamentary faction that almost gained a vetoing power (Fedor 1995). The second group composed mostly of the hardliner communists set up a Socialist Party and formed an alliance with the representatives of Slavic minorities united in the "Unitate-Edinstvo" Movement. Finally, many of the hardliner communists got involved in the most structured among the post-communist survival parties, the Party of the Communist of the Republic of Moldova (PCRM).

The struggle for power, however, was also reflected by the tensions in the president-government relations. In this context between 1991 and 1994, President Snegur made several attempts to accumulate power – to this end, he was instrumental in arranging the dismissal of the PF’s premier, Mircea Druc<sup>122</sup> through a motion of censure<sup>123</sup>, but was also able to install two subsequent heads of government of his choice, namely Valeriu Muravschi (May 1991 – July 1992) and, after his resignation, Andrei Sangheli (July 1992 - March 1994)<sup>124</sup>. In this way, he managed to neutralize his increasingly weakening rival, the PF, whose representatives did not hold important governmental portfolios after the collapse of the Druc’s government (King 2003; Olson and Norton 2007). Nevertheless, due to the semi-presidential institutional design, the attempts of President Snegur to extend his authority were always confined by the Assembly (Mazo 2004). In fact, already in 1993 the new majority managed to force the resignation of the Parliament’s Chairman, the BȚI (the former moderate PF member) Alexandru Moșanu and replaced him in February 1993 with Petru Lucinschi<sup>125</sup>, one of the President Snegur’s major political rivals (Ziarul Național 2017), which altered significantly the equilibrium of executive-legislative relations (Solomon 2001).

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<sup>122</sup> Who, however, proved not very well suited to the post as, but intensified the conflict with the separatist regions, especially with Transnistria, which eventually lead to the military clashes.

<sup>123</sup> Just a day before the vote, the requirements for successful adoption of no-confidence motion were changed from two-thirds to a simple majority. The move triggered several intense protests from both, the PF supporters of Druc in parliament and mass protests on the streets of the Moldovan capital, Chișinău (Moldova Liberă 2016f; 2016g).

<sup>124</sup> With the votes of PDAM, PF defectors and deputies from Conciliation party group (later the Socialist Party).

<sup>125</sup> First secretary of the Communist Party of Moldova and First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.



As the Assembly was fragmented and excessively divided, it passed a self-dissolution motion in October 1993 and set snap parliamentary elections for February 1994 (Moldova Liberă 2014b). In preparing the ground for the founding contest, the works on the reform of the Soviet electoral system were launched in summer 1993 – eventually, the electoral design based on PR system with closed party lists and a single, nation-wide electoral district was included in the Law on Elections adopted in October 1993 (IFES 1993). At this point it is worth mention that, besides the political calculations of its crafters, the ultimate shape of the electoral system was influenced by the military conflict with the separatist region of Transnistria between March and July 1992, which eventually led to the loss of control of the central Moldovan authorities over its territory<sup>126</sup>, which rendered the participation of its Moldovan inhabitants in national electoral contests significantly more complicated<sup>127</sup>.

Besides many unresolved, pressing problems, including the reminiscences of the Transnistrian conflict as well as the deteriorating economic condition of the country, the first parliamentary term left in inheritance the need to settle the constitutional order. The results of the 1994 founding contest brought a reshuffled and mildly fragmented assembly<sup>128</sup>, which allowed for relatively smooth preparation of the final project. The institutional arrangement that emerged from these works was intended to follow the French model and provided a clear basis for premier-presidential type “in which the executive plays a strong role in directing government, but the legislature remained sovereign, with strong oversight authority” (Crowther 1997). The new Moldovan Constitution was ratified on 28 July 1994 and effectively entered into force a month later, on 27 August.

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<sup>126</sup>The implacability of PF’s activists generated increasing nervousness among the representatives of the ethnic minorities and hardliner communist party members, grouped under the umbrella of Sovietskaya Moldavia faction. In fact, only a few months after its inauguration the Supreme Soviet was already in functional and political deadlock when 100 members left its ranks in May 1990 in protest against the increasing nationalism. But it was outside the political institutions in the capital Chişinău that the PF’s nationalistic proclivities generated the firmest resistance. In this context, in cooperation with the Gagauzians, the Transnistrians suggested the establishment of a tripartite federation with Moldova, but the Moldovan parliament rejected the proposal. Consequently, the autonomy of the Gagauz republic was proclaimed by its leaders on 21 August 1990 while that of the Transdnistriean Moldovan Soviet Socialist Republic was claimed on 2 September 1990. (Crowther and Roper 1996). In response, and under the pressure of PF, President Snegur introduced a state of emergency and called for the disarmament of the separatists. Expectedly, such a move encountered their firm resistance, which generated a full-blown war with Transnistria between May and July 1992. The conflict caused the death of over one thousand people and generated 130 thousand internally displaced persons. At the same time, unlike the Transnistrians, the Gagauz leadership did not seek a complete separation from Moldova, notwithstanding declaring the independence of its Republic.

<sup>127</sup> For details see Chapter 7 and, in particular, sections 7.2.1.2.

<sup>128</sup> In which the PDAM party composed of the former reformed communists detained the absolute majority of seats (56 out of 104), followed by the Slavic-dominated Socialist Bloc with 28 seats and the two post-PF formations – the more moderate BȚI-led bloc with 11 and the more radical PPCD-led bloc with 9 seats. For detailed electoral results see Appendix I.

The ultimate content of the basic law was influenced by a combination of Soviet institutional legacy and political weights of the actors involved in its drafting. In fact, it inherited the institutional arrangements of the communist regime, including the vertical structure of power based on the executive body designed to coordinate the legislative affairs and the legislative branch acting as a mediator between the executive and constituencies (Crowther and Roper 1996, 150). In this context, the presidential component of the executive was considered as a “superimposition” or, perhaps, a replication of a similar evolution that took place in Russia, rather than a deliberate choice of the Moldovan lawmakers (Mazo 2004; Roper 2008a).

Bearing in mind the political context, in which the assembly continued to prevail over the president, one of the most puzzling aspects surrounding the crafting of the new regime type pertains to the logic followed by the Moldovan lawmakers in their decision to opt for semi-presidentialism, even if slightly inclined towards the parliamentary dominance in terms of competencies, instead of choosing the full parliamentarism. This aspect becomes even more curious considering that, despite supporting the then-president, Mircea Snegur the PDAM, which dominated the assembly at the moment of constitutional drafting, was by no means a presidential party. Furthermore, the experience of the previous parliament operating under the semi-presidential form of government clearly demonstrated its conflict-generating nature and a high potential for political deadlocks, which continuously paralyzed the assembly’s work.

Although one could argue that the country’s institutional set up was borrowed from the semi-presidential neighbouring Romania – a traditional point of reference for Moldovan political elite – this alone seems to be insufficient to explain its choice. Similarly, the argument according to which there was an international pressure urging Moldovan lawmakers to avoid the presidential system as reported by Hale (2014) seems to have limited explanatory value. Perhaps one of the most convincing solutions to this conundrum has been found in the uncertainty and instability of the Moldovan political life of the mid-1990s. More specifically, as argued by Roper “(T)he unpredictability of politics, parties and coalitions during this period as well as shifting alliances constrained the behaviour of all the political actors so that a status quo prevailed in which the regime type functioning since 1991 was kept largely in place” (Roper 2008a, 117). Given the multi-party composition of the parliament and the institutional setup, which made it very difficult for one actor to dominate over the others, this argument seems convincing.

To summarize, the first phase of party development in Moldova ended with well-defined parties crystallized from the intra-elite struggle that unfolded during the first parliamentary term, clearly positioned along the identity-divide as well as the institutional setup, including the PR electoral systems and the semi-presidential regime.

## 1.4. Conclusions

This chapter has sought to understand the impact of the historical legacies and that of the immediate-strategic context of transition on the early phases of institutional and political development in Georgia and Moldova. In doing so, I have sketched the historical and social backgrounds of the two countries through three periods to reconstruct the sequence of events relevant to political outcomes.

The main conclusion that can be drawn from the analysis is that the *past* clearly did matter for the direction of the early choices, yet by evidencing important differences between the two countries, the analysis uncovered some limits of universal explanatory models employed by the legacy-based approach. In fact, both Georgia and Moldova undoubtedly fall into the category of patrimonial communism, yet the basic shapes of their political and institutional structures differed – not only from each other but also from the theoretical predictions. It also provided additional arguments supporting the usefulness of combining the role of historical legacies with that of the immediate-strategic context of transition stemming from critical events. My analysis has also shown that the exact mechanisms through which the structural and historical factors affect the present outcomes depend, to a great extent, on the idiosyncratic experiences of individual countries.

Against this backdrop, the political and social landscapes of Georgia in the wake of the USSR's collapse were shaped by a mixture of both, the historical legacies and critical events. In this regard, the pre-Soviet and Soviet periods affected the traditional societal structures through urbanization and industrialization, but also enhanced the attachment to traditional cultural values and Georgian distrust towards Soviet institutions. By the late 1980s, Georgia was characterized by an atomized civil society relating to the state structures through “patronage system, regional bosses, and (informal) networks” (Jones, 2012, p. 9). It was also marked by strong regional identities, dominated, however, by the sense of Georgian cultural superiority over ethnic minorities. This increasing nationalism of the top Georgian politicians was one of the causes of civil wars and ultimate loss of control over the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia.

On the political side, if there was not much continuity with the pre-Soviet experiences, the Soviet era generated a well-rooted clientelist regime, in which Soviet nomenklatura – largely uncontrolled by the Moscow central authorities – built up their personal power structures as well as a fragmented opposition gathered in two (a moderate and a radical) camps. Nevertheless, it was the critical event of the 9<sup>th</sup> April 1989 massacre that constituted a clear turning point in the Georgian history by initiating a sequence of events and decisions bearing crucial consequences for its early political and constitutional choices. In summary, it affected the transition mode by progressively marginalizing the Communist Party, which had no say in the ultimate shape of the political order, but, most importantly, further radicalized and fragmented the opposition preparing the ground for the predominance of one of its leaders, Zviad Gamsakhurdia. The chaos of the transition period left a conspicuous imprint on the ultimate shape of the early institutional preferences: the

parallel mixed electoral system was chosen to satisfy the requests of the various power networks and the American-type presidential system was imposed by the need to restore order in the country. Yet, most importantly, despite the initial high political fragmentation, the early stage of party development set institutional and political conditions for party system concentration.

In the Moldovan case, the most crucial historical legacy is represented by the ethnolinguistic issue – rooted back in the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the eastern part of the Moldavian Principality, the Bessarabia, was annexed by the Russian Empire, it has continued to cast its shadow until the present day. The geopolitical game over Bessarabia deeply affected its societal structures by altering its composition at the expense of the native population and its language. Furthermore, it left an imprint on the nature of the communist regime by systematically excluding the Bessarabia-born communists from positions of power in fear of their potential disloyalty. Consequently, at the eve of its independence from the Soviet rule, there were four main political groups in Moldova exploiting the ethnolinguistic issue in pursuing their political goals – the hardliner and the moderate wings of the Communist Party, the opposition united under the Popular Front umbrella and the ethnic-minorities.

In this context, the early phase of political development in independent Moldova resulted in some unexpected institutional preferences – as noted by King, “(A)t every turn, Moldova has turned out to be something other than what most observers had either hoped or expected” (King 2000, 224). Yet if the choice of the PR electoral system can be partially ascribed to the effects of the Transnistrian war, that of semi-presidentialism maintained by the one-party dominated parliament appears more puzzling. A possible key to its understanding pertains to the nature of the Moldovan transition, which, contrary to the Georgian experience, provided institutional and political context leading to the emergence of a few parties with well-defined ethnolinguistic positions. This higher fragmentation increased political uncertainty and favoured the continuity of political institutions as “few political figures were willing to make bold moves that could be used against them or their party in the next election. Muddling through, for most Moldovan politicians, remained preferable to messing up” (King 2000, 161).

To conclude, regardless of the obvious differences between the two countries, the institutional and political choices they made at the outset of transition are commonly believed to have had “a disproportionate weight in determining what followed” (Crowther and Roper 1996, 149). The subsequent parts of this thesis will help to verify the truth of this claim.



## **Chapter 2. The social rootedness of parties**

The limited comparative studies of post-Soviet political developments have left important gaps in our understanding of their cross-country and cross-temporal evolution. Hence, the main objective of the following two chapters is to explore the nature of parties and party systems in Georgia and Moldova and assess the extent to which they have stabilized over time. Among several analytical approaches applied to party institutionalization research (Panebianco 1988; Randall and Svåsand 2002; Tan 2006), in this thesis, I focus on party social rootedness and organizational stability as proposed by Casal Bértoa (2011).

The inquiry conducted in the present chapter is based on two theoretical assumptions: firstly, I am well aware of the distinction between the consolidation at the individual party and the systemic levels, however, I presume that the stability of the parts affects the stability of the entire system (Sartori 1976). Secondly, considering that the political processes in Georgia and Moldova have yet to become fully democratic, here the focus rests on the potential stabilization of political actors and predictability of their interactions rather than on their structuration.

Against this backdrop, the dimension of social anchorage assesses the strength of “linkages between parties, citizens, and organized interests” (Mainwaring and Scully 1995, 9). If one agrees that the main function of political parties outside the authoritarian contexts is to “connect representatives and the represented, (that is) politicians and voters” (Arter and Kestilä-Kekkonen 2014), then they certainly will not be able to perform this primary function without stable roots in the societies in which they operate. Considering the limited social linkages between parties and societies in post-authoritarian polities, the common wisdom suggests that the process of social anchorage is generally perceived as “time-consuming, labour-intensive and only chosen if no other option is available to build up support” (van Biezen 2005, 155). Furthermore, as in these contexts, the electorates tend to be demobilized as reflected by the low level of trust, membership, party identification and general instability of electoral support (Rose 1995), and the political actors are generally viewed as ephemeral and predominantly leader-oriented.

In trying to understand how deeply, if at all, the Georgian and Moldovan political parties have become rooted in the respective societies, the discussion is based on a set of indicators, including social divides, stability of electoral support, party durability and nationalization as well as the level of partisanship and party links with civil society. Nevertheless, as the multiple indicators employed here are not identical in terms of weight, they are not aggregated in a single index (Bruhn 2016, 226). The conclusive part of the analysis summarizes the main similarities and differences among political actors in both countries in order to emphasize the comparative dimension of this study.

Before delving into the proper analysis, one important methodological consideration is in order. Considering the fluctuation of political formations in both countries, the units of the present analysis are selected based on their electoral success, namely only those political actors who obtained at least 5 percent<sup>1</sup> – corresponding to an average electoral threshold in both countries throughout the period under scrutiny – in at least one election in the period between 1992 and 2016 are considered. The main reason for such a choice is dictated by the requirement of parsimony – the inclusion of the conspicuous number of smaller parties, which have consistently fallen below this threshold would inevitably distort the general patterns, which this study aims to depict. Furthermore, I believe that the choice of similar studies of political parties in new democracies to set the barrier at 10 percent (Mainwaring 1999; Dix 1992; Casal Bértoa 2011) is too restrictive and would exclude from the analysis many of political formations which, despite having obtained less than 10 percent, still play an important political role.

## **2.1. Social divides**

For quite a long time in an effort to explain the trajectories of post-communist party development, scholars took the weak social anchorage of political actors for granted and assumed that in this region “dealignment appears not as an end state but as a departure point” (Enyedi 2008, 297). Consequently, the literature on political sociology in the region is quite recent (Tavits and Letki 2014) and its main findings tend to emphasize that the emergence of social divides followed a different pattern from that discussed by the Rokkanian approach (Rokkan and Lipset 1967). As such, it suggests that cleavages in the post-communist region translated into two main dimensions of party competition, namely the value or cultural-oriented as well as the economic or the interest-based (Evans and Whitefield 1993; 2000).

In the Eurasian region, however, in particular at the early stages of party development, the relevance of social divides remained secondary in structuring the political competition as the “political actors and political institutions (...) shaped the direction of mass preferences” (Gel’man 2005, 227) and not the other way round. To be sure, social divides were present, yet they did not translate in the traditionally defined cleavages<sup>2</sup> as demonstrated by the following discussion.

Building on Casal Bértoa (2014), table 2.1 summarizes the major social indicators traditionally epitomising the social cleavages, respectively ethnic/linguistic fractionalization for centre-periphery

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<sup>1</sup> Except for the calculations of volatility as explained in section 2.3.

<sup>2</sup> We can only speak of cleavages “when a particular social divide becomes associated with a particular set of values or identities [which are] made politically relevant by means of an organized party or group” (Mair 2006, 373). In other words, it requires “social stratification (according to class, religion, etc.) and group consciousness (according to different values and/or preferences), but also a certain organization (in the form of a political party, trade union, etc.” (Casal Bértoa 2014, 17; see also Bartolini and Mair 1990).

cleavage, religious fractionalization for religious cleavage, urban/rural fractionalization for urban-rural cleavage and pro-Russian/pro-European social attitude for the foreign-policy cleavage (Casal Bértoa 2014).

**Table 2.1 Social data on Georgia and Moldova (1989-2016)**

	<b>Ethnic/Linguistic</b> <i>(fractionalization)</i>	<b>Religious</b> <i>(fractionalization)</i>	<b>Urban/Rural</b> <i>(% of population)</i>	<b>Foreign Policy</b> <i>(attitudinal)</i>
<b>Georgia</b>	0.49/0.57	0.65	55/45	65/16
<b>Moldova</b>	0.54 /0.59	0.56	44/55	44/47

Source: own compilation with data retrieved from a) ethnic, linguistic and religious fractionalization from Alesina et al., (2003); Campos & Kuzeyev (2007); Unesco, (2009) as well as for b) the percentage of urban/rural population (1989-2016) from the World Bank Data available at [www.data.worldbank.org/indicator](http://www.data.worldbank.org/indicator). The d) foreign policy position is an attitudinal dimension measured by the percentage of supporters of potential accession of each country to EU/Eurasia Union retrieved, respectively, from the Barometer of Public Opinion (available at [www.bop.ipp.md/ro/](http://www.bop.ipp.md/ro/)), November 2014 for Moldova and from NDI Opinion Poll (available at [www.ndi.org/node/23817](http://www.ndi.org/node/23817)), April 2014 for Georgia (all accessed in July 2019).

A careful look at the first column of table 2.1 reveals a rather pronounced ethnic and linguistic fractionalization in both countries (the religious division is discussed more in detail in section 2.6). This suggests a quite marked centre-periphery cleavage; yet, the reality appears to be more complex. In the Georgian case, the high ethnolinguistic fractionalization has not translated into a pronounced dimension of political competition as, since the outset of transition, the ethnic minorities<sup>3</sup> consistently voted for the ruling parties (Nodia 2006) while the incumbents constantly engaged with the local community representatives<sup>4</sup>. Likewise, in Moldova, the ethnic minorities (including Gagauzians concentrated in the south of the country and Slavic minorities dispersed over the entire territory) generally aligned with the national parties. Certainly, this tendency observed in both countries can be explained by structural constraints, including the prohibition of regional parties by party law (as in Georgia, see Law on Political Unions of Citizens, art.6) or strict requirements for party registration (e.g. a number of signatures from several, dispersed administrative regions as in the case of Moldova).

In this context, the Moldovan case is interesting also from another point of view. As discussed in Chapter 1, the ethnolinguistic issue constituted the most salient political issue mobilizing citizens and politicians during the first phase of transition in Moldova. Yet, once the issue of state language was settled in

<sup>3</sup> Among them the largest groups of Armenian and Azerbaijani origins concentrated respectively in the Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo-Kartli regions. Citizens from separatist republics, i.e. the Abkhazia and South Ossetia do not participate in the Georgian political elections.

<sup>4</sup> For instance, for the 2012 local elections the two major rivals, the UNM and the GD-DG coalition have both nominated the representatives of the Armenian community as their respective candidates for the SMD race (Sichinava 2015). Furthermore, since the peaceful revolution held in 2003, the voting patterns in the autonomous region of Adjara has realigned with the nation-wide politics.



August 1989, it was replaced by the attitude towards the statehood and foreign policy orientation<sup>5</sup>. Accordingly, the Moldovan political scene divided into the pro-Romanian position broadly identifying with the right-wing formations, the pro-independent Moldova one with the centre and the pro-Russian orientation with the left-wing parties. Furthermore, since the question of Moldovan identity/language<sup>6</sup> and the country's independence was largely settled, at least since 2009 both issues have been gradually replaced by a more pronounced geopolitical division pitting pro-European and pro-Russian formations<sup>7</sup>.

The second interesting observation derives from the last column of table 2.1, which exhibits the public attitudes towards foreign policy dimension. If in the Georgian case this dimension does not pose specific interpretative problems considering that the conspicuous majority of Georgian citizens display a pro-European orientation (65 percent as opposed to 16 percent supporting the pro-Russian course), the cross-cutting nature of the 'foreign policy' divide is worth of a more careful examination. As it now constitutes the most salient dimension of political competition in Moldova and appears to, by far, overshadow the ethnolinguistic one. In fact, in the opinion poll from November 2014 around 51 percent of respondents of Moldovan/Romanian ethnicity supported EU accession, but 40 percent preferred the accession to the Russia-led Eurasian Union<sup>8</sup>. Nevertheless, it should also not be ignored that, as argued by the experts of Moldovan politics, with a lack of coherent party programs, the ethnolinguistic/geopolitical division has been systematically, and purposefully, overemphasized by the political class in order to distract the public opinion from much more pressing problems such as, *inter alia*, economic reforms. According to this interpretation,

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<sup>5</sup> At this point, it seems useful to point out the rich linguistic diversity in Moldova, even though the biggest and most visible ethnic minority is the Russian-speaking one. It is quite suggestive that a large portion of this ethnic group has not learned the official, Moldovan/Romanian language, despite a long-term residence in the country. This phenomenon concerns also politicians as it is not infrequent that deputies in the Moldovan parliament are unable to communicate in the state language. For more on this issue see, *inter alia*, Zdaniuk (2016).

<sup>6</sup> In a sense that, the Moldovan independence "made Moldovan/Romanian a 'minorized majority language' (a majority language that necessitates the protection normally reserved to engendered languages); in turn, Russian in post-Soviet Moldova possesses a number of the attributes of a 'majorized minority language' (the language of a numerical linguistic minority but de facto with the prestige of a majority language)" (Prina 2015, 53).

<sup>7</sup> Stemming also from the fact that the once, strong calls, for reunification with Romania have weakened over time, also because of a rather cold reception in Romania itself.

<sup>8</sup> This trend is also reflected by the declared support for the political parties in Moldova. For instance, the pro-Russian PCRM, which since 1998 has been consistently obtaining the highest number of votes in parliamentary elections, have been supported by the representatives of both the titular Moldovan/Romanian group as well as by the Russian-speaking minorities: in 2002 40 percent of Moldovan/Romanians (M/R) declared the intention to vote for PCRM against 51 percent of Russian (RU), 69 percent of Ukrainian (UKR) and 67 percent of others (OTH); in 2010 the declared voting intentions for PCRM were equal to M/R – 29.9, RU – 77.2, UKR – 67.6 and OTH – 71.4. The support for pro-European parties among ethnic minorities have, nevertheless, remained rather low – for instance in 2010, 36.6 percent of M/R declared to vote for PLDM against RU – 9.1, UKR – 6.9 and 4.7 of other nationalities. For a more detailed data see Barometer of Public Opinion.

the foreign policy orientation would also serve a purpose to overshadow the incessant intra-elite struggle for power and progressive state capture by the political elite (Oleksy 2018).

Finally, neither in Moldova nor in Georgia does the urban/rural divide seem to have played a role in structuring political competition. In fact, the internal migrations towards urban centres during the Communist era altered the traditional structure of the population, which reduced the cultural differences between the two contexts. Furthermore, the composition of the first Moldovan parliament made the “(S)ocial divisions between elites and masses (...) far less marked”, which made the Moldovan deputies more favourable to redistributing resources towards the peripheries (Crowther and Roper 1996, 153). Although this attitude of the Moldovan parliament has changed over time as the political process became always more centralized and nationalized, the urban/rural cleavage has remained weakly defined as also reflected by the voting preferences of respective electorates<sup>9</sup>. Some scholars (Sichinava 2015) have argued that the urban-rural divide manifested itself more clearly on the occasion of the Georgian 2012 parliamentary elections when the rural population voted for the United National Movement (UNM) and those located in urban centres supported the Georgian Dream (GD) coalition. This is an interesting observation, however, these patterns seemed not to be replicated in the subsequent elections held in 2016; thus, we can hardly speak of a clearly defined cleavage.

## **2.2. Party durability**

The durability of the political formations is one of the most common indicators used for investigating their social rootedness (Basedau and Stroh 2008; Mainwaring and Scully 1995). In the words of Mogens N. Pedersen, parties are “mortal organizations bounded by a lifespan” and each stage of their lives can be examined (Pedersen 1982, 1), but “the ability of parties to survive a long time provides one possible indication that they have captured the long-term loyalties of some social groups” (Mainwaring and Scully 1995, 13). The indicator of ‘durability’ chosen for the purpose of this analysis consists of two elements: the first pertains to their length of existence (hereinafter referred to as party ‘age’), while the second refers to their ability to survive external shocks (Gurr 1974).

Having this in mind, table 2.2 summarizes the age<sup>10</sup> of the main political parties in Georgia and Moldova from a comparative perspective. What immediately captures the attention is that, in general terms, the mainstream parties in both countries have not been as short-lived as it is commonly believed.

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<sup>9</sup> In fact, between 2000 and 2016 no significant differences in the voting preferences of the urban and rural populations could be observed. See Barometer of Public Opinion (Moldova).

<sup>10</sup> There are two indicators related to party age as developed in the literature on political parties in emerging democracies: one indicates the overall lifespan of a given party since its creation; the other measures the age of parties since the moment when parties were allowed to register. In the cases of Georgia and Moldova, as it is in most of the post-Soviet states, those two generally coincide (with the exception of a few political actors whose overall lifespan is indicated in brackets).

**Table 2.2 The durability of political parties in Georgia and Moldova (1990-2016)**

Country	Party ( $\geq 5$ percent of votes)	Lifespan	Dates
<i>Georgia</i>	Republican Party of Georgia	26 (38)*	1990 (1978)*-
	Union of Georgian Traditionalists	26	1990-
	National Democratic Party (NDP)	24 (35)*	1992 (1981)*-
	Georgian Labour Party	21	1995-
	Industry Will Save Georgia	17	1999-
	Conservative Party of Georgia	15	2001-
	New Rights	15	2001-
	United National Movement (UNM)	15	2001-
	Democratic Union for Revival	12	1992-2004
	National Forum	10	2006-
	Union of Citizens of Georgia (CUG)	8	1995-2003
	Georgian Dream (GD-DG)	4	2012-
	Alliance of Patriots of Georgia (APG)	4	2012-
	<b>Average</b>	<b>15.1</b>	
<i>Moldova</i>	Christian-Democratic People's Party (PPCD)	28	1989-
	Democratic Agrarian Party of Moldova (PDAM)**	26	1991-
	Socialist Party of Moldova (PSM)	24	1992-
	Liberal Party (PL)	24	1993-
	Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova (PCRM)	23	1994-
	Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM)	20	1994-
	Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova (PSRM)	20	1997-
	Our Moldova Alliance (AMN)	14	1997-2011
	Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova (PLDM)	9	2008-
	Party of Democratic Forces (PFD)	9	1993-2002
	Party of Rebirth and Conciliation of Moldova (PRCM)	7	1995-2002
	<b>Average</b>	<b>18.5</b>	

\* Year of the official registration (year of establishment); \*\* since 2004 renamed as Agrarian Party of Moldova (APM) Note: Political parties gaining mandates through electoral blocs are not taken into account with an exception of the Georgian Dream alliance.

Source: own elaboration based on party websites, format adapted from Casal Bértoa (2011)

Table 2.2 reveals a rather important difference between the average longevity values of Georgian (15.1) and Moldovan<sup>11</sup> (18.5) political formations. Indeed, as table 2.2 clearly indicates, seven out of eleven

<sup>11</sup> It is important to keep in mind that over the last two decades political parties in both countries, but particularly in Moldova were exposed to several organizational changes, namely splits/mergers and re-labelling. However, where those changes have not substantially altered the nature of the party, I treated it as one continuous, coherent political actor. See section 3.2. for more details.

among those who gained at least 5 percent of votes in at least one election since independence in Moldova were established right before the founding elections held in 1994 while only three out of twelve such political actors existed in Georgia right before the founding elections in 1992. This difference can be explained by the nature of emerging political scenes in both countries discussed in Chapter 1. Indeed, the first few years of independence of all the post-communist states were marked by a high level of political turmoil reflected in several reconfigurations of the political scene including the disintegration of the opposition umbrella movement and regroupings of the former communist elites. However, while in Moldova certain stability was encouraged since the beginning, this was not the case in Georgia where the opposition was much more fragmented and the initial institutional choice much less favourable for the development of a multiparty political system.

Political parties can be exposed to several shocks of both endogenous (change in leadership, party switching, etc.) and exogenous nature (e.g. change of political system by means of societal pressure). The endogenous factors will be further examined in the subsequent chapter, yet one interesting aspect is worth anticipating in this section. In this vein, table 2.2 reveals that out of twelve political actors in Georgia, two ceased to exist at about the same time (between 2003 and 2004). These two formations, the All-Georgian Union for Revival and the CUG, were the classic ‘parties of power’ and, as such, their fate proved inexorably linked to the fate of their leaders ousted from power by the 2003 Rose Revolution<sup>12</sup>. More concretely, the All-Georgian Union for Revival was led incessantly since 1992 by Aslan Abashidze, the influential representative of the Communist nomenklatura and the authoritarian leader of the Adjara autonomous region, forced to resign by the new, post-revolutionary Georgian authorities<sup>13</sup>. Likewise, the CUG, launched by President Shevardnadze and his followers to provide parliamentary support for his political activities, was

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<sup>12</sup> The peaceful Rose Revolution erupted following the rigged parliamentary election held in November 2003 and swept away most of the old elite led by President Shevardnadze along with the institutional features of his regime. For a more detailed account on the Rose Revolution see, among others, (Welt 2009; Mitchell 2009a; Ó Beacháin and Polese 2012).

<sup>13</sup> Adjara was entirely run by the Abashidze’s family, ‘clan’ who escaped any control from the central authorities, including the refusal of transferring tax revenues, as well as conducting its own foreign policy having an exclusive control of the Georgian main port, Batumi, as well as principal checkpoint at Georgian-Turkish border at Sarpi. Abashidze was pro-Russian and supported the separatist regions that were undermining the central authorities. See (Nodia 2006). The refusal of Abashidze to carry on the disarmament requested by the post-Revolutionary entry government and his obstructionism in talks over power distribution led to increasing tensions to the point of Abashidze’s decision to blow up key bridges and railways connecting Adjara with the rest of Georgia. This led to mass protests in Adjara’s capital, Batumi and eventual intervention of the Secretary of the Russian Security Council as mediator. Following the Abashidze departure in May 2004, the central government outlined the new terms for Adjarian autonomy and snap elections were held in June 2004 to determine the composition of the regional parliament: unsurprisingly, the pro-Saakashvili’s bloc, Victorious Adjara obtained a landslide victory of 75 percent with only one other party, the Republicans, managing to clear the threshold. For details see, (Civil.ge, 2004j, 2004k, 2004l, 2004n).

progressively losing members as their conflict with the President intensified during the second Shevardnadze term. His forced removal from office by the young reformers and leaders of the Rose Revolution led to the complete disintegration of his party.

By contrast, the extinction of the three Moldovan parties in the period under examination, namely the AMN, PFD and the PRCM was mostly generated by a progressive decrease in electoral support rather than being linked to the fate of their leaders. Furthermore, instead of completely disappearing, the three parties were absorbed by other groupings: the PRCM united with two smaller formations in the Liberal Party in 2002 and was absorbed by the AMN in 2003, PFD united with the Social Liberal Party in 2002 (which, in turn, merged into the Democratic Party in 2008) while the AMN merged into PLDM in 2011.

### **2.3. Electoral volatility**

The change in voting preferences of the electorates over time is another crucial indicator of the extent of the social rootedness of parties (Basedau and Stroh 2008; Mainwaring 1999). There are two ways in which this aspect can be measured. The first applies the concept of electoral volatility, commonly operationalized by the Pedersen's Index (Pedersen 1982), which captures the aggregate variation in the percentage of votes cast for parties in a sequence of elections. Although electoral volatility is one of the most, if not *the* most, commonly employed indicator of party system stability by the 'institutionalization' research (Casal Bértoa 2018), many scholars have argued that it relates more to party-voter than to inter-party relations (Toole 2000, 441). As such what it actually measures are the shifts in "patterns of party strength" (Wolinetz 2006, 58) resulting from electoral outcomes rather than changes in recurring patterns of inter-party relations.

Against this backdrop, the Pedersen's Index combines two distinctive elements: the supply-side, namely the changes stemming from the entry of new parties into the system (Type A), and the demand-side, namely the volatility caused by the shifts in electoral supports of the established parties (Type B) (Mainwaring, Gervasoni, and España-Najera 2017). As it has been often emphasized by the post-communist party research, only Type A would be an indicator of systemic stabilization – according to this logic, the lower the score, the higher the system's permeability from new entries. Consequently, the Type B volatility would indicate a democratic competition that allows voters to choose freely from among the established actors, which, at least from a theoretical perspective, does not alter the structural properties of the system (E. N. Powell and Tucker 2016). In other words, variation in Type A volatility brings with it some changes at the systemic level, but not all variations in Type B dispose of the same consequential power (Rafałowski 2014). A similar perspective was adopted by Birch who included in her study the measure of party replacement, which, in essence, corresponds to Type A volatility (Birch 2003). In fact, the disentanglement of the two volatility types appears particularly useful to studies of fluid party systems, in which organizational

discontinuity of their components (i.e. split/mergers, etc.) is a frequent phenomenon. Following this approach, tables 2.3 and 2.4 summarize the volatility scores of each type and their overall value for each country<sup>14</sup>.

A careful examination of both tables reveals greater stability of electoral support in Moldova than in Georgia. Likewise, the values reported in the first rows of tables 2.3 and 2.4 displaying the fluctuation in type A volatility from election to election suggest a generally lower systemic stabilization over time in Georgia than in Moldova. Indeed, in the Georgian case the total volatility score is caused mostly by the new actors entering the system, even though, as it will be discussed in more detail a few lines below, they should not be perceived as entirely “genuinely” new (Sikk 2005) in all occasions<sup>15</sup>. In other words, it is worth mentioning here that at least part of the Type A volatility fluctuation is due to changing configurations of electoral alliances arranged by the established opposition parties from one election to another (in particular between the 2008 and 2012 contests). Nevertheless, the frequency of establishing new parties in Georgia is certainly much higher than that in Moldova.

**Table 2.3 Electoral volatility in Georgia (1992-2016)**

<b>Type</b>	<b>1992-1995</b>	<b>1995-1999</b>	<b>2004-2008</b>	<b>2008-2012</b>	<b>2012-2016</b>
<b>A</b>	57.78	23.59	25.75	60.81	37.73
<b>B</b>	1.64	22.06	4.94	18.79	31.82
<b>Total</b>	59.42	45.65	30.69	79.60	69.55

Source: Powell & Tucker (2016) and own calculations of the missing values based on their calculation method

As displayed by table 2.4, in the case of Moldova it is possible to observe a progressive stabilization of electoral preferences over time since the 2005 elections. In fact, for three consecutive electoral contests, there has been little variation in terms of electoral volatility caused by the entry of new parties – its increase in 2014 was triggered by the shift of voters’ support towards PSRM, which, however, was not an entirely new party<sup>16</sup>. The second row of table 2.4 shows the evolution of the volatility scores stemming from swings

<sup>14</sup> For the rules on which the calculations Powell and Tucker’s volatility index comprises parties that receive 2 percent of votes in at least one contest. Those that do not fulfil this criterion are considered outside the system. Additionally, it is important to note here that the discrepancies of the volatility scores reported in the post-communist party literature are mostly due to the method applied to classifying organizational discontinuity of parties – i.e. mergers/splits, but also electoral coalitions and, in particular, new parties (Sikk 2005).

<sup>15</sup> According to Sikk a “genuinely new party” a) is not a successor of any previously existing formation, b) is not formed nor include any previously important political figures such as premiers, members of cabinet or parliament, and c) has a new structure and name (Sikk 2005, 399).

<sup>16</sup> PSRM is not a new party as it was founded in 1997; nevertheless, it had obtained more than 2 percent of votes (i.e. in 2005 under the umbrella of “Patria-Rodina” electoral bloc with 4.97 percent) only once before the 2014 contest in which it turned out to be the winning party. Its electoral success can be explained by the reinforcement

in electoral preferences among the established parties evidence its increase over time, which also clearly suggests a certain progressive stabilization of the Moldovan party system.

**Table 2.4 Electoral volatility in Moldova (1994-2014)**

Type	1994-1998	1998-2001	2001-2005	2005-2009 <sup>a</sup>	2009 <sup>a</sup> -2009 <sup>b</sup>	2009 <sup>b</sup> -2010	2010-2014
<b>A</b>	66.16	45.23	27.57	36.62	4.75	0	16.79
<b>B</b>	19.77	10.03	2.46	4.77	11.23	14.69	18.19
<b>Total</b>	85.93	55.26	30.03	41.39	15.98	14.69	34.98

<sup>a</sup> April 2009, <sup>b</sup> July 2009; Source: Powell & Tucker (2016) and own calculations of the missing values based on their calculation method

The second way of measuring the shift of electoral support is to employ the Index of Party Stabilization (IPS) conceptualized by Lewis (2006) and employed in similar studies (Casal Bértoa 2011). The main advantage of employing IPS in the context of this study lies in its ability to capture the stability of electoral support of individual parties, thus better capturing the degree of their social anchorage. In fact, it helps to track party survival record over time by assigning weights and ‘rewards’ to their electoral achievements in a sequence of elections<sup>17</sup>. Overall, the higher the value of IPS, the more stable is the electoral support in each country.

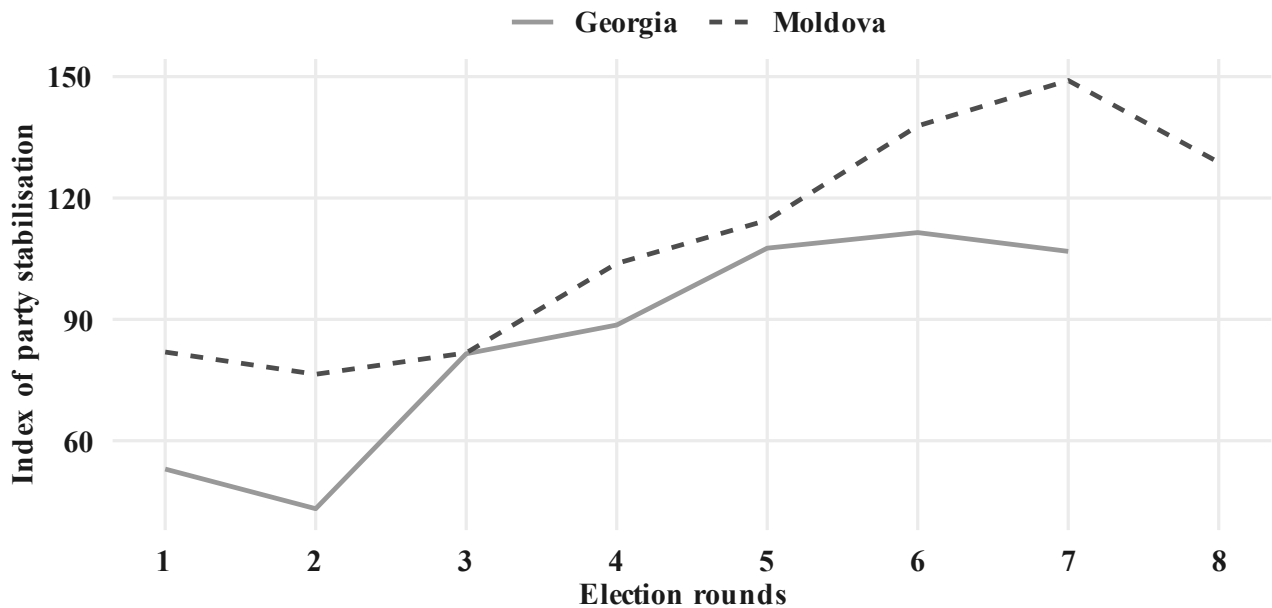
Figure 2.1 depicts the evolution of party stabilization over time. What clearly follows from this graphic representation is that the electoral stability of major parties in Moldova is generally higher than that of political actors in Georgia. Indeed, the overall IPS score for the first country is equal to 64.3 whereas for the latter is 52.9. A closer look at figure 2.1 allows also to track a clear pattern of increasing electoral stability in Moldova until the latest elections held in 2014, while in Georgia there has been little variation since the last three contests. In this way, the IPS scores in both countries confirm the trends observed with regard to the shifts of electoral volatility discussed in the previous paragraphs.

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it received from an important group of high-ranked PCRM’s Communist splinters, which, in turn, allowed PSRM to subtract a significant number of votes from the Communist Party (see chapter 3). For more details see Partidul politic “Partidul Socialiștilor din Republica Moldova” (PSRM), Scurt istoric, available at: <http://www.e-democracy.md/parties/psmpr/> (last accessed in May 2017).

<sup>17</sup> The IPS is constructed by establishing the percentage of the total vote of a given party and progressively enhancing this share by adding to the original number a reward (20 for the second, 40 for the third, 60 for the fourth and so on). Eventually the number of votes is divided by the sum of enhanced numbers of total votes (100 percent for the first election, 120 for the second, 140 for the third and so on). For a more detailed account see Lewis (2006).

**Figure 2.1 Index of Party Stabilization in Georgia and Moldova over time (1994-2016)**



Note: Coalitions are treated as single parties unless one of the elements is predominating or it is possible to determine the individual support of its components; Source: own calculations based on Lewis (2006)

To further examine the shifts in electoral stability, table 2.5 summarizes the proportion of votes obtained by the parties participating in more than one election in both countries between 1995 and 2016. The reported scores indicate that while in Moldova the votes were increasingly distributed between the established political formations, in Georgia for each subsequent election a successful challenger managed to attract a share of votes. However, it is important to point out again that in the Georgian case, at least for 2008 and, partially, for 2012<sup>18</sup> we were not in front of the emergence of entirely new parties challenging the mainstream ones – in fact, the fluctuation in the IPS score is partially due to the changing electoral alliances among the established opposition parties who, from election to election, attempt to challenge the party in power through various aggregative configurations. This pattern has been even more visible in the Moldovan case, especially on the occasion of the 2014 parliamentary contest – the decrease of the IPS score would indicate that the path towards consolidation has been disrupted and that its party system is not entirely immune to the penetration of challenging parties – however, as mentioned a few lines above, PSRM is not an entirely new party, thus the changes in support should be ascribed to the regrouping of the mainstream elite rather than to emergence of new actors.

<sup>18</sup> This pattern was partially disrupted by the 2012 elections when a new party – the GD-DG was set by a Georgian oligarch, Bidzina Ivanishvili, which promptly emerged as the leading opposition formation to the incumbent UNM, even if it participated in the contest in an electoral bloc along with five other, smaller mainstream parties.



**Table 2.5 Proportion of votes obtained by the parties participating in more than one election in Georgia and Moldova (1995-2016)**

<b>Election</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>Average</b>
<b>Georgia</b>	8.01	71.3	6.01	66.6	40.3	75.8	44.7
<b>Moldova</b>	50.1	55.1	49.5	83.3	91.4	63.1	65.4

Source: own calculations based on electoral results retrieved from respective Central Electoral Commissions (CECs)

## **2.4. Partisanship, membership, and trust in political parties**

Partisanship is one of the classic indicators of the degree of social rootedness of political parties (Mainwaring 1999; Mainwaring and Scully 1995; Rose and Mishler 1998) as it estimates “the sense of personal attachment which the individual feels towards the (party) of his choice’ (Campbell, Gurin, and Miller 1954, 88–89). Scholars have often emphasized the correlation between party identification and consolidation of democratic regime – in words of Mishler and Rose (2001, 217–18) “if the level of identification is low, then the democracy itself is endangered” while Klingemann and Wattenberg (1992, 149) assumed that “to achieve a state of stable democracies in Eastern Europe, (we believe) a rapid development of citizens’ images of the major parties is essential”. While several studies on established democracies have revealed little variation between the party identification and electoral preferences (Bartle et al., 2014), those on post-communist party systems emphasized their distinctiveness (Casal Bértoa 2011). Indeed, while roughly 60-70 percent of citizens in Western democracies identify with at least one political actor (Mainwaring 1999, 30), these numbers are much lower in emerging democracies as evidenced by several empirical studies (P. Lewis 2000; Rose and Mishler 1998).

The lack of reliable data poses a major constraint for cross-country examination of the level of party identification in Georgia and Moldova. The only available data I retrieved that directly addresses this issue reveals that approximately 34 percent of respondents identify while 39 percent feel close to a political party in Moldova, and nearly 40 percent of Georgians indicate that they do not feel close to any political actor<sup>19</sup>.

Another telling indicator, which allows gauging the strength of the sense of belonging to a political party is the level of party membership (Mair and van Biezen 2001; van Biezen et al. 2012) expressed in both absolute numbers and as the percentage of the electorate (M/E ratio). Studies on membership levels in Europe clearly indicate that the scores are rather low in both new and established democracies: the average M/E ratio in 27 countries amounts to only 4.7 with the distinction between 3.0 for the Central and Eastern Europe, and

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<sup>19</sup> Data retrieved from April 2017 NDI Political Poll (Georgia) available at <https://www.ndi.org/publications/results-april-2017-public-opinion-polls-georgia> and Barometer of Public Opinion (Moldova) (both last accessed in May 2017).

5.7 for the Southern and Western European states (van Biezen, Mair, and Poguntke 2012, 29). This finding substantially confirms the hypotheses advanced in the literature according to which the levels of party membership in post-communist states would constantly remain far below those in established European democracies (Kopecký 1995; P. Lewis 2000; van Biezen 2003).

Yet, recent research has drawn the attention to the fact that in some post-Soviet states political actors actually might be much more interested in expanding their membership levels due to specific legislative provisions required, for instance, for party registration discussed in section 3.1 (Kallakas 2015)<sup>20</sup>. Considering that in Georgia it is much lower than in Moldova, the quite high M/E ratio (equal to 8.45 as calculated for Moldova based on 2017 data) would confirm this argument<sup>21</sup>.

Finally, figures 2.2 and 2.3 depict the level of trust/distrust in political parties in Georgia and Moldova over time<sup>22</sup>. What immediately captures the attention is a significantly high level of distrust among citizens towards political actors, which generally increases over time. Indeed, according to the opinion polls which I examined, political parties are generally the least trusted (and least favoured, depending on the formulation of the question) among a number of other public/private actors. Another interesting finding that emerges from the opinion polls is the general low level of trust towards political institutions (including president, government, parliament and local authorities) in both Georgia and Moldova while among the most trusted (or favoured) are religious institutions (along with army and police in Georgia or mass media in Moldova). The questionnaires employed in both countries do not contain questions related to trust (or closeness) to individual parties, but to the specific political figures (mostly leaders of those parties).

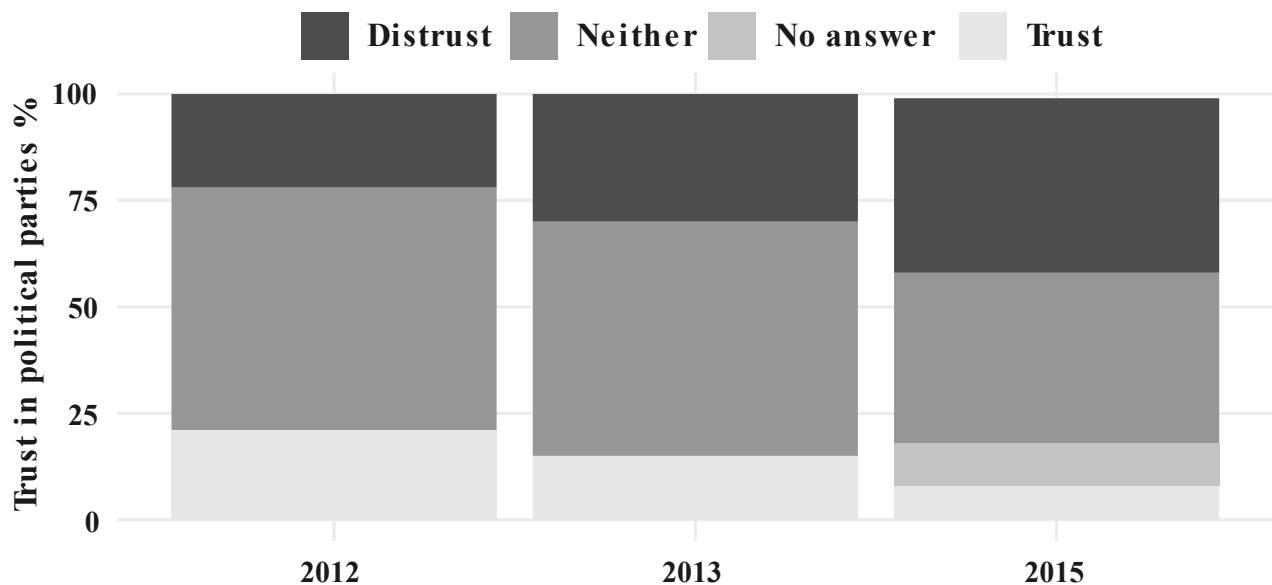
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<sup>20</sup> See Article 22, Law № 1028 (1997).

<sup>21</sup> In both countries parties are obliged to submit the full information on membership to either the Ministry of Justice (Moldova) or the Civil Registry at the Ministry of Justice (Georgia), even though neither the authorities nor parties themselves are obliged to disclose this information. Therefore, the biggest obstacle for the cross-country analysis or party membership is the lack of reliable and complete data which is mostly based on information obtained from individual parties. This poses a significant limit to analysis as political actors might tend to overstate the number of members for ‘reasons of organizational resources or legitimacy’ (Mair and van Biezen 2001). I observe this trend especially in Georgia where even minor political actors often have a tendency to indicate relatively high membership rates – this was the case, among others, of the Revived Communist Party of Georgia established in 1997 as a legal successor the Soviet Georgian Communist Party, which claimed to have as many as 17500 members. The party obtained only 3229 votes in the 1999 parliamentary elections, which somehow raises doubts about the veracity of the self-reported membership volume.

<sup>22</sup> The choice of years in Georgia is constrained by the availability of data.

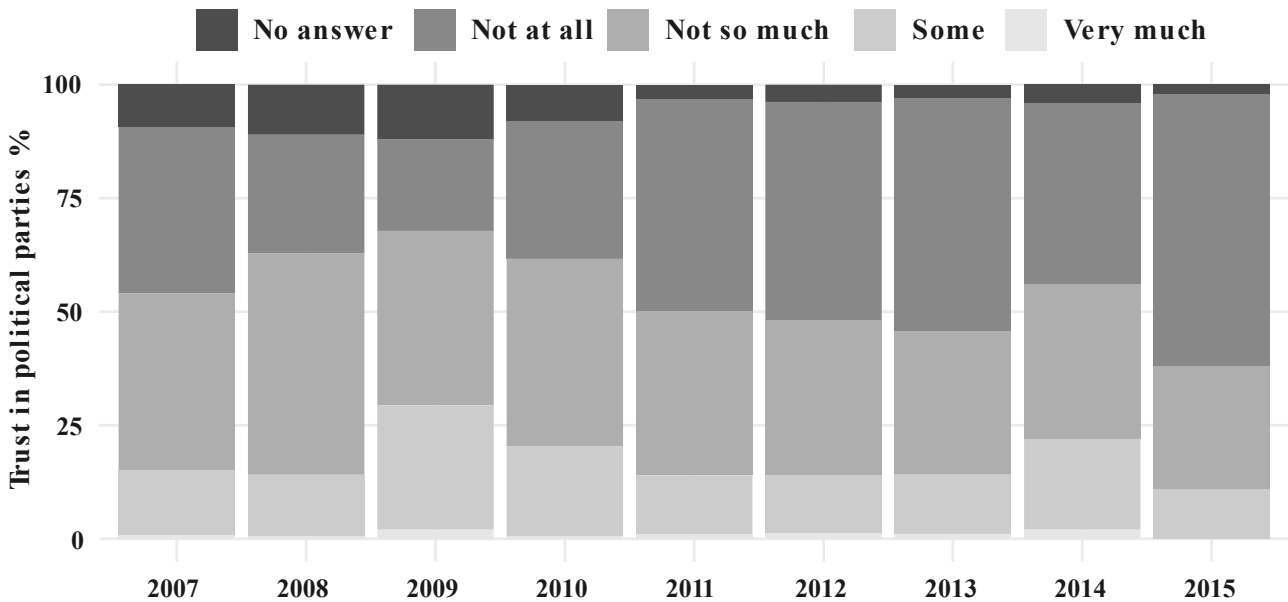
**Figure 2.2 Levels of trust/distrust in political parties in Georgia (2012-2015)**



Source: Own elaboration based on data retrieved from Caucasus Barometer (<http://caucasusbarometer.org>), NDI opinion polls ([www.ndi.org/georgia-polls](http://www.ndi.org/georgia-polls)) and IRI opinion polls (<http://www.iri.org/polls>) (all accessed in April 2017).

These findings conform to the more general hypotheses advanced by scholars of political parties in post-communist states according to which “citizens (in post-communist societies) are likely to manifest little initial trust for democratic institution” (Mishler and Rose 2001, 1), despite its critical importance for the consolidation of democracy. There are two types of explanations for this phenomenon: on the one hand those labelled as macro-cultural emphasize the legacy of the communist authoritarian regime (Badescu and Uslaner 2003; Jowitt 1993); on the other hand the micro-cultural theories punctuate the persistence of authoritarian values in the societies well beyond the breakdown of the communist regime (Mishler and Rose 2001). In fact, as observed by Antoszewski (2006, 121) the initial lack of trust in political actors could, perhaps, be explained by the clear association with Communist Parties whose ‘guiding and leading role’ was often in stark contrast with the social interests. At the later stage of party development, however, scholars have argued that the levels of trust/distrust are expected reactions of citizens to the (mal)functioning of political institutions (J. G. March 1988; North 1990).

**Figure 2.3 Levels of trust in political parties in Moldova (2007-2015)**



Source: own elaboration based on data retrieved from Barometer of Public Opinion

## 2.5. Nationalization

Mainwaring and Jones understand the concept of nationalization of political parties as “the extent to which a party receives similar levels of electoral support throughout the country” (2003, p. 3). In other words, nationalization measures the ability of political actors to sponsor their candidates nation-widely by estimating “the extent to which subnational units approximate national vote patterns” (Jones P. and Mainwaring 2003, 3). High values of nationalization indicate territorial homogeneity; conversely, low values are the sign of its heterogeneity.

The main finding that has emerged from analyses of party nationalization in post-communist states is that their levels are generally lower than those of political actors in established democracies. Scholars have argued that the main reasons for this phenomenon lie within the higher openness of the electorate for political competition coupled with their greater volatility as well as the high level of social and territorial heterogeneity inherited from the turbulent past (Tiemann 2012).

In this section, I investigate the level of nationalization of the major political parties in both countries over time in order to assess to what extent they follow the regional pattern. Besides examining the aggregate values at the national level, I am particularly interested in exploring the geographical strength of individual parties and investigate the variation over time. Furthermore, considering that in both countries the ethnic/regional parties are not allowed, or considerably constrained by the institutional requirements, it appears interesting to inquire into parties’ coverage in autonomous regions, namely Adjara in Georgia and

Gagauzia in Moldova. In order to do so, I will employ the method designed by (Jones P. and Mainwaring 2003) according to which the Gini coefficient (employed widely in assessing the income inequality) is subtracted from 1. Consequently, the higher the score, the greater the level of nationalization<sup>23</sup>.

At this point one important clarification needs to be made: in their article the two scholars suggest that the measurement of nationalization is not suitable for countries, which employ majoritarian/plurality electoral systems due to the different logic of “strategic behaviour by elites and voters that takes place in single-member districts” (2003, p. 9). A similar logic applies to those states in which elections according to PR formula take place in a single, nation-wide constituency. This is precisely the case of Georgia, which uses a mixed electoral system encompassing both the above-cited characteristics, but also of Moldova, which falls within the second category. Nevertheless, and having in mind this caveat, I believe that it is still useful to investigate the geographical distribution of electoral support, especially considering the availability of electoral data for individual administrative regions<sup>24</sup>. The aggregate scores<sup>25</sup> displayed in table 2.6 reveal that the territorial coverage of parties is more evenly distributed in Moldova than in Georgia while the values of nationalization tend to be quite stable over time.

**Table 2.6 Aggregated scores of nationalization of parties in Georgia and Moldova (1998-2016)**

Country	Nationalization Score
Moldova	0.74
Georgia	0.68

Source: own calculation based on data retrieved from respective CECs and indications from (Jones P. and Mainwaring 2003)

To be more precise in this analytical endeavour, figure 2.4 depicts the variation of nationalization scores of individual parties over time. Its thorough inspection reveals that the variance of the territorial homogeneity of the mainstream parties is more pronounced in Moldova than in Georgia, but this is perhaps due to its generally higher systemic fragmentation. In Moldova, the PCRM appears to have the highest capacity to attract voters across the country, including the autonomous region of Gagauzia where it has been systematically favoured by voters (with exception of 2014 elections when the majority of preferences went

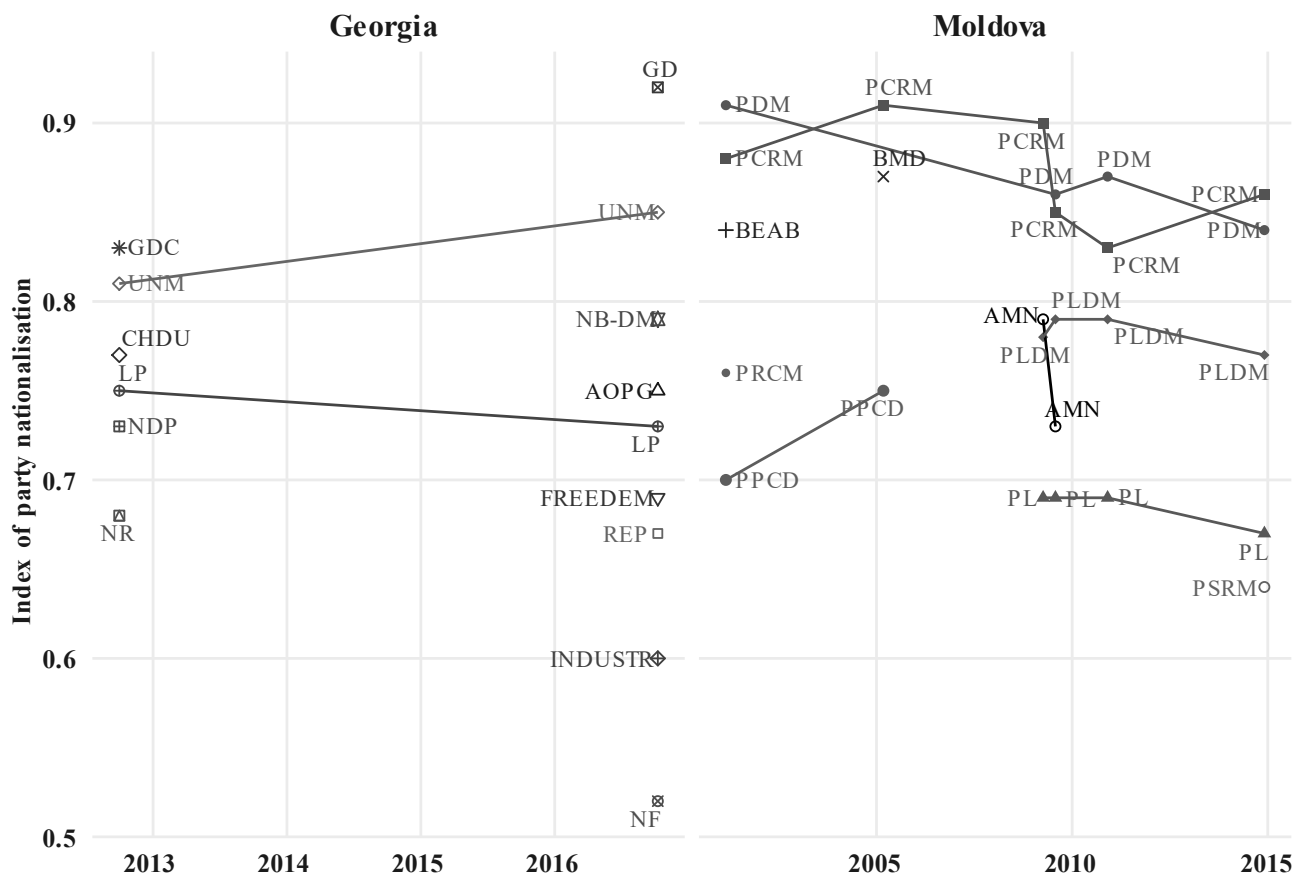
<sup>23</sup> According to this method the score of 0 indicates that a given party receives the same number of votes across all the territorial units, while the score of 1 suggest that a given party receives the total amount of votes in one district while none in the others. For a detailed explanation see Mainwaring and Jones (2003).

<sup>24</sup> Data for Georgia is limited to the two last two elections held in 2012 and 2016 based on electoral results under proportional voting in individual districts (employed in majoritarian system). Although in Moldova a single, nation-wide electoral district is employed, it is possible to retrieve electoral results of all individual administrative regions in the country (with the exception of Transnistria).

<sup>25</sup> The figures include the average of values obtained by all the parties participating in the elections (excluding the individual candidates).

to the PSRM)<sup>26</sup>. The second among the most highly nationalized party is PDM, while the third major actor, PLDM displays slightly lower levels of geographical strength. Unsurprisingly, in Georgia, the two mainstream parties – GD-DG<sup>27</sup> and UNM – that have dominated the political competition in the last five years (gathering together over 95 percent of votes in 2014 and over 75 percent in 2016), exhibit the highest levels of nationalization. The national patterns of territorial coverage also include the autonomous region in Adjara where the two parties were clearly prevailing over the other contestants in terms of the number of obtained votes.

**Figure 2.4 Nationalization of the mainstream parties in Georgia (2012-2016) and Moldova (2001-2016)**



Source: own elaboration based on data retrieved from respective CECs

Finally, data examined in this section suggest that, in overall terms, Georgia and Moldova conform to the regional pattern of the lower degree of nationalization if compared with the levels reached in established democracies, but also those of CEE post-communist states (Tiemann 2012).

<sup>26</sup> For a more detailed explanation of the reasons of such phenomenon see section 2.2 of this chapter.

<sup>27</sup> In 2012, the GD-DG run in an electoral bloc with five other formations, which is marked in the figure with the name of \*GDC.

## 2.6. Links to civil society

Scholars of democratization suggest that a strong civil society which is able to influence policy-making (Skocpol 2004), impose accountability on the state (Fukuyama 2011) and offer auxiliary channels for interests articulation and representation (Diamond 2009) is one of the most important prerequisites for the effectiveness of democratic governments (Putnam 2001). Indeed, citizens may organize in different types of associations and gain leverage over policy-makers through various means such as lobbying, civic education, mass mobilization, advisory services, monitoring, and accountability, among others (Piñol Puig 2016). Yet, while the regular dialogue between citizens and political parties suggests a solid anchoring of the latter in the society (Basedau and Stroh 2008; Burnell and Gerrits 2013), too much influence from powerful non-state actors such as the Church or interest groups indicates exactly the opposite.

Although a vast literature has been devoted to this theme, there seems to be no unequivocal definition of civil society. In this chapter I rely on Lutsevych's definition which describes it as "public space for citizens to engage in collective debate and self-expression, and where public opinions that influence public policy are formed" (2013, p. 3). What emerges from the majority of studies on post-communist societies is that, on the one hand, they are generally weak and disorganized; on the other hand, political parties are seldom interested in engaging with civil society organizations (CSOs) in wider consultations while they remain significantly influenced by other non-state actors, in particular, the business interest groups (Tarkhan-Mouravi and Sumbadze 2003, 29–35).

In the following sections, I examine the connections between political actors in Georgia and Moldova on the one hand and three types of associations (NGOs, interest groups, including trade unions and business associations as well as religious organizations) on the other. The main aim of this discussion is to determine how autonomous the political actors in both countries have been in responding to societal needs and fulfilling their political goals. Such a capacity is very difficult to gauge through precise analytical tools, nevertheless, I believe that a qualitative examination can depict the underlying trends quite accurately.

### *NGOs*

A careful look at the state registers would suggest that civil societies in both Georgia and Moldova, are quite robust: indeed in 2015, there were over 10 thousand non-commercial organizations listed in Moldova<sup>28</sup> and over twice as many in Georgia<sup>29</sup>. However, a closer examination reveals two important aspects: firstly, only

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<sup>28</sup> For a detailed list see 'Registrul de stat al unităților de drept privind organizațiile necomerciale', available at <http://date.gov.md/ckan/ro/dataset/18516-date-din-registrul-de-stat-al-unitatilor-de-drept-privind-organizatiile-necomerciale> (last accessed in May 2017).

<sup>29</sup> For a detailed list see State Register, available at <http://napr.gov.ge> (last accessed in May 2017). However, it is important to specify at this point that since 2011 the government-owned bodies (e.g. kindergartens) are also

a small portion of these organizations is active in pursuing projects; secondly, they dispose of a very narrow social base – in 2010 only around 4 percent of Moldovans and 4.8 percent of Georgians were actively engaged in the third-sector (Lutsevych 2013, 4), and these numbers have not increased much since then. As indicated by scholars of post-communist societies, the main reasons for citizens' reluctance to engage in third-sector organizations are the general lack of trust and absence of collective thinking stemming from the communist legacy (Paturyan and Gevorgyan 2014; Sapsford et al. 2015). In fact, as mentioned in Chapter 1, instead, citizens rely on informal institutions (such as kinship networks) and practices (such as corruption)<sup>30</sup> to ensure the representation of their interests.

Under particular circumstances, NGOs seem to dispose of a great mobilizing capacity as proved by their role in the most significant mass protests in both countries. More specifically, NGOs such as Kmara (*'Enough'*), Liberty Institute and Georgian Young Lawyers Association (GYLA) were essential during the Georgian Rose Revolution in 2003; in a similar vein HydePark and ThinkMoldova participated in the protests during the Moldovan so-called "Twitter Revolution" in April 2009<sup>31</sup> while Dignity and Truth Platform led massive demonstrations in September 2015 against an unprecedented corruption scandal involving illegal transfers of USD1 billion from three state-owned banks<sup>32</sup>. Yet this intensified activity and visibility of non-governmental actors has not translated into increased linkage with citizens, perhaps due to the fact that in the aftermath of the protests many activists transformed their civic activities into political ones which, in turn,

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included in the non-commercial category which obscures the information on actual functioning of civil society organizations (USAID 2015).

<sup>30</sup> Corruption is now much more diffused in Moldova than in Georgia as reflected by the data provided by the Global Corruption Barometer according to which in 2015, 42 percent of Moldovan households admitted to have paid bribes in exchange for basic services while this number in Georgia amounts to only 7 percent. In fact, corruption in Moldova is endemic: according to Corruption Perception Index compiled by Transparency International, Moldova occupies the 123<sup>rd</sup> place among the 176 countries analysed while Georgia is ranked at 44<sup>th</sup> place. For more details see Global Corruption Barometer 2015/2016 available at [http://www.transparency.org/research/gcb/gcb\\_2015\\_16/0/](http://www.transparency.org/research/gcb/gcb_2015_16/0/) as well as Corruption Perception Index 2016 available at [http://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption\\_perceptions\\_index\\_2016](http://www.transparency.org/news/feature/corruption_perceptions_index_2016) (both last accessed in May 2017).

<sup>31</sup> Mass protests organised in response to allegedly rigged April 2009 parliamentary elections.

<sup>32</sup> The money, the sum of which equals one-eighth of Moldovan GDP, were transferred from the three Moldovan leading banks (Banca de Economii, Banca Sociala and Unibank) under the form of loans to the companies related to Moldovan oligarchs, Ilan Șor (a Moldovan-Russian businessman and leader of the Șor Party), PM Vlad Filat, and probably also Vlad Plahotniuc, leader of PDM. As most of these loans were unsustainable from the very beginning, the three banks were unable to collect the debts. Consequently, the National Bank of Moldova used currency reserves to bailout the three banks, arguably under political pressure from Vlad Filat and, allegedly, Vlad Plahotniuc. The scandal triggered a firm response from Moldovan citizens' who participated in great number – estimated to over 100 thousand – in street protests. Nevertheless, only one of these actors, namely Vlad Filat, was eventually convicted in what has been seen as a political battle between the two oligarchs (RFE/RL 2015; Politico 2015).



further deepened public distrust<sup>33</sup>. The perception of political involvement of NGOs has intensified over the last years, in particular in Georgia where a large number of activists have openly sided with one of the two main political opponents, the UNM and GD<sup>34</sup>.

Numerous reports on the third sector in post-Soviet space suggest that two types of associations are among the most relevant in the region. The first is represented by think-tanks<sup>35</sup> whose major task is to provide political and analytical expertise. The second kind includes NGOs involved in implementing projects in areas such as human rights or civic education. Despite operating in different areas, these associations are linked by two elements: firstly, both are predominantly relying on foreign donors – mostly from Western Europe and the US, but recently also increasingly from Russia (Cecire, 2015) – as the domestic funding is still very limited; secondly, they are largely perceived by citizens as elite-based NGO-crazy (Pogleba 2016). Indeed, to run their activities NGOs usually do not rely on volunteers, but on regular staff; thus, they are seen as career providers rather than associations determined to pursue community-oriented goals (IDEA 2003)<sup>36</sup>.

Furthermore, many among the CSOs are focused on specific issues such as media freedom or economic liberalization and gathers around particular professional groups such, for instance, journalists or the academic community (Lutsevych 2013, 14). Interestingly enough, most of the associations perceive the influence on public policy and promoting accountability as the main tasks of civil society in democratic states while the capacity to access policy-makers at both, national and local levels, is considered as one of the primary indicators of their strength<sup>37</sup>. Yet, even though “the capacity of influence [policy-making process] depends on the level of competence (...) and the extent to which [NGOs] have been able to develop self-

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<sup>33</sup> Seven out of eleven ministers in the new government installed after the Rose Revolution came from civil society (Civil.ge 2004j, 2004n, 2004k, 2004l), while the organizer of 2015 protests, the Dignity and Truth Platform transformed into a regular political party. Furthermore, in case of the latter event, the non-partisan nature of the protests was somehow altered by the participation of political actors such as pro-Russian formations Our Party and PSRM who seemed to use it for pushing their political agenda, i.e. advancing demands for snap parliamentary elections (Civicus 2016; Dempsey 2015; DW 2015).

<sup>34</sup> The clashes include physical violence: in March 2015 a confrontation took place between pro-UNM Free Zone and pro-GD Free Generation during the protest against the economic policies of the government while some of the Free Zone activists were detained after clashes with members of Erakle II association during a pro-Russian demonstration held in front of the Georgian Parliament (DF Watch 2015a; Rustavi 2 2015).

<sup>35</sup> In Moldova those include, *inter alia*: IDIS, IPP, Expert-group, Adept, API, Politicon, Credo; in Georgia those include: GFSIS, GIP, CIPDD, CRRC, IPS.

<sup>36</sup> As mentioned before, the other few civic organizations such as e.g. Defend Georgia or 7 November Movement are often pursuing politically oriented goals while genuine NGOs (e.g. “This affects you too!” in Georgia) are relatively rare.

<sup>37</sup> As reported by Pogleba (2016) around 66 percent of NGOs representatives enumerated the first and 50 percent the second element among the most important duties of civil society while the last indicator was indicated by 52 percent of respondents.

articulation skills” (Pokleba 2016, 244), civil associations themselves recognize that their impact on decision-makers is, overall, limited<sup>38</sup>.

Notwithstanding certain similarities discussed above, the relationship between the third sector and public actors, including political parties, in Georgia and Moldova have assumed somehow different trajectories as it will be demonstrated in the following passages. More specifically, in Georgia, the dialogue between civil society and politicians intensified towards the end of the 1990s, which allowed the NGOs to enhance their influence over the policy-making process. As mentioned in the previous sections of this chapter, this trend was maintained until the Rose Revolution in 2003 in which non-state actors played a prominent role. Nonetheless, the linkage between NGOs and politics weakened as many of the former activists switched to public administration. Besides this drainage of professional staff, the third sector suffered from a significant funding shortage as many of the foreign donors redirected the support towards the new, reform-oriented state (ADB 2011).

The role of NGOs in public life, in particular in the area of policymaking, was further constrained by the lack of established mechanisms, which would regulate the relations between the third sector and state authorities. As highlighted by the Nations in Transit report, the first term of President Saakashvili (2004-2008) was marked by constant tensions and pressures from public officials on CSOs, especially those located outside the capital Tbilisi, as well as more by general hostility as “authorities [were] mostly reluctant to accept policy recommendations from NGOs, considering them unprofessional and politically biased” (Freedom House 2010). Lack of institutionalized dialogue was accompanied by the absence of suitable funding regulations<sup>39</sup>, which induced NGOs to rely on foreign contributions. However, as the access to such resources became increasingly restricted to a limited number of the largest organizations close to the incumbents, the Georgian third-sector assumed an even more elitist nature (Areshidze 2007, 97–104).

All in all, the relations between politics and society in Georgia have been characterized by both, cooperation and confrontation (Nodia 2006, 31–33). The civil society’s ability to exert pressure on policymaking in Georgia increased from 2012 when the power passed to the Georgian Dream coalition. Lacking the skills indispensable for policy formulation, Georgian authorities had progressively engaged non-state actors in a number of activities such as advisory service, research and law drafting, provision of services

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<sup>38</sup> According to 34.6 percent of NGOs representatives in Moldova they do not exert any influence on the decisions made at central public authority levels while only 14.6 percent consider this impact to be large (and very large). For more details see Chiriac & Țugui (2014).

<sup>39</sup> The Civic Institutionalization Development Fund established in 2010 was largely ineffective.

(e.g. legal aid) as well as training for civil servants (Piñol Puig 2016). This intense collaboration resulted in a more coherent framework regulating the role of NGOs in the policy-making process at its various stages<sup>40</sup>.

Over the past years, the third sector organized a number of successful initiatives<sup>41</sup>, nevertheless, in spite of this openness of the authorities to collaborate with the third sector, the actual impact of civil society organizations on policymaking still remains rather limited, especially at the policy evaluation stage. In this regard, it has been observed that “healthy relations [with NGOs] have finished once the government has absorbed all the technical and human CSOs’ capacity in order to start ruling the country in a credible way on one hand, and CSOs have started holding government accountable for its decisions and actions on the other” (Piñol Puig 2016, 37; see also USAID, 2017). Such a shift of position seems to confirm the public statements of GD leader Ivanishvili who recently has attacked NGOs as being politically biased and unreliable (DF Watch 2015b).

Consequently, NGOs in Georgia have become more oriented towards projects aimed at enhancing democracy, civic participation and respect for human rights through advocacy and lobbying, especially in Parliament, which seems to be more open than the government. There is one final remark that should be made at this point: the unpredictability of Georgian politics has induced CSOs to establish informal mechanisms to exercise their influence on the policy-making agenda (Piñol Puig 2016).

In Moldova, civil society is less robust than in Georgia, but still quite active in public life (Rusnac 1994; Budurina-Goreacii 2013; Bucătaru 2004; Țirdea 2007). The involvement of the third sector in policymaking has been characterized by a fluctuant trajectory: from a very limited role during the transition period (Dawisha and Parrott 1997a) to a more pronounced presence through the 1990s and, again, marginalization towards the end of the 90s. The visibility of the Moldovan CSOs increased once again at the beginning of the 2000s due to their engagement in activities aimed at the preservation of national identity and culture threatened by the reforms initiated by the PCRM government<sup>42</sup>. Furthermore, the intensifying

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<sup>40</sup> More specifically, non-state actors participate in consultations at the formulation stage during which they often act as facilitators between central authorities and local communities. At the implementation level the dialogue takes place within the framework of specific participatory meetings (such as the Inter-Ministry Criminal Justice Reform Council) Furthermore, NGOs are engaged in monitoring the action plans developed in relation with specific issues (Piñol Puig 2016).

<sup>41</sup> For instance, in 2012 a group of over 200 organizations obtained amendments to party funding legislation as well as an appointment of a director of a human rights NGO to the position of human rights ombudsman; in 2015 the parliament adopted a bill on the initiative of a Georgian think tank, that provides for establishment of the Permanent Parliamentary Council on Open and Transparent Governance (USAID, 2017).

<sup>42</sup> The project presented in 2001, which envisaged the replacement of school subject entitled History of Romanians as well as the Romanian Language and Literature textbooks with the History of Moldova and Moldovan Language and Literature along with the reform aimed at introduction of Russian language as compulsory in public schools, from the second grade onwards, in schools as of 1 January 2002 triggered massive street protests from January until April 2002 organized by the Christian Democratic Party and sustained by various NGOs. The large scale of

violations of civil, political and economic rights by the Communists generated a firm opposition from non-state actors: e.g. in February 2002 a group called ‘Civil Society Says NO’ consisting in 30 NGOs (Freedom House 2005) issued a common statement, in which it denounced the oppressive governmental activities and obtained the intervention of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE).

Overall, the two terms of PCRM incumbency (2001-2009) were characterized by both collaboration and hostility. On the one hand, NGOs in Moldova were forced to rely on foreign donors due to lack of state funding, further limited by the Communist government through increased financial controls. Furthermore, CSOs were subjected to several limitations, though without major violations in terms of their rights to conduct activities, and had to face pressure from pro-governmental NGOs established with the sole aim to destabilize the third sector (Freedom House 2007). On the other hand, however, the government had started to increasingly seek dialogue with the third sector from 2004 onwards due to the country’s involvement in the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) and, later, the Eastern Partnership (EaP) frameworks. In this regard, the major problem that the PCRM had to face was, thus, to find an equilibrium between receptiveness to expertise, essential for conducting effective foreign policy, and preventing the increased role of NGOs in assessing the government’s performance (Chiriac and Țugui 2014). Both this matters were more comprehensively covered by the 2005’s Concept on Cooperation between Parliament and Civil Society and the 2008’s National Council for Participation in 2008 (Țugui 2013)

The increased openness of the government increased the NGOs activism – in 2005 CSOs were particularly involved in monitoring the parliamentary elections and the pressure from Civic Coalition for Free and Fair elections induced the incumbents to comply with democratic standards. As already mentioned, NGOs played also an essential role during the “Twitter Revolution”, which increased pressure on the opposition politicians not to engage in dialogue with PCRM<sup>43</sup>.

The transfer of power to the pro-European coalition further consolidated the role of CSOs as expertise providers as well as its activism in advancing reform proposals in areas such as media, justice and local governance (Freedom House 2010) – the most important achievements include the 2008 Law on Transparency in Decision Making Processes regulating procedures for ensuring transparency in the process of developing and making decisions<sup>44</sup> (Chiriac and Țugui 2014) as well as the 2015 bill obliging all private broadcasters to disclose the identities of their owners (USAID 2015). However, the most important role was

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protests which attracted over 50 thousand people induced the Communist to drop those initiatives (RFE/RL 2002b).

<sup>43</sup> For a more detailed account on this event and its implications for political developments in Moldova consult Chapter 5, particularly section 5.3.2.2.

<sup>44</sup> According to the law all the new or amended legislative proposals need to be published at least 10 days before approval in order to allow public consultations and comments (Law № 239, 2008; Decision № 96, 2010).

played by the third sector in the area of monitoring the conduct of political parties and public institutions in relation with the abuse of office, nepotism, and corruption.

At the same time, however, the parliament has been rather reluctant in adopting legislation to facilitate the functioning of civil society organizations – the mandate of the National Council of Participation was not extended while the new Law on Specialized Public Administration erased public consultations as mandatory for public authorities (Chiriac and Țugui 2014). Furthermore, the amendments to the Fiscal Code, which would allow citizens to donate 2 percent of their income taxes to the organization of their choice had firstly been blocked by the politically-controlled Constitutional Court and, when finally adopted in 2014, was not followed by implementing regulation rendering it ineffective for the time being (Freedom House 2016). Indeed, the lack of state funding for CSOs remains one of the major constraining factors for their effective functioning; consequently, they remain largely dependent on foreign or individual donors, including prominent politicians and businessmen which, in turn, compromise their image as politically unbiased.

To sum up, the Moldovan civil society disposes of a variety of legal/formal instruments as well as informal channels to exert pressure on politicians. Nevertheless, their impact is confined to some policy sectors and only a few stages of the policy-making process. More specifically, and differently from the Georgian experience, the Moldovan NGOs are predominantly involved in policy formulation, monitoring, and evaluation, but remain largely excluded from the implementation phase (Chiriac and Țugui 2014).

### ***Interest groups***

#### ***Trade Unions***

There are several reasons for which trade unions are undoubtedly the weakest non-state actors in the post-communist region, including Georgia and Moldova. Firstly, they do not dispose of a large social basis – during the USSR rule, all workers belonged to one while the membership fees were detracted from their salaries. After its collapse, the number of workers enrolled in syndicate significantly diminished: in 2015 the largest association in Georgia, the Georgian Trade Union Confederation composed of twenty-two syndicates, gathered around 220 thousand members (out of more than 755 thousand)<sup>45</sup>, which amounts to almost 30 percent of the total employees, while in Moldova the number of trade unions' members equals to 46 percent of the work force (Ciurea 2017b). Secondly, Trade Unions are often considered as a means for a narrow group of leaders to pursue their own, usually political, goals rather than effectively promoting workers' rights –

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<sup>45</sup> According to Georgian National Statistics Office this was the number of workers employed in the public and private sectors, the remaining percentage encompassed the self-employed persons, available at [http://geostat.ge/index.php?action=page&&p\\_id=143&lang=eng](http://geostat.ge/index.php?action=page&&p_id=143&lang=eng) (last accessed in February 2017).

because of this belief, they are constantly among the least trusted public actors<sup>46</sup>. Such a detachment of trade unions from the working class is also viewed through the lens of the Soviet legacy – in the communist regimes the Trade Unions were top-down organizations with little independence from the central authorities, reduced to a mere complementary body with the task to distribute state benefits rather than representing workers’ rights in negotiations with the authorities (TI Georgia 2010).

Overall, Trade Unions in both countries are still struggling in assuming their role as workers’ representatives – for example in 2002 the largest Moldovan association, the Trade Union Confederation signed an agreement with the government on salaries’ increase, yet without consulting the protesting teachers and health service personnel, whose demands were much higher (Suruceanu 2003). In fact, it is a common practice that “economic agents resort to informal and non-transparent mechanisms of negotiating the individual or collective rights of laborers with politicians’ which further debilitate the role of trade unions as representatives of workers” rights (Chiriac and Țugui 2014). Furthermore, syndicates in both countries have struggled in transforming from the Soviet-type to the Western-type modern organizations. The major change in the largest Georgian syndicate union (the Georgian Trade Union Confederation) took place only in 2005 with the replacement of the former Soviet *nomenklatura*-based leadership, which used it for private interests leaving the confederation almost without financial resources (TI Georgia 2010).

Finally, Trade Unions are still hardly considered as equal partners by the public authorities. In this respect, for instance, a number of activists denounce the reluctance of the neoliberal government of President Saakashvili to cooperate - as a result, the 2006 Labour Code was adopted without a single consultation with workers’ representatives (TI Georgia 2010). The situation has slightly improved under international pressure<sup>47</sup>, nevertheless, in both countries, the Trade Unions remain relatively unsuccessful in exerting pressure on the policy-making process and largely ignored by political actors, except the rare situations in which the support of syndicate is convenient. In this respect, the tripartite negotiations usually take place

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<sup>46</sup> In this respect, in 2016 in Georgia 67.7 percent of respondents declared to have no or little trust and only 11.8 percent to have total or certain trust in TU, while 50 percent of Georgians were unfavourable to syndicate against only 13 percent who spoke in their favour. Furthermore, such a low figure has been typical for both countries for the last two decades. For full figures see Barometer of Public Opinion (Moldova), and Survey of Public Opinion (Georgia), available at [http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/iri\\_poll\\_presentation\\_georgia\\_2017.03-general.pdf](http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/iri_poll_presentation_georgia_2017.03-general.pdf) (both last accessed in April 2017).

<sup>47</sup> The Georgian Labour Code was first amended in 2010 following wide consultations with syndicate representatives while in Moldova the trade unions, beside participating in drafting of the new Labour Code, were also actively involved in contesting the pension reform.

between the government, employers and selected syndicates, leaving many of the smaller groupings outside the process<sup>48</sup>.

### ***Business organisations***

The relations between politics and business groups can occur under two main formats – the first type involves formal mechanisms of interaction such as lobbying or tripartite dialogue (between the state, employers, and employees) aimed at negotiation of the best possible policy outcomes; the second type, instead, is based on informal links frequently assuming the form of illicit practices such as favouritism or corruption with an intent to influence policy-making. This latter form can, in its most degenerated form, lead to the phenomenon of “state capture” defined as “shaping the formation of the basic rules of the game (i.e. laws, rules, decrees, and regulations) through illicit and non-transparent private payments to public officials” (Hellman, Jones, and Kaufmann 2000, 2). Unfortunately, as we shall see in the following sections, this is the most diffuse way, in which businesses engage with political parties in Georgia and Moldova as in both the political and economic elites have been consistently exploiting the states for their personal profits (Wheatley, 2005)<sup>49</sup>.

The concept of state capture has been quite extensively discussed in the literature – as the limited space does not allow for its extensive examination<sup>50</sup>, for the purpose of this research, it suffices to use its most general definition, which interprets this phenomenon as a “mechanism through which decision-making processes in a state mainly serve the private or group benefits of the narrow power elite” (Nodia 2006, 7). In other words, it “illicitly provides private gains to public officials via informal, non-transparent, and highly preferential channels of access” (Tudoroiu 2015).

There are two main forms of favouritism, typical for state capture: the first is of economic nature and includes exclusive access to markets, access to privatization and public procurements as well as tax exemption for entrepreneurs linked to politicians; the second is of a political type and encompasses advantageous legislation as well as nepotism (Wetzinger 2017; Ciurea 2017a). The tight networks of interrelations between politicians and business are typical for the entire post-Soviet region – in countries with a larger number of oligarchs, like Russia or Ukraine, those relations are mostly of rent-seeking type, in the sense that oligarchs “contract with politicians for special favours” (Rowley and Schneider 2004, 493). In smaller republics, such as Georgia and Moldova, where the number of oligarchs is limited, usually there is an intense flow of

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<sup>48</sup> For instance, in Moldova the tripartite cooperation is conducted among the government representatives, the National Confederation of Moldovan Employers and the National Trade Union Confederation, a descendent of the Soviet syndicate which largely succeeded to its heritage and modus operandi, excluding other associations from the negotiations. For more details on tripartite structure see the (Law № 245, 2006).

<sup>49</sup> State capture will be discussed also in chapter 6 considering that its persistence over time has been greatly facilitated by the party funding regulations in both countries.

<sup>50</sup> On this issue see, *inter alia*, Hellman et al. (2000).

individuals between politics and business – as the boundaries between the two become blurred, the links between the two assume the form of rent-extraction, i.e. active seeking of “wealth-increasing opportunities” (Rowley and Schneider 2004, 493).

The systemic failure of the Georgian state to perform its main functions from the outset of transition until the Rose Revolution in 2003 was one of the determinants of its transformation into a captured state. During the Shevardnadze period (1992-2003) around 40 to 80 percent of the economic activities were performed in the grey zone (Wetzinger 2017, 58) while Georgia was consistently classified among the most corrupt countries<sup>51</sup>. Besides the institutional deficiency, Georgia was unable to control a large part of its territory, including the separatist republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, but also the autonomous region of Adjara governed by Aslan Abashidze – a communist apparatchik who transformed the region into his personal feud<sup>52</sup>.

In its first years of independence from Soviet rule, Georgia functioned according to the logic of a neo-patrimonial state (Jones 2014) while the Shevardnadze regime assumed characteristics of “patronal presidentialism” as it “combined great formal power with informal power and resources derived from the networks of patron-client relations that spanned the state and economy” (Hale 2014). The patronal nature of Shevardnadze’s rule manifested itself not only through concession in policy-making but also through presidential appointments made “according to loyalty, not according to merit” (Wheatley 2005, 113). In this context, the “government bodies literally became the private fiefdoms of informal family networks” (Wheatley 2005, 110) while the rivalling centres of power (including President Shevardnadze) divided among themselves the spheres of influence along the territorial and sectorial axes through vertical patronage networks (Stefes 2006; Wheatley 2005; Cheterian 2008, 693; Wetzinger 2017, 64)<sup>53</sup>. Consequently, narrow political and economic elites benefited from numerous advantages including access to the privatization of state companies for a fraction of their real values or private connections to administrative bodies to illegally defeat their competitors (Stefes 2006, 139).

A change in leadership following the Rose Revolution brought a substantial reinforcement of the state structures, the eradication of corruption (at least the petty one) and the restoration of control over Adjara<sup>54</sup>.

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<sup>51</sup> In 2002 85<sup>th</sup> out of 102 countries while in 2003 124<sup>th</sup> out of 133 states. See Corruption Index, Transparency International.

<sup>52</sup> See section 2.2.

<sup>53</sup> Including the powerful Ministry of Internal Affairs; local administrators such as the influential leader of the autonomous region of Adjara, Aslan Abashidze; business elite, reunited mostly under the umbrella of the Taxpayers’ Union; and, finally, the professional criminals ‘*vory-v-zakone*’ (thieves in law) (Kupatadze, 2012; Wheatley, 2005).

<sup>54</sup> See fn. 13.



Nevertheless, as democratization was not among the top priorities of the new ruling elite<sup>55</sup>, their position towards the informal networks was somehow mixed (Wheatley 2014). On the one hand, as a consequence of their reconstructive agenda, several of the informal centres of power were eradicated (Mitchell 2009). More specifically, the new leaders regained control over the “competing fiefdoms” (Jones 2012, 164), firstly by subordinating the ‘ministries of power’ to the president through the constitutional provision, and employed them to fight against the remaining ones<sup>56</sup>. The incredibly successful anti-corruption campaign led to the almost total annihilation of *vory-v-zakonie*, also through re-establishment of state jurisdiction over the prison system (Kupatadze 2012). Finally, Saakashvili exerted pressure over the courts to obtain the conviction of the corrupted elite, which emerged under his predecessor, even though many avoided imprisonments by paying enormous fines<sup>57</sup>. This strategy had a double advantage of extirpating corrupt elites and providing substantial financial resources to the state budget which allow the smooth wage payments to the civil servants, and, in turn, rendered more effective the fight against petty corruption (C. Berglund 2014, 449).

On the other hand, however, even though triumphant in certain areas, these measures did not eradicate the power networks in their entirety. Indeed, lack of a decisive reform of local governance, which remained subservient to centralized control, as well as limited replacement of old administrative elites, linked to Shevardnadze’s regime (or, often, even to Soviet nomenklatura) resulted in conserving the “vertical patron-client networks” largely intact (Wheatley 2005, 201) with the local networks simply changing their colours in support of the new incumbents<sup>58</sup>. In this context, the new President continued to perform his activities in close connection with some newly established informal networks “composed of individuals whose influence did not so much derive from their official positions, as from the close connections they developed with

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<sup>55</sup> Composed of young, energetic reformers, splinters from the Shevardnadze’s CUG (gathered in the National-Movement-United Democrats coalition first and in the UNM party later) and led by the newly elected president, Mikheil Saakashvili, the new ruling elite was majorly worried about implementing comprehensive reforms aimed at rebuilding the highly dysfunctional state institutions inherited by the preceding regime. See the interview with Georgian political analyst, Ghia Nodia, December 2013, available at <https://www.eastbook.eu/2013/12/10/gia-nodia-%e2%80%9eiwaniszwili-formalnie-b%c4%99dzie-poza-polityk%c4%85-ale-b%c4%99dzie-ajatollahem-cywilnym%e2%80%9d/> (last accessed in June 2017).

<sup>56</sup> The control over the once powerful Ministry of Internal Affairs was obtained by installing Vano Merabishvili, one of the closest allies of president Saakashvili, as its head. Merabishvili remained at his post for the entire period of Saakashvili’s presidency, i.e. between 2004 and 2012, and he was believed to be the candidate for the prime minister after the 2010 constitutional reform (De Waal 2012).

<sup>57</sup> This procedure was used in the trials of a number of prominent politicians including former ministers, presidents of state-owned companies as well as other businessmen, including the Gio Jokhtaberidze, the owner of the largest Georgian telecommunications company and the son-in-law of former President Shevardnadze who was charged with tax evasion of GEL700 thousand (around USD 318 thousand) and settled to pay USD 15.5 million to the state (Rimple 2006).

<sup>58</sup> For instance, only since 2009 does Georgia’s capital Tbilisi directly elect its mayor. In a similar vein, the regional governors remained presidential appointees, agreed upon with the prime minister, until recently (Zasztowt and Skorupska 2014).

Saakashvili as a result of their work in the NGO sector during the Shevardnadze period” (Wheatley and Zürcher 2008, 6). Thus, informal practices continued to prevail over the formal rules while personal disloyalties were severely punished as illustrated by the cases of the former defence minister in the Saakashvili’s government who was arrested for alleged money laundering and extortion only after he had moved to the opposition (Civil.ge 2007b)<sup>59</sup>.

Numerous investigations conducted by think tanks and international organizations have revealed that during the Saakashvili’s incumbency (2004-2012), political power continued to be perceived as “the shortest path to great wealth” (Wetzinger 2017, 65). For instance, between 2004 and 2012 many influential businessmen performed their duties as MPs without withdrawing from their economic activities allegedly abusing their powers to obtain benefits for their enterprises (TI Georgia 2013a).

A similar path seems to have been undertaken by UNM’s successor, the GD-DG party led by the billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili whose personal assets equal half of Georgian GDP. While the current authorities appeared to be determined to eradicate the favouritisms offered by the previous regime, they seem not to be entirely free from this type of practices as demonstrated, for instance, by the example of the Minister of Energy Kakha Kaladze who maintained ties with companies in the energy sector also after his appointment<sup>60</sup>. The migration of wealthy businessmen, in terms of both, electoral participation and political sponsorship, from the former to the new ruling party seem to suggest that the close ties between politics and business are not really cut off (Wheatley 2005, 119–20; Nodia 2006, 110). Furthermore, the Georgian Dream-led government has frequently resorted to nepotism in appointing high-level political posts (Georgia Today 2015). Finally, political power seems also to be used frequently by the GD-DG leader, Ivansihvili, for facilitating his business activities – for instance, one among many controversial ideas of the GD-DG controlled government was to reduce the supervisory powers of the Georgian Central Bank over the banking sector, in which Ivanishvili is very active owning one of the biggest Georgian banks, the Cartu Bank (New Eastern Europe 2017).

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<sup>59</sup> On the other hand, those who remained loyal to Saakashvili enjoyed significant privileges such as tax exemptions, access to public procurement, exclusive licenses and tailor-made legislation. The list of Presidential allies include, *inter alia*, the former defence minister Davit Kezerashvili who enriched himself with activities in the gasoline market and a monopoly in the advertising market; Kakhaber Okriashvili, a UNM MP and the owner of PSP Pharma which obtained oligopoly in the pharmaceutical sector in exchange for generous donations to his party as well as vice speaker of the Parliament, Rusudan Kervashvili, the founder of Centre Point company who continued to escape justice despite being accused of swindling and embezzlement of citizens who paid for never constructed apartments. For a more exhaustive list see (TI Georgia 2013a).

<sup>60</sup> In particular his enterprise, Kala Company, owned 45 percent of shares in Georgia Hydropower Construction Company, sold in 2012, amid controversies on the actual amount of commercial interests.

The phenomenon of state capture in Moldova is even more pronounced – in this regard, prior to 2009 the World Bank rated the country as one of the post-communist regimes with the highest level of state capture along with Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Latvia. More importantly, Moldova held the first place among them regarding the individual components of state capture index directly related to political parties, i.e. the unofficial payments to political parties and MPs to obtain favourable legislation/regulations (J. Hellman et al., 2000). Similar to the Georgian case, the emergence of state capture in Moldova was determined by the systemic incapacity of the state to exert political control over polarized and fragmented political actors (Way 2002; 2003). Furthermore, bad economic governance including slow privatization as well as wage freezing in the public sector<sup>61</sup> pushed the country into economic stagnation<sup>62</sup> and enhanced endemic corruption.

While the initial state weakness was dictated mostly by the political turmoil following the collapse and disintegration of the Soviet Union, its subsequent inefficiency has been determined by the political actors who made rent-extraction one of their main activities (Ciurea 2017a). If in the case of Georgia the public and the private sector intersected only to a certain extent, in Moldova there has been an increasing convergence between the two – in fact, for over two last decades a supercilious political elite across all ideological spectrum has engaged in competition for detaining control over “policymaking in order to promote their own private economic interests” (Tudoroiu 2015, 655).

While the phenomenon of state capture was already well established during the first decade of independent Moldova, it intensified further during the PCRM rule (2001-2009) which, being the most powerful political actor, extended its control over the economic sphere. In the eight years of PCRM’s incumbency many among the most profitable companies were brought back under the state control as their privatization was cancelled<sup>63</sup>, while the most prosperous enterprises were either closed down or took over by the state through a sophisticated mechanisms including pressure from public entities – paradoxically, one of the main bodies involved in the process of seizure of private enterprises was the Centre for Combating Economic Crimes and Corruption. The main beneficiary of these rent-extracting activities was the leader of

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<sup>61</sup> With a monthly average salary equal to USD 53 in 2003 (Spânu 2014).

<sup>62</sup> Moldova has been systematically classified as the poorest country in Europe: in 2015 its GDP per capita amounted to USD 1.8 thousand while this of Georgia was equal to USD 3.7 thousand, see World Economic Outlook Database, April 2017 available at <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2017/01/weodata/index.aspx> (last accessed in May 2017) as well as among the most corrupted European states (see fn. 34).

<sup>63</sup> In this regard, the Moldovan government was condemned in several cases for fraudulent privatization by the European Court of Human Rights, see, for example, CASE OF MEGADAT.COM SRL v. MOLDOVA, available at <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-85732>; CASE OF OFERTA PLUS S.R.L. v. MOLDOVA available at <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-78585>; CASE OF DACIA S.R.L. v. MOLDOVA available at <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-91479>.

PCRM and the President of Moldova Vladimir Voronin along with his family members<sup>64</sup> and closest allies settled at the top governmental and administrative positions.

The defeat of the Communists in July 2009 by the pro-European forces took place amidst an intense debate on the necessity to eradicate corruption and free the country from its grip. The winning opposition parties immediately declared a commitment to dismantling the patronage network established by Voronin through reforms required for closer cooperation with the EU. Nevertheless, the initial optimism triggered by the slowly adopted, but partially successful, measures<sup>65</sup> crashed immediately after as the “unexpected scandals unveiled the frightening magnitude of Moldovan high-level corruption and state capture” (Tudoroiu 2015, 660).

Indeed, from 2010 onwards, Moldova has been captured in a tight network composed of new elites gathered around two oligarchs, Vlad Filat and Vlad Plahotniuc, whose fortunes were acquired through not completely transparent means (Ciurea 2017). However, in their intent to exert pressure on policy-making process they moved beyond the standard mechanism used by oligarchs, namely the rent-seeking by becoming directly involved in politics – as mentioned earlier, after being in government as PDM member, Filat set his own party – PLDM – and served as Moldovan Prime Minister (PM) between 2009 and 2013 while Plahotniuc, after a period as PDM financial backer, ousted its long-term leader, Marian Lupu, and took over the party. Although the two oligarchs are opponents in business, they jointly ruled the country in five coalition governments. As suggested by several analysts such a configuration was dictated by the necessity of both to maintain the current political system, favourable to their business activities (Căluș 2015), not always of an entirely legal nature.

During the incumbency of the governments led by PLDM and PDM, several investigations have been launched into the cases of state capture. As a result, charges were brought against numerous high-profile politicians such as Minister of Finance Veaceslav Negruța, Minister of Culture Boris Focșa, Minister of Health Andrei Usatî as well as Minister of Information Technology Development Vladimir Molojen (Tudoroiu 2015), even though none of these charges had legal consequences. In this context, perhaps one of the most blatant examples of the conflict of interests was represented by an incident during illegal hunting in the national reserve where a businessman was deadly wounded. The event was attended by many high-ranking

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<sup>64</sup> Including his son, Oleg Voronin, whose private assets are estimated to around 2 billion euros (RFE/RL 2010a).

<sup>65</sup> Only in 2012 the Parliament adopted a series of concrete measures such as a large-scale anti-corruption strategy accompanied by a detailed two-year action plan while the Centre for Combating Economic Crimes and Corruption was transformed into a National Anti-Corruption Centre. All these steps brought tangible results: in 2012 the Corruption Perception Index placed Moldova at the 94<sup>th</sup> position (out of 174) while a year before it was ranked as 112. See Corruption Perception Index, Transparency International, available at <https://www.transparency.org/country/> .

public officials, including the Prosecutor General of Moldova as well as the president and vice-president of the Court of Appeal along with prominent members of the Moldovan business community linked to Plahotniuc – the accident remained concealed from public opinion due to justice obstruction performed by the several public offices while the final convictions were very low (Jurnal.md 2015a; Reuters 2013).

The control that Filat and Plahotniuc, joined by the current President Igor Dodon and his PSRM, have managed to establish over the Moldovan state is perplexing. Both have used their political positions for personal gains. On the one hand, they maintained key offices personally or through politically irrelevant nominees<sup>66</sup> in order to exert pressure on state institutions to secure both economic – through access to privatization, public procurement, control over foreign funds including those granted by the EU as well as favourable legislation – as well as political – for instance through coercion on the Central Electoral Commission to exclude political competitors from running in the parliamentary elections<sup>67</sup> or through controlling the Constitutional Court - interests. An example of such practices can be found in the banking sector: in 2014, the Moldovan parliament adopted a law according to which banks are obliged to disclose information on the shareholders; nevertheless, the ownership of Moldovan banks is still obscure and this, in turn, renders them susceptible to illegal practices such as money laundering<sup>68</sup>. In addition, the most recent corruption scandal which entailed the embezzlement of USD 1 billion was possible precisely due to the lack of proper law enforcement deliberately maintained by the two oligarchs, which ultimately proves that the “process of appropriating the state by interests groups cantered around the two main political leaders is underway” (Cașus 2015).

A final remark about state capture in Moldova refers to the current situation in the country. As a consequence of the corruption scandal mentioned in the previous section, the former PM and leader of PLDM has been convicted of nine years in prison for corruption, favouritism, and abuse of office, even though clear evidence of his involvement in the bank-fraud case has not been found (RFE/RL 2016). While it is not entirely clear what role his business, and political, opponent Vlad Plahotniuc had in the fraud, there seems to be little doubt that the leader of PDM is one of its biggest beneficiaries (Infotag.md 2016). Indeed, the disappearance of Filat from the political landscape has left most of the channels open for Plahotniuc to take over the country.

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<sup>66</sup> Such as Chiril Gaburici, an independent, but affiliated to PDM who held the position of Prime Minister between February and June 2015.

<sup>67</sup> This is the case of Our Party, a left-wing populist pro-Russian opposition party led by millionaire Renato Usatii, which was excluded by the court decision from running in the 2014 parliamentary elections (Timpul.md 2014). For more details see chapter 5, section 5.3.

<sup>68</sup> Most notably, a Moldovan bank was involved in what was labelled as a Russian Laundromat, an operation of moving billions of dollars (estimated to up to 80) from Russia to Europe and the US between autumn 2010 and spring 2014. The scheme is believed to be invented by Veaceslav Platon, a former Moldovan MP (from the lists of PCRM) and one of the wealthiest people in the country, as well as vice president of the administration board of Moldovan private banks, Moldindconbank and, later, Investprivatbank (OCCRP 2016; The Guardian 2017).

Nevertheless, the fragmented political scene with a few strongly positioned actors as discussed throughout this chapter may ultimately act as a potential constraint in this endeavour.

### ***Religious organizations***

If the links between CSOs and trade unions on the one hand and political parties on the other have, at least formally, remained weak the opposite can be said about the religious institutions, in particular, the Orthodox Church which, being the most trusted non-state actor in Georgia and Moldova, dispose of an extraordinary mobilizing capacity.

The position of the Orthodox Church in both countries has been determined by two factors. The first is related to its historical and cultural role in shaping the national identities before, during and after the Soviet period. Both the Georgian Orthodox Church (hereafter GOC) and the Moldovan Orthodox Church (hereafter MOC) were central to nationhood-building, however to a different extent. The GOC acted as a 'reinforcing agent' of Georgian identity and played a crucial role in the struggle for the country's independence from both the Russian Empire and the USSR by pursuing a parallel goal of restoring its autocephaly removed by the Tsar in 1811 (Jones 2012). The fusion of national identity with the religious had been reinforced since the late 1970s as continuously emphasized by the clergy through symbolic associations – for instance the traditional Easter acclamation 'Christ is risen' was enriched by the Georgian Patriarch Ilia II with the statement 'Georgia is risen' which implied the union of the country with the body of Christ (Chitanava 2015, 41). Conversely, due to its links with the Moscow Patriarchate, the Moldovan Orthodox Church has been a firm supporter of the 'Moldovanism'<sup>69</sup> promoted by the Soviet authorities, which went in sharp contrast with the independence struggles.

However, regardless of this difference, both Churches are now playing a similar role in the political life of their respective countries. During the Soviet Union religious dimension was pushed to the margins of the public life, but soon after the collapse of the regime religious institutions actively strove for establishing themselves as important political actors. This process was significantly facilitated by the preferential treatment enjoyed by the Churches including the return of properties confiscated by the Soviet regime as well as a favourable tax regime<sup>70</sup> (Hug 2015). Nevertheless, the nature of the relationship between politics and the Orthodox Church in both countries has been mostly dictated by the ideological position of the ruling elite towards the 'traditional values' agenda pursued by both, the GOC and the MOC.

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<sup>69</sup>See Chapter 1 for reference.

<sup>70</sup>No other Georgian nor Moldovan religious organization was granted with such privileges.

In Georgia, after the period of open confrontation between the first independent President Zviad Gamsakhurdia and clergy<sup>71</sup> (1990-1992), the regime of Shevardnadze (1993-2004) proved to be much more accommodating for the Church. The era of the second President of Georgia's era was characterized by a mixture of symbolic gestures, such as baptism, received in 1992 (despite his numerous declarations of being atheist) as well as concrete legislative facilitations such as the Constitutional Agreement (Concordat) between the State and the Patriarchate signed in October 2002 which extended the range of privileges conceded to GOC (Jamestown Foundation 2013a)<sup>72</sup>. Shevardnadze's conciliatory attitude was reflected by his willingness to make concessions such as withdrawing from some of his foreign policy initiatives, including the treaty on common relations with the Vatican, strongly opposed by the GOC (Civil.ge 2003i).

During the presidency of Mikheil Saakashvili (2004-2012) the ideological divergence provoked numerous clashes between the ruling party and the clergy despite several gestures in favour of GOC including both symbolic (the presidential inauguration in the historic monastery of Holy Gelati and blessing from the Patriarch Ilia II) as well as substantial concessions such as increased subsidies from the state budget (Civil.ge 2004b)<sup>73</sup>. Yet, these provisions proved to be insufficient to prevent intense criticism from GOC on the pro-Western, liberal path that the government embarked on. The open confrontation regarded, for example, the regulation of the legal status of religious organizations (Civil.ge 2011a) or the removal of Orthodox religion as an obligatory subject in public schools. GOC was also a firm supporter of the re-establishment of the monarchy in Georgia and actively participated as mediator between the incumbent President and the opposition, frequently contrasting the first (Radio Tavisupleba 2007) and accusing him, for instance, of being the sole responsible for the Georgian-Russian war that erupted in August 2008 (RFE/RL 2009)<sup>74</sup>. Furthermore, the hostilities between the UNM ruling party and the GOC were used for political purposes by emerging actors such as the Christian-Democratic Party (CDP) established in 2008 whose main political slogan claimed that Orthodox Christianity should detain the status of state religion.

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<sup>71</sup> Gamsakhurdia often referred to the Church's representatives as 'red clergy' due to a high number of infiltrators who penetrated the GOC during the Communist regime. See Hug (2015).

<sup>72</sup> For details see the full text (in Georgian) of the Constitutional Agreement between the Georgian state and the Apostolic Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Georgia, available at <http://patriarchate.ge/geo/eklesia/saeklesio-samartali/konstituciuri-shetanxmeba-saqartvelos-saxelmwifosa-da/> (last accessed in February 2017).

<sup>73</sup> During the two terms of Saakashvili's incumbency the amount of state subsidies was constantly increasing: from 4.27 million Georgian Lari (GEL) in 2004, 13 million GEL in 2008 to 26.39 million GEL in 2009. Furthermore, from 2010 onwards GOC has been receiving around 22-25 million GEL annually. These numbers are not inclusive of donations from other sources such as local authorities as well as economic gains from real estate and other properties (TI Georgia 2013c).

<sup>74</sup> In this context, the Georgian Church was also the first actor to restore dialogue with the Russian authorities after the war (Hug 2015).

The use of religion and religious institutions in political struggle was also a part of the electoral strategy of the main UNM contestant, Georgian Dream (GD) led by the billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili. Indeed, GOC was actively campaigning in favour of GD, despite being obliged by the Patriarch's order to maintain neutrality (Civil.ge 2014c; Funke 2014). At the same time, Ivanishvili who often resorted to religious symbols and pronounced support for the GOC during the campaign (Civil.ge 2012b), changed his position right after the electoral victory by openly calling for a major separation between the state and the church. Such a shift generated a firm response from the Patriarch who observed that "building a church does not mean being a son of the Church" as Ivanishvili provided generous funding for the main cathedral of Tbilisi, the Holy Trinity Church (Tabula.ge 2014). Furthermore, the two were frequently at odds over the traditional cultural values, in particular on the adoption of anti-discrimination law in the framework of the Eastern Partnership negotiations with the EU (see below). Nonetheless, the intensity of ideological confrontation has diminished in comparison with the Saakashvili's period to the point that Georgian premier publicly pledged to take into consideration the GOC request to grant pardons to convicted prisoners (Civil.ge 2015h; 2015i). In sum, it can be stated that currently "there is no other political group capable of mobilizing so many people as the Georgian Orthodox Church" (Chitanava 2015, 52) while public policy in the country is decided "between the party in power, the opposition and religious establishment" (Lutsevych 2013, 9)<sup>75</sup>.

The situation in Moldova does not differ much in this respect. The relationship between the Church and the state is regulated by the Moldovan Constitution in the wording of which "(r)eligious cults shall be autonomous, separated from the State"<sup>76</sup> while no single form of cult shall be privileged – yet the article 15(5) of the 'Law on religious denominations and their component parts' adopted in 2007 which states hints to another reality by stating that "(t)he State recognizes the special importance and leading role of the Orthodox Christian religion and, respectively, the Moldovan Orthodox Church in the life, history and culture of the people of Moldova" (Law № 125, 2007). Indeed, until 2002, the MOC under the Moscow Patriarchate was a monopolist in the religious sphere and the only formally registered religious organization<sup>77</sup>. Besides being somehow contradictory to the Moldovan Constitution, this also had a more symbolic aspect – considering

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<sup>75</sup> As confirmed by a number of examples such as the legislative proposal on amendments to the code of Self-Government, which was successfully opposed by GOC (DF Watch 2013).

<sup>76</sup> Article 31 (4), available at <http://www.presedinte.md/titul2>.

<sup>77</sup> Following the decision of the European Court of Human Rights in 2002 the Ministry of Justice registered the Bessarabian Orthodox Church (BOC) under the Romanian Patriarchate, for details of the case see Metropolitan Church of Bessarabia and Others v. Moldova, App. No. 45701/99 available at [http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{"appno":\["45701/99"\]}](http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{). The Islamic League of the the Republic of Moldova was officially registered in March 2011, receiving the status of religious community under the Law on Freedom of consciousness, belief and religion Religious from 2007.



that the MOC operates under the Moscow Patriarchate, the Moldovan territory is under the canonical dominion of the Russian Church.

As mentioned above the MOC has served as an additional channel for spreading the Moldovanism propaganda and support for the Russian speaking community, not only through the pre-Soviet and Soviet periods, but also during the Communist government (2001-2009); hence, quite unsurprisingly, due to these ideological affinities the relations between the two actors were rather friendly (Avram 2017). As an illustration of this trend, only in 2002 over 650 religious buildings, considered architectural monuments, were returned to MOC by the PCRM government while no patrimony was ever given back to any other religious organizations (V. Munteanu 2015, 60)

The pro-European coalition, which took power in 2009, has not changed the favourable attitude towards MOC<sup>78</sup> while the Church maintained its activism in the political camp by openly supporting certain political parties and opposing the others, despite a clear prohibition of such practices prescribed by the primary legislation<sup>79</sup>. The position of the MOC towards the Moldovan political actors is determined by its close links with the Russian Church which, in turn, firmly supports the Russian authorities. Consequently, the Moldovan Church has also, traditionally, built up closer ties with the pro-Russian national actors – firstly, with the previously mentioned PCRM and, more recently, with the PSRM. In fact, the MOC played an important role in the presidential electoral campaign by favouring the pro-Russian Socialist Party and its candidate Igor Dodon (Moldova.org 2016). Nevertheless, occasionally, it seems to be willing to provide political support for candidates who display particular devotion by providing it with financial and material resources<sup>80</sup>. All in all, the involvement of the MOC in the political life of the country arrived to the point of inducing the CEC to ask the Ministry of Justice's intervention in preventing political propaganda in churches (Infotag.md 2015).

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<sup>78</sup> The list of concessions towards the Moldovan Orthodox Church includes diplomatic passports for the high representatives of the MOC, governmental registration numbers for luxury cars as well as no substantial reaction to hatred speech pronounced by the clergy (Hug 2015, 60).

<sup>79</sup> Article 15 (2) of Law № 125 (2007) provides that religious denominations and their components shall abstain from publicly expressing and manifesting their political preferences or favouring a political party or socio-political organization. The same law provides in its article 24 (2) (f) for the suspension of activity in cases when religious denomination, institutions or their component parts unfold electoral campaigns and/or financially or materially support electoral candidates.

<sup>80</sup> As was the case of Serafim Urecheanu, one of the leaders of the pro-European Our Moldova Alliance, who provided substantial donations to the MOC in exchange for political support. The more symbolic dimension is also important as it demonstrates the fact that political leaders are competing each year to occupy the airplane seat closest to the Moldovan Metropolitan Vladimir while he is bringing back the Holy fire from Jerusalem on the occasion of Easter. For more details see Hug (2015).

On a side note, despite over 90 per cent of Moldovans declaring themselves as Christian Orthodox<sup>81</sup>, the opinion polls conducted by a non-governmental Institute of Public Policy reveal that 85 percent of respondents are in favour of the separation of church and state while 76 percent criticized the MOC for being involved in political matters<sup>82</sup>.

Against this backdrop, there is one additional aspect that unifies the Georgian and the Moldovan Orthodox Churches, namely the criticism of the pro-Western paths embraced by the two countries' ruling elites<sup>83</sup>. Indeed, the historical role of the guardians of traditional values transformed both the GOC and the MOC into moral authorities over the most sensitive issues. There are two key elements, which encounter a firm opposition from the two. Firstly, both Churches are reluctant to grant recognition to any other religious organizations. In seeking to maintain their predominant role in public life, the GOC and the MOC often exhibit xenophobic and racist propaganda, either directly through sermons and public statements, or indirectly through extremist groups, the violence of which has never been openly condemned by clergy. More specifically, the GOC has started to be increasingly critical of religious minorities, including those traditionally living in Georgia for decades (e.g. Muslim community in the autonomous province of Adjara), since the beginning of the 2000s. Indeed, the issue of minority protection which was placed high on the political agenda of President Saakashvili represented one of the main dimensions of conflict between him and the GOC (Chitanava 2015, 43). In Moldova, the state intolerance toward the religious minorities is widespread (Bielefeldt 2012), even though the difficulties with official registration have been alleviated.

The second element is constituted by the introduction of any sort of legislative provision which might constrain the Churches in both countries in pursuing their 'traditional values' agenda. The recent attempts of adopting the anti-discrimination bills constitute the most blatant example of this point<sup>84</sup>. In Georgia, the final draft of the Law on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination was finally adopted in 2014, but only after some adjustments imposed by the Patriarch Ilia II who threatened the MPs with expulsion from the Church. However, as the bill as such was not acceptable by the GOC, it was subjected to incessant criticism: for instance, in the words of Ilia II homosexuality is an "anomaly and disease", while the legalization (through the bill) of "illegality is a huge sin" (Civil.ge 2014b; RFE/RL 2014a). The MOC uses exactly the same rhetoric and extends the criticism also towards the EU, and to the European values in general: on a number of

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<sup>81</sup> However, the national statistic needs to be taken cautiously as several irregularities were discovered to have occurred during the process of data collection (Jurnal.md 2016a).

<sup>82</sup> See Barometer of Public Opinion, October-November 2014 (last accessed in March 2017).

<sup>83</sup> The GOC has generally not been opposing Georgia's closer cooperation with the EU (Civil.ge 2014a).

<sup>84</sup> Requested by the EU requested of the neighbouring countries to adjust their legislation in this area in order to pursue the Association Agreements negotiated within the framework of the Eastern Partnership Association Agreements.

occasions its representatives compared Europe to the city of Sodom ruled by the Devil and urged his followers to use holy water against the LGBT activists (V. Munteanu 2015).

To sum up, in both states the Churches have assured themselves a place between the most powerful political actors with a clear agenda, often in contrast to the principles of liberal democracy and their leverage on policy-makers is, thus, quite pronounced. The GOC and the MOC consider themselves the defendants of traditional values and national identity (even though in the case of the systematic pro-Russia attitude of the latter such a role is questionable), and they are actively pursuing this agenda by rejecting any, allegedly, contrasting political ideas. Consequently, both actors do not entirely embrace opposing the pro-European course undertaken by their respective governments and do not hide their sympathies towards Russia (in particular the Moldovan Church which operates under the Moscow Patriarchate). Interestingly enough, however, in neither of the two countries do the respective party systems have assume an explicitly religious dimension – in fact, the quite high religious fractionalization in both countries (see table 2.1 for reference), has not been accompanied by the emergence of a pronounced religious cleavage and has not generated a clear clerical/anti-clerical political movements.

## **2.7. Conclusions**

The main objective of this chapter was to assess to what extent parties in Georgia and Moldova have become socially anchored in order to determine the degree of their consolidation over time. The analytical dimensions have been selected in order to allow for a comprehensive analysis while the guiding argument was that the parties which are deeply rooted in their respective societies will not only consolidate themselves faster, but will also contribute to the stabilization of the entire party systems as their relations will become more predictable over time (Mair 2001). There are a few interesting findings that follow from this inquiry.

Firstly, and somehow, surprisingly the average age of the political actors in both states is higher than it could be expected based on the theoretical arguments advanced in post-communist party research), respectively of 14.5 years in Georgia and 19.2 in Moldova (relative to the period from the outset of democratic transition). Nevertheless, in both states, political actors are consistently indicated as the least trusted institutions – although the initial distrust towards political entities could be explained by the Soviet legacy, after almost three decades of party development this trend is somehow disturbing. In fact, while a certain decline in trust towards political parties is currently experienced also in established democracies, the high levels of distrust in post-Soviet countries might be a rather strong sign of a more general institutional dysfunction.

The scores of nationalizations, namely the parties' capacity to sponsor candidates homogeneously across the national territory are also higher in Moldova than in Georgia (respectively 0.74 and 0.68). There is

a significant cross-party variation within the countries: the two dominant political formations, the UNM and the GD-DG in Georgia are the most homogenized, while the territorial coverage of the smaller actors is less evenly distributed. In Moldova, the PCRM is the most nationalized party, closely followed by the PDM while the electoral support for the latest electoral winner, the PSRM, was the most unevenly distributed on the national territory. At the aggregate level, however, the nationalization in both countries is lower than in established democracies.

Another interesting finding follows from the analysis of the variation in electoral support over time. The raw data would suggest that political parties in Moldova are more consolidated than those in Georgia as the stability of electoral support appears to be higher in first than in the latter not only at the level of individual parties but also at the systemic one. Indeed, the average support obtained by the established Moldovan parties amounts to 65.4 percent while only to 44.7 percent in the case of the Georgian mainstream parties. Furthermore, the trend of electoral stabilization was increasing steadily in Moldova until the last elections held in 2014, while it underwent little variation in Georgia since the last three contests.

The discussion on links with civil society conducted in section 2.6 suggests a rather poor performance of political parties in both countries as a channel of representation of the aggregate interests. Contrarily, they appear very much dependent on interest groups while the unclear relations between business and politics trigger similar social responses in terms of low trust and, more generally, low interest in politics. Yet party autonomy appears to be affected by these links to a much larger and deeper extent in Moldova than in Georgia. In fact, while in Georgia, at least until the entry in politics of the business tycoon, Ivansihvili, the incumbent party has been a major source of power encouraging the rent-seeking relationships, the Moldovan formations have progressively become captive of a small number of individuals from both, business and political elites, who have systematically exploited party organizational structures to increase their personal wealth. This, in my view, paradoxically become one of the main sources of their stabilization over time.

To summarize, although in both countries – in line with a general trend in most of the post-communist polities – political parties have remained generally weakly anchored in their respective societies, and their progressive stabilization over time has been more pronounced in Moldova than in Georgia.



### **Chapter 3. Routinization of party organizational structures**

This chapter is devoted to a comprehensive assessment of the ‘systemness’ of parties defined as their “internal structural coherence” (Panebianco 1988, 56). Hence, while the rootedness of parties discussed in the previous chapter, measures their relationship with the external environment, the dimension of routinization pertains to the intra-party organizational interactions. In line with this view, political parties will be characterized by a high level of ‘systemness’ when they display “consistent patterns of internal organization” (Casal Bértoa 2011, 8). In other words, they will be viewed as consolidated once they acquire firmly established structures, good organization and comprehensive territorial coverage (Mainwaring 1999).

There are two major problems pertaining to the dimension I intend to analyse in this chapter. The first is its inconsistent operationalization generating several different sets of indicators employed in empirical studies. The second regards the availability of reliable data, which is often not easy, or not at all accessible<sup>1</sup>. Being constrained by these two limitations, the focus of this analysis rests in assessing the extent to which political parties in Georgia and Moldova have developed coherent organizational structures through the lens of five factors – registration requirements, party organizational continuity, the political loyalty of party members, the alternation of leadership as well as their organizational features such as centralization and professionalization (Casal Bértoa 2011). The conclusive part of the chapter will be devoted to the comparison of the degree to which party organizational structures stabilized over time in both countries.

#### **3.1. Registration rules**

In 2016 there were over 180 political parties officially registered in Georgia, even though only around one third actively participated in political life. In Moldova, the total number of registered parties in 2016 amounted to 45 while approximately half of them participated regularly in elections<sup>2</sup>. The registration obligations may, at least partially, account for this puzzling divergence. Although no systematic studies have been conducted on this aspect, the restrictiveness of the formal registration requirements may affect the survival strategies of the existing formations and influence the decision of political entrepreneurs to launch new formations.

A review of the registration rules in both countries reveal an interesting finding. In Georgia, since the adoption of the 1997 the Organic Law on Political Union of Citizens (LPUC, Law № 1028, 1997) in order to be registered parties need to support their application with signatures of at least 1000 party members with no

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<sup>1</sup> For this reason, some of the crucial indicators related to party organizational features (for instance party unity and voting discipline) was excluded from my analysis.

<sup>2</sup> For a full list of political parties in both countries see: National Registry of Georgia available at <https://napr.gov.ge/p/472> and Official Register of the Ministry of Justice, available at: <http://www.justice.gov.md/pageview.php?l=ro&id=780&idc=212> (both last accessed in May 2017).

further restrictions in terms of their territorial distribution (LPUC, art.22.2). By contrast, the Moldovan regulatory framework has not only underwent several amendments, but has also been significantly more restrictive than the Georgian one since the 1998 amendment to the Law on Political Parties and Socio-Political Organizations (LPSSPO, Law № 146, 1998). The evolution of the registration requirements in Moldova is summarized in table 3.1. A careful look at it unveils that since 1998 an aspiring Moldovan party not only has to dispose of a significantly higher number of members (5000 between 1998 and 2008, and 4000 since 2008), but is also additionally constraint by their territorial distribution (art.8.1). This means that a minimal number of signatures established by law must be collected among members residing in no less than half of territorial-administrative units of the second tier (districts) – currently, this number is set at 120<sup>3</sup>. The combination of these two requirements places the Moldovan regulatory framework among the most restrictive in the post-communist region.

**Table 3.1 Evolution of registration requirements in Moldova (1991-2016)**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Minimal number of members</b>	<b>Territorial distribution of members</b>	<b>Legal basis</b>
<b>1991</b>	300	0	Law № 718 (1991)
<b>1998</b>	5000	150	Law № 146 (1998)
<b>1999</b>	5000	600	Law № 367 (1999)
<b>2003</b>	5000	150	Law № 470 (2003)
<b>2008</b>	4000	120	Law № 294 (2007)

Source: own elaboration based on party laws

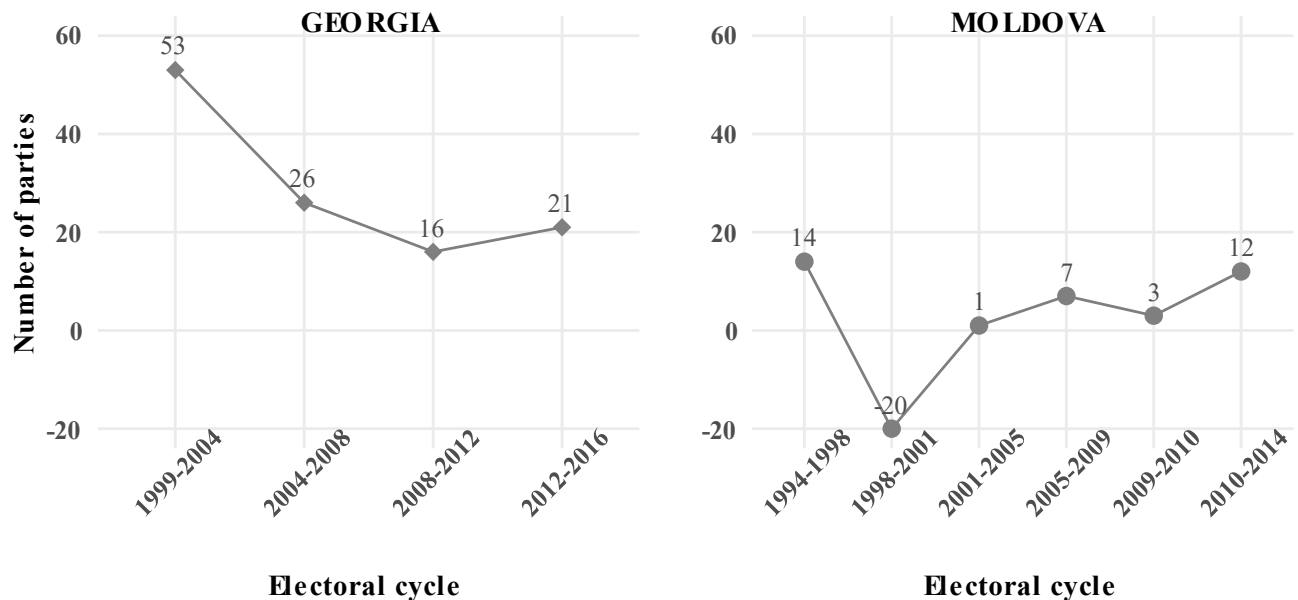
To provide evidence of a possible impact of the restrictiveness of registration rules on the emergence of new parties, figure 3.1 depicts the total number of newly registered parties (for the first time) between electoral cycles in both countries. Two important findings derive from this graphic representation. Firstly, figure 3.1 clearly shows that in Georgia,<sup>4</sup> which had much lower registration requirements, the number of newly registered parties is significantly higher than in Moldova where the rules were much more demanding. Secondly, the data shows that the tightening of registration requirements in Moldova in 1998, accompanied by the obligation to re-register the existing parties, is associated with a steep drop in the number of registered parties (from 39 to 19). This implies that many of the pre-existing parties were unable to meet the new

<sup>3</sup> This requirement is particularly difficult to fulfil for potential regional parties as discussed in section 2.2 of this chapter. See, Article 8 of the Law № 294 (2007).

<sup>4</sup> The period immediately following the adoption of the new Organic Law on Political Union of Citizens (Law № 1028) in 1997 until the parliamentary elections in 1999 is not covered by the figure 3.1. Given that 125 parties registered (and re-registered as required by the new law) at that time, its inclusion would have distorted the representation.

signature requirements. All in all, while the registration rules are certainly not the only reason affecting the political decision on launching new formations, they nevertheless may facilitate or constrain such choices.

**Figure 3.1 Number of newly registered parties between the electoral cycles in Georgia (1999-2016) and Moldova (1994-2014)**



Source: own elaboration based on data retrieved from official registers (see fn.2.)

### 3.2. Organizational continuity (splits/mergers/extinctions)

One of the most straightforward measures of party structural routinization measures their organizational continuity understood in terms of the frequency and weight of splits, mergers as well as party extinction. Needless to say, higher discontinuity negatively affects party consolidation (Tomsa 2008) according to the logic that “the structure of competition will remain open to permanent challenge by newcomers, making access to government easier and government innovation more likely” (Casal Bértoa 2011, 131).

The most common conclusion that can be drawn from post-communist party research is that political parties in the region have been characterized by intrinsic instability – they frequently enter and exit the political competition, and, in more general terms, tend to be subjected to “complex changes of identity” (Ibenskas and Sikk 2017), which goes from a simple re-labelling to deeper organizational restructuring including splits and mergers.

In this section, the organizational systemness of the Georgian and Moldova parties over time is assessed in two ways. Firstly, I calculate the total number of organizational changes that took place in both countries between 1994 and 2016. For the sake of simplicity, the number of splits/mergers/party extinctions indicates the number of political actors involved in the process. These operations will provide some useful



insights into the general restructuring patterns of the two countries' political scenes. However, it is important to keep in mind that the consequences of the organizational changes are contingent on the respective weights of splits and mergers. In fact, the separation of a limited number of parliamentarians does not alter the identity of the party in the same way as the detachment of one of its key members pulling out a conspicuous number of followers. Likewise, the size, strength, and relevance of the respective individual actors that merge will inevitably impact the organizational structure and nature of the newly established entity. The literature distinguishes a few ways to categorize party splits based on the size of splitting groups (Janda 1980; Ibenskas 2012) or the extent of organizational change (Rose and Mackie 1988). Nevertheless, the lack of reliable data renders it quite difficult to apply precise quantitative criteria. Keeping in mind this limitation, the second analytical step will consist in a qualitative discussion of the weights of single instances of split/mergers.

Figure 3.2 is the simplest illustration of the frequency of organizational changes in both countries over time. What immediately captures the attention is that parties in Moldova appear to display the lower level of organizational continuity as compared to Georgia. Indeed, in the years between 1994 and 2016 Moldovan political actors experienced 5 splits and 8 mergers while in Georgia 7 splits and only one merger took place<sup>5</sup>. Furthermore, in Georgia, two of the parties under examination, i.e. the UNM and the Revival Party disintegrated and disappeared following the removal of their leaders from power; in Moldova, the two parties that no longer exist merged into other formations, and thus are not counted as instances of extinction. In overall terms, the level of parties' organizational continuity is relatively low in both countries, but the divergence between them is quite interesting.

Another look at figure 3.2 reveals that in Georgia<sup>6</sup> the splits are by far exceeding the mergers, while in Moldova the latter strategy seems to be more frequent. Such a configuration suggests that while in Moldova uniting with a stronger political formation, including cases of total absorption, is the best way to assure political survival, in Georgia the most common political strategy is defection and formation of a new grouping. Such a divergence might be dictated, *inter alia*, by the formal institutional factors, including the requirements to register a new party, but also by the electoral legislation – this aspect will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 5, thus it suffices to anticipate here that in Moldova the threshold for electoral coalitions is higher than that established for individual parties and depends on their size, while in Georgia

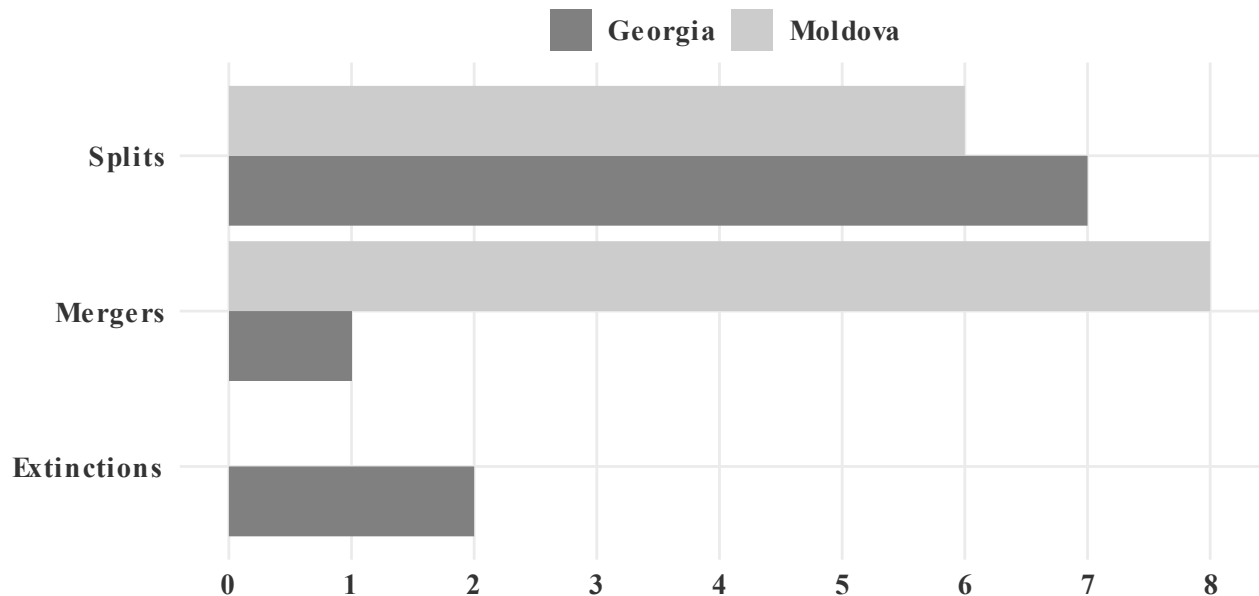
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<sup>5</sup> In consistency with the analytical choice explained in Chapter 2, the parties concerned here are those, which obtained at least 5 percent of electoral support in at least one election, thus the analysis does not discuss the organizational changes of the smaller political actors as well as do not take into account their possible migrations to the mainstream parties.

<sup>6</sup> In this chapter I only account for splits/mergers that led to the establishment of new political parties, thus I do not take into consideration the reshuffles within parliamentary factions. It is important, however, to keep in mind that this type of organizational change is quite common in Georgia.

there is no distinction between the two. The structure of political competition dictated by the type of government (see Chapter 5) may also play a role in determining party political strategy. Finally, the frequency of organizational changes may constitute quite a compelling indicator of a tendency to prioritize personal rivalries over ideological similarities in the formulation of inter-party alliances.

**Figure 3.2 Organizational continuity of political parties in Georgia and Moldova (1994-2016)**



Source: own elaboration based on party websites, data retrieved from the Association for Participatory Democracy “ADEPT” and textual analysis of newspapers

Figure 3.2 offers an interesting insight into the structure of organizational changes in both countries; yet, as anticipated earlier, does not account for their respective weights nor is particularly useful to understand whether there has been any stabilization in this respect over time – in other words, whether the major organizational changes took place at the early phases of party developments or have continued throughout the entire period under examination. To grasp these more nuanced aspects, the subsequent section will offer a more fine-grained qualitative discussion of the major organizational changes affecting the mainstream parties in both countries. Their graphic spatial representation is contained in Appendix V to further facilitate the understanding of these reconfigurations.

As anticipated a few paragraphs earlier, the mainstream Georgian parties are not immune to organizational discontinuity; nonetheless, the changes are not affecting them equally. In this context, the NDP experienced a major split after its leader Giorgi Chanturia was killed on the streets of the Georgian capital, Tbilisi, in 1994. Chanturia’s death generated a pronounced conflict over the succession between his wife Irina Sarishvili and other high-ranking party members, including Mamuka Giorgadze who eventually left the party

and, together with a group of its former members, founded the People's Party, which, however, did play a rather insignificant role in Georgian politics. In December 2006 a personal conflict between Bagaturia and LPG's leader, Shalva Natelashvili, provoked the former to leave its ranks and set up his own formation, Kartuli Dasi (Georgian Troupe) (Civil.ge 2006d). In 2010 one of the founders of the Conservative Party, Kakha Kukava, left to establish a new grouping, called Free Georgia, of a centre-left orientation.

However, the most pronounced discontinuity regards the two parties that dominated the political life of the country between 1995 and 2012, respectively the CUG and the UNM. The CUG<sup>7</sup> experienced several high-profile defections, including the deputies from the Taxpayers' Union group, invited by Shevardnadze to participate in 1999 elections from the CUG's list, who established their own New Rights party in 2001 (Wheatley 2005). The group's move was emulated by Shevardnadze's Minister of Justice Mikheil Saakashvili, who, together with eight other reformers established the For Democratic Reforms faction, later transformed into the National Movement party, which gradually subtracted important support of some of the pro-presidential networks from the CUG (Hale 2014). As a result, by 2001 the party was left with only forty-one deputies in contrast to 141 elected in November 1999 (Wheatley 2005). The decision of president Shevardnadze to step down as the CUG's leader in September 2001 and the following defection of his successor, Zurab Zhvania, who established a new formation, the United Democrats in June 2002, led to the party's total collapse (Civil.ge 2002c; 2002b; 2001g; 2001f).

The systematic draining of the CUG's members as well as the 2003 Rose Revolution, which ousted its leader, Eduard Shevardnadze from power, eventually led to the party's collapse and extinction. A similar fate was encountered by the Democratic Union for Revival, led by Aslan Abashidze who also lost his power on the wave of the revolutionary movement.

In this context, the members of the UNM party – born out of a merger of United Democrats and National Movement in 2004 – that ruled the country for 8 years (2004-2012) proved highly disloyal towards their party organization. Indeed, UNM suffered the highest number of splits and mergers, and the effects of those changes have been the most pronounced<sup>8</sup>. The first split took place in 2007 when a group of

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<sup>7</sup> The party was, almost since its inception, suffering from the increasing tensions between its two wings. The hardliner wing of CUG was represented by the former members of the Soviet Georgian Communist Party and the closest allies of Shevardnadze, while the reformists were composed mostly of young, western-educated politicians co-opted by the President, including members of the Green Party, which participated in the 1995 elections from the CUG's list. Among the later wing there were, among others, Mikheil Saakashvili, Zurab Zhvania and Nino Burjanadze, who would successfully remove Shevardnadze from power a few years later through the peaceful Rose Revolution (November 2003).

<sup>8</sup> As the largest party dominating Georgian political scene between 2004 and 2012, the UNM was affected by several defections of its own members, also following various political allies (yet not the UNM members) of

parliamentarians, including former Minister of Defence Irakli Okruashvili, left the party denouncing Saakashvili's authoritarian leadership and established a new formation – the Movement for United Georgia. A year later, in 2008, Nino Burjanadze, although not a formal member of UNM, founded Democratic Movement-United Georgia, and was echoed soon after by the former premier in Saakashvili's government, Zurab Noghaideli, who established the Movement for Fair Georgia (Civil.ge 2008i). In 2009 another group of splinters defected to a new party, Our Georgia-Free Democrats, led by Irakli Alasania, a Georgian diplomat and chairman of the Tbilisi-based Abkhazian government-in-exile nominated by Saakashvili. An ultimate wave of defections ensued after the UNM defeat in the parliamentary elections in 2012, which cost President Saakashvili his leading position in the country – the New Political Center-Girchi was founded in 2015 by one of the top UNM activists Zurab Japaridze accompanied by three other relevant MPs (Civil.ge 2015f).

Before exploring the Moldovan political case in more detail, there is one important clarification that should be made. In the literature on party and party system consolidation, the changes of party labels are usually considered as of equal importance to other forms of organizational discontinuity (Montes, Mainwaring, and Ortega 2000, 804). However, despite the frequency with which the Moldovan parties modified their banners, such changes did not always translate into organizational discontinuity of the original formations. Thus, in this analysis, the variation of labels is not taken into consideration unless they affected party continuity to a significant degree.

Only two of the mainstream Moldovan parties have not experienced significant organizational ruptures, even though this claim requires further clarification. In this respect, the PPCD, founded in 1988 as the main heir of the Popular Front, appears to display the relatively stable organizational continuity once the re-labelling is disregarded – in fact, before assuming its current name, the party was called the Democratic Movement of Moldova (1988–1989), Popular Front of Moldova (1989–1992), and the Christian Democratic Popular Front (1992–1999). Although, the party did not experience formal splits/mergers, it was affected by a massive defection from local branches between 2007 and 2008 in favour of PLDM (see section 3.3).

The two pro-Russian parties, the Communists (PCRM) and the Socialists (PSRM) are the other two formations that are characterized by the highest levels of organizational continuity. PCRM<sup>9</sup> has experienced one minor merger (more precisely it absorbed a minor Civic Dignity Party) which, however, did not bring any substantial change to its organizational structure. Moreover, besides a few important defections (see below), the party also experienced a crucial internal rupture a few months before the 2014 parliamentary

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Saakashvili such as Irakli Alasania or Salome Zurabishvili who began to gradually distancing themselves from the President. However, in this analysis I focus only on the major splits affecting the UNM.

<sup>9</sup> For more details see <http://www.e-democracy.md/parties/pcrm/>.

contest, which ultimately led to its progressive decline, even though it did not lead to the establishment of any new formation (Moldova Liberă 2014a). PSRM, on the other hand, has been immune to major organizational disrupters, even though the party itself emerged as a result of a split from the PSM which took place in 1997, and received a substantial reinforcement from a group of PCRM's defectors in 2011<sup>10</sup>.

What constituted the major strength of the once-powerful PDAM<sup>11</sup>, ultimately became its major weakness: being composed of top figures among the reformist wing of the Moldovan Soviet Communist Party, it eventually fell victim to the intra-party struggle for power among those prominent figures, each with his own, distinct and often rivalling political ambitions (see Chapter 5). By 1996, five years after it was established, the party experienced the major quarrel over who should be its candidate for the presidential elections: more specifically, part of the splinters (ten) fused into then-President Snegur's newly established formation, the Party for Rebirth and Conciliation in Moldova (PRCM), which united together with sixteen other political formations under an umbrella organization, the Civic Union, in supporting Snegur's run in the presidential contest<sup>12</sup>. Following its lack of electoral success, PRCM merged into the National Liberal Party (PNL) in 2003, which in turn merged into the Our Moldova Alliance (AMN). The second splitting group of Agrarians gathered around Lucinschi who, despite running as an independent candidate, was backed by all the central-left formations. The remaining part of the PDAM provided support for the PM, Andrei Sangheli. This decomposition resulted in a complete marginalization of a once-dominant PDAM, which never managed to regain electoral support.

The Liberal Party (PL)<sup>13</sup> of Moldova, re-labelled from Party of Reforms, established in 1993, experienced a major split in 2013 following an internal dispute over its future as part of the ruling coalition. As a consequence, a group of splinters led by Ion Hadârcă left PL to establish the Liberal Reformist Party (PLR), which took part in the new government while the remaining part of PL led by Mihai Ghimpu left the ruling pro-European coalition (ADEPT 2013).

The Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM) was founded in 1997 under the name of Movement for a Democratic and Prosperous Moldova as a union between the splinters from the PDAM, the Unity Movement for Equality in Rights and the Socialist Party of Moldova<sup>14</sup>. Re-named as PDM in 2000, it absorbed the Social

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<sup>10</sup> The three defectors, including the PCRM's former Minister of Economy Igor Dodon and the former Communist presidential candidate, Zinaida Greceanii, established a socialist faction in the parliament as they merged with the Socialist Party of Moldova (PSRM) (ADEPT 2011).

<sup>11</sup> For more details see <http://www.e-democracy.md/parties/pam/>.

<sup>12</sup> Included the Popular Front Christian Democratic (PFCD), the Gagauz People's Party (GPP), and the Peasant Christian Democratic Party (PCDP), (EECR 1997).

<sup>13</sup> For more details see <http://www.e-democracy.md/elections/parliamentary/2014/opponents/pl/>.

<sup>14</sup> For more details see <http://www.e-democracy.md/parties/pdm/>.

Liberal Party in 2008. PDM has been affected by one large magnitude split – in 2007 one of its prominent members, oligarch Vlad Filat defected from the party following the dissatisfaction with the direction taken by the party under the leadership of Dumitru Diacov. He was immediately joined by a group of other former PDM members as well as many prominent representatives of Moldovan civil society while PLDM soon became one of the key political players in the country. PLDM absorbed AMN in 2010, while in 2015 it was left by former PM Iurie Leancă who established the European Popular Party (PPEM).

The only two parties that are not active any longer at the political scene of the country are Party of Democratic Forces (PFD) and, the previously mentioned AMN. The PFD itself is a successor of CI established in 1993 and re-labelled to its current name in 1995. The party was successful in 1998 elections but has lost its appeal since 2001. Consequently, by the end of 2002, it was absorbed by the Social Liberal Party which marked its extinction as an independent formation. The AMN was founded in 2003 as a successor of Civil Alliance for Reforms (established in 1997)<sup>15</sup> absorbing four different political groupings, namely the Braghiș Alliance, the Liberal Party (different from the one discussed a few lines above), Independents' Alliance of Moldova and the Popular Democratic Party of Moldova. In the 2005 parliamentary elections, the Alliance gained 34 out of 101 mandates, nonetheless, the internal rivalries led to its disintegration into three parliamentary factions corresponding to the constituent groupings, while the remaining core of the Alliance retained its original, AMN label. The party managed to gain representation in both elections held in 2009, but following its defeat in 2010, it was entirely absorbed by the PLDM a year later.

### **3.3. Party switching**

Party switching is closely associated with the aspect of organizational continuity. Indeed, after all, both phenomena measure the defection of party members. However, while the latter considers the flows to the newly established political entities, party switching, in most general terms, measures the migration between the established parties. The phenomenon has been conceptualized and operationalized in different ways and is often referred to as an “umbrella” concept encompassing different types and directions of political shifts (Heller and Mershon 2009, 12).

In the following section, I discuss the concept of party switching understood as the number of parliamentarians who are successfully re-elected for the consecutive term on a different party ticket (Bakke and Sitter 2005, 8-9)<sup>16</sup>. While most of the studies on party switching in established democracies focus on

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<sup>15</sup> The party changed its name in 1999 to Social Democratic Party “Furnica” (MACpR) and again to Social-Democratic Alliance of Moldova (PDSF) in 2001.

<sup>16</sup> Thus, I exclude from this analysis candidates whose floor-crossing occurred at the distance of more than one parliamentary term.

shifts between party-oriented parliamentary groups (PPGs), in this analysis I take into consideration the changes between party labels. Such a methodological choice can be justified by a few reasons, one of which is the empirical evidence from the analyses of party switching in post-communist legislatures according to which their parliamentarians have been generally unattached to their respective party groups (Remington 2001; Semenova 2015). But, more importantly, what constitutes the object of this study is the party organizational continuity, hence, its focus should rest on the party-level. The analysis will then be integrated with a discussion on floor-crossing in between elections. Here, however, I will rely on data gathered through textual analysis of newspaper articles and reports considering the unavailability of systematic data.

The common wisdom that emerges from the studies on party switching in the post-communist context is that the partisan loyalties are rather loose and significantly lower than is the case in established democracies. In this context, the phenomenon of floor-crossing in most countries of the region is not constrained by regulations, which would impose the imperative mandate and would, in this way, prevent parliamentarians from changing their affiliations. Nevertheless, it should be noted that “(s)witches in political affiliation after elections, therefore, raise questions and criticisms – in particular in ethical and moral terms – relating to political opportunism, potential threats to public confidence in the political class and the internal discipline of political parties” (PACE 2014).

A careful look at table 3.2 reveals that in Georgia and Moldova the average number of parliamentarians who switched their party affiliation does not appear very high.

**Table 3.2 Party switching (as percentage of all elected deputies) in Georgia and Moldova (1992-2016)**

Country	Parliamentary term							
	1-2	2-3	3-4	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	Average
Georgia	0.9	2.6	1.3	2.7	0	4.7	-	2.0
Moldova	6.9	1.0	0	1.0	1.0	0	2.0	2.0

Note: The percentage of parliamentarians elected under the new party affiliation in consecutive elections in proportion to all elected parliamentarians; Source: own calculations based on the lists of parliamentarians<sup>17</sup>; format adapted from Casal Bértoa (2011)

The first row of table 3.2 demonstrates that the frequency of floor-crossing reflects the instances of a major restructuring of the Georgian political scene. In this context, following the 2003 Rose Revolution the CUG disintegrated and ceased to exist while the UNM emerged as the new leading political force.

<sup>17</sup>Available at <http://www.parliament.ge/en/parlamentarebi> for Georgia and <http://www.parlament.md/StructuraParlamentului/Deputies/tabid/87/language/en-US/Default.aspx> for Moldova (both last accessed in February 2017).

Consequently, the number of switchers between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> elections (2003-2004) does not consider the wave of defectors from the CUG to the new UNM. In this context, the included switchers are those MPs who joined the Rightist Opposition alliance, composed of Industry Will Save Georgia (IWSG) and the New Rights parties. In the subsequent elections held in 2008, the number of switchers remained low as only two MPs moved away from the Saakashvili's UNM while two others joined it.

The situation changed again in 2012 when floor-crossing was more frequent and concerned several parliamentarians switching to the GD coalition. The last period under the analysis as marked by the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> legislature is the most interesting from the analytical point of view since as many as seven parliamentarians changed their affiliation, mostly from the UNM to the GD-DG. The explanation for such a shift can be, perhaps, found in the more general political context: three years before, in 2013, the leader of the UNM lost presidential elections in favour of Georgian Dream's candidate, Giorgi Margvelashvili. Since then the UNM, despite remaining the major oppositional party, has never regained its previous political strength. Thus, the defection towards the new incumbents, the GD-DG is an attempt to continue the political career. Defections between elections were quite rare: for instance, as a result of personal conflict between the leader of the NDP Irina Sariashvili and one of the leading party members, Jondi Bagaturia, the latter moved in 2002 to the Labour Party (Nodia 2006; Civil.ge 2002a).

To conclude, there are two important aspects pertaining to party switching in Georgia that warrant emphasis. Firstly, data included in table 3.2 does not account for switchers among the majoritarian candidates, but it is there that this phenomenon can be expected to be more pronounced. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, it does not capture the rather common practice, at least until recently, of smaller formations to run in the elections on the ticket of a bigger party, usually the incumbent, and then break away to establish one's own faction once in parliament. This seems to have been among the main sources of political instability, at least at the initial phases of party development (Nodia 2006), and also explains the limited intra-electoral party-switching between the established parties.

In Moldova, the relatively high number of defectors between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> terms was a result of the political turmoil following the first stage of transformation – on the eve of the 1998 elections the switchers mostly changed from the PDAM to PCRM once the first lost and the second started to regain political strength. In the following parliamentary elections, floor-crossing was rather limited. However, it is important to keep in mind that this was the period of significant restructuring of the Moldovan political scene as discussed in section 3.2. The period between the 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> parliamentary terms was also characterized by a very low number of defections, mostly from the PCRM to the PSRM.



Although data reported in table 3.2 does not include the instances of party switching between the elections, these cases require a more careful examination. The changes in party affiliations between the elections are certainly not uncommon to the Moldovan politics (Ipn.md 2018): for instance, in 2007 PDM absorbed a group of former members, including one of the founders, from the minor Social Democratic Party. But switching frequently included high-profile defectors. The most salient of such cases is that of PCRM members, namely that of Marian Lupu in June 2009 who joined the then extra-parliamentary PDM, as well as that of three deputies led by the current president, Igor Dodon who took over the uninfluential PSRM in November 2011 (Moldova Liberă 2011a; 2009b). This was also the case of PPCD who lost many members, deputies and local officials due to disillusionment with the decision of its leader, Iurie Rosca, to cooperate with the Communist government and offering support for its leader's candidature for presidency<sup>18</sup>.

Nevertheless, the most pronounced intra-parliamentary party-switching took place after the 2014 elections with a massive flow of deputies to PDM from all the other parliamentary formations. In this context, PLDM has been the most affected by these shifts by losing as many as eighteen parliamentarians (out of 23) between 2015 and 2017 in favour of PDM. The second most damaged, the PCRM, lost fifteen (out of 21) of its deputies followed by PL with four (out of 13) defectors and PSRM with one (out of 25). Such a wave of defections, which granted the PDM more additional mandates than it actually won on its own in the 2014 contest (nineteen won and twenty-three gained from splinters) is not only curious but also raises serious doubts about the legitimacy of its nature<sup>19</sup>.

### **3.4. Leadership alternation**

According to the arguments advanced by the scholars of political parties and party systems in post-authoritarian contexts, the dependency of a given party on a charismatic (individual or collective) leader is inevitably a sign of its poor consolidation (Mainwaring and Torcal 2005). In other words, if a party is captured by the personal interests of the leader, its institutional survival after the leadership change is usually seriously compromised. On the contrary, a party capable of surviving “inter-generational conflicts” (Dix 1992, 491) following the leadership alternation can be considered as a consolidated and autonomous entity. All in all, “a party that has had the same leader since its inception is judged to be *less* institutionalized than one that has changed leaders” (Janda 1980, 24). One additional argument is constituted by the supposition that the excessive dependence on dominant leaders' arbitrary decisions constitutes a considerable obstacle for other actors to develop expectations towards behavioural predictability which, in turn, impedes the consolidation of the whole system (Mainwaring 1999).

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<sup>18</sup> For more details see Chapter 5, section 5.3.2.

<sup>19</sup> For a more detailed discussion see Chapter 7, in particular section 7.4.

Following this logic, with the unfolding of consolidation, alternating leadership is a necessary precondition for political formations to become autonomous entities with their distinctive nature, detached from particular individuals (Pedahzur and Brichta 2002). Furthermore, the rotation at the top levels, which involves changes in the style of leadership constitutes an important test for the parties' ability to survive internal conflicts (Dix 1992; Tomsa 2008). Again, it appears evident that parties cannot consolidate "without a certain degree of headship updating and renewal" (Casal Bértoa 2011, 146).

The studies on political actors in the post-communist context have empirically validated the above-mentioned hypotheses. The lack of leadership alternation appeared to be particularly harmful for the consolidation of political actors – and of entire party systems – in the post-Soviet context. Parties from the region are remarkably dependent on their leaders and, usually, do not survive their departures. This is particularly true for "parties of power" (Lavery 2015), a very diffuse party type, which functions as an extension of the executive rather than as an independent political organization. The following investigation into the patterns of leadership alternations will allow assessing to what extent Georgia and Moldova (where parties of power have generally been absent) follow this regional trend.

The number of leaders of each mainstream party in Georgia and Moldova is summarized in table 3.3. The first interesting finding is that both display a rather low level of party autonomy in this respect, even though the average alternation seems to be lower in Georgia than in Moldova. Interestingly enough, a few parties in both countries are led by collective leadership: this is the case of the NF party managed by a seven-member council as well as of the APG ruled by a body composed of fifteen members with various roles. In Moldova, this was the case of the PSRM led by two co-presidents until their replacement by Igor Dodon in 2011. Likewise, resulting from a merger of four distinctive formations, the AMN was managed by three leaders for the first two years after its founding.

If assessed only through the frequency of leadership alternation then the most consolidated Georgian formation would be the Republican Party (RP) which, at the same time, is also the older and most stable on the political scene of the country. Indeed, in 25 years of its functioning (starting from the outset of independence, even though the party was founded in 1978), the RP experienced four changes to its leadership. The second party which experienced the highest number of alternations is the NDP. However, it is important to specify here that the first change took place in 1994 following the assassination of its founder and leader at, Giorgi Chanturia. As mentioned, he was replaced by his wife, Irina Sarishvili, who led NDP for nearly ten years. Indeed, the ultimate shift took place only in 2003 – as a result of internal conflict when Sarashvili was expelled from the party and substituted with Bachuki Kardava by the NDP's Presidium. New Rights

experienced one leadership alternation: the new chairman, Pikria Chikhradze, was elected in 2013 following the resignation of the founder, David Gamkrelidze, due to the poor electoral performance.

**Table 3.3 Party leadership alternation in Georgia and Moldova (1992-2016)**

Country	Parties (≥5percent of votes)	Number of leaders
<i>Georgia</i>	Republican Party of Georgia (RP)	5
	Union of Georgian Traditionalists (UGT)	1
	National Democratic Party (NDP)	3
	Labour Party of Georgia (LPG)	1
	Industry Will Save Georgia (IWSG)	1
	Conservative Party of Georgia (CP)	1
	New Rights (NF)	3
	United National Movement (UNM)	2
	Democratic Union for Revival (DUR)	1
	National Forum (NF)	-
	Union of Citizens of Georgia (CUG)	1
	Georgian Dream (GD)	2
	Alliance of Patriots of Georgia (APG)	-
<i>Moldova</i>	Christian-Democratic People's Party (PPCD)	4
	Democratic Agrarian Party of Moldova (PDAM)**	1
	Socialist Party of Moldova (PSM)	1
	Liberal Party (PL)	2
	Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova (PCRM)	1
	Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM)	3
	Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova (PSRM)	4
	Our Moldova Alliance (AMN)	4
	Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova (PLDM)	2
	Party of Democratic Forces (PFD)	1
	Party of Rebirth and Conciliation of Moldova (PRCM)	1

Source: own elaboration based on party websites and data retrieved from Asociația pentru Democrație Participativă “ADEPT”

There are three Georgian political formations that can be classified as parties of power, namely the CUG, the UNM, and the GD-DG. Indeed, all three were established around the strong leaders and served mainly as channels of additional support for their leaders' political ambitions. However, there are some interesting differences between the three. Firstly, both CUG and UNM were led by the charismatic leaders, respectively Eduard Shevardnadze and Mikhail Saakashvili, who, at the same time, were holding the highest

position in the country, i.e. the presidential one. Conversely, GD-DG was founded by a billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili who, despite having been withdrawn from political life after having served as premier for one year, continues to maintain control over the country from the backseat (RFE/RL 2013b). Another important difference is the fact that both GD-DG and UNM have experienced formal changes in leadership yet both continue to be directed, albeit informally, by their former leaders; the CUG, instead, disintegrated once its leader was removed from power by the 2003 Rose Revolution<sup>20</sup>.

The remaining parties included in my analysis have not experienced any leadership alternation. Among them, the case of the Democratic Union for Revival stands out because it disintegrated after its leader Aslan Abashidze, the ruler of the autonomous region of Adjara, was removed from power in 2004. In fact, it was a typical ‘party of power’, but limited to the regional rather than national level. All in all, a more detailed look at the structure of party leadership in Georgia clearly reveals that most of the formations are predominantly dependent on their founders who, usually, assume the leadership position. Considering the very limited alternation, it is quite difficult to assess how parties would react to the leadership alternation – nonetheless, the highly personalized nature of political competition coupled with the general voters’ identification with leaders rather than with parties suggest that their survival rate would be rather low.

In Moldova, the frequency of leader alternation is much higher than in Georgia, even though the average score is well below the average scores in other post-communist countries. The party that experienced the highest number of leadership changes is PPCD. From its establishment in 1989 until now, PPCD was led by four politicians: Ion Hadârcă (1989-1992), Mircea Druc (1992-1994) and Iurie Roșca (1994-2011) and Victor Ciobanu (from 2011)<sup>21</sup>.

The other two formations characterized by a relatively high number of leader alternations are PDM and PSRM, and in both cases, the leadership changes were dictated by pragmatic political calculations. PDM was founded and led by the former Parliamentary speaker Dmitriu Diacov (1997-2009) who, however, was not very successful in attracting voters; consequently the party managed to enter the parliament in 1998 and in 2005 as a part of larger electoral alliances, but never by running individually (in 2001 and in April 2009 it did not clear the threshold). This problem was overcome through party reinforcement by a group of defectors from PCRM led by the former Parliamentary Speaker Marian Lupu enjoying high popular support – at the 6<sup>th</sup> Extraordinary Congress held in July 2009 he was elected as a new party chairman and at the parliamentary contest held only ten days after the party gained thirteen seats. Marian Lupu held the leadership of the party

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<sup>20</sup> In fact, Saakashvili has continued to maintain its leading position even after the defeat in parliamentary elections in 2012, even though soon after he fled the country and held the position of the governor of a Ukrainian province of Odessa (JAM News 2017; Jamestown Foundation 2019).

<sup>21</sup> See <http://www.e-democracy.md/parties/ppcd/>.

until 2016 when he was replaced following an intra-party political intrigue by an oligarch and party deputy chairman Vlad Plahotniuc (Moldpress 2016).

The PSRM's experience was similar. Since its establishment in 1997, the party was led by two co-chairs: Veronica Abramciuc and Eduard Smirnov. The party had not been able to mobilize voters and never managed to pass the electoral threshold on its own; in fact, its leaders were frequently included on the PCRM's lists. Following the merger with a group of prominent Communist splinters in 2011, during its 10<sup>th</sup> Congress, the party delegates elected one of them, Igor Dodon, as new party chairman ousting its historical frontmen from leadership. The shift finally brought long-awaited electoral success as PSRM gained twenty-five seats and became the largest force in the parliament. After Dodon's election as President of the Republic, another former, high-profile Communist deputy, Zinaida Greceanîi, assumed the position of the acting leader which was subsequently institutionalized in December 2016 when she was officially elected as PSRM's chairman.

The PLDM's case resembles the fate of most parties led by charismatic leaders. Indeed, PLDM was founded in 2007 by a PDM splinter, Vlad Filat, who chaired the party until 2015 when he was arrested for corruption and abuse of office<sup>22</sup>. Between October 2015 and June 2016, the party had two interim presidents, Valeriu Streleț and Vadim Pistrinciuc, replaced by the permanent chairman Viorel Cibotaru elected at the party's Congress in June 2016. Nonetheless, PLDM seems to experience an increasing fatigue as a consequence of the corruption scandal, which involved its founder: on the one hand the party is systematically losing public support; on the other it has been affected by a massive defection of its deputies, even though only the subsequent parliamentary elections will reveal whether the party will survive the leadership change. The Liberal Party changed its leader once when the first president Anatol Țălaru (1993-1998) was replaced by Mihai Ghimpu following the resignation of the former due to the unsatisfactory electoral performance. The remaining two parties included in the analysis, namely the AMN and PFD did not experience changes at the leadership position, but both are no longer present at the Moldovan political scene.

Finally, the only party with no leader alternation, which not only managed to survive since its inception but also has played a dominant role in Moldovan political life is the PCRM. As has been evidenced in other parts of this thesis, the PCRM is entirely subordinated to its charismatic leader who exercises total control over its activities<sup>23</sup>. Indeed, the conflict between the core members led by Vladimir Voronin and the reformist wing composed by younger party activists resulted in the prevalence of the first and the expulsion

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<sup>22</sup> See Chapter 2 for more details.

<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, and somehow contrary to the general interpretation from the literature, I would not classify it as a classic 'party of power', despite the eight-year incumbency (2001-2009) – in fact, PCRM was launched long before it was even allowed to participate in the elections and survived long after (in relative terms) it was ousted from power in 2009.

of the latter (Unimedia 2014b). All in all, the issue of whether the party can survive the change at the top position remains an open question.

To conclude, even though there seems to be no substantive difference between the two countries in terms of leadership changes' frequency, one important aspects warrants the emphasis. In Georgia the replacement of party leader is often caused by his/her inability to perform the function due to e.g. health problems or death rather than following a political decision of party members as it is more often the case in Moldova.

### **3.5. Internal organization**

Strong and well-developed party organization is not only an indicator of consolidation but also one of the pre-conditions for political actors to effectively fulfil their main objective, namely the active and effective participation in the political process (Tavits 2013). The main argument advanced by the scholars of parties and party systems in post-authoritarian contexts is that a consolidated party should be characterized by a high level of centralization, comprehensive territorial coverage and a high degree of professionalization. In other words, a party with a strong organizational structure manifests an established and effective central administration which, however, is not operating at the expense of well-developed local branches, spread evenly across the national territory (Mainwaring and Scully, 1995).

As it is often the case, the biggest constraint limiting the research on party organizational strength in the post-Soviet context is the lack of available and reliable data. Thus, I will base my analysis on qualitative estimations of the strength of individual parties' organizational structures based on information retrieved mostly from secondary sources. Having in mind this methodological limitation, I will focus on three dimensions of party organization. The first measures the extent to which the decision-making process in a party is centralized, i.e. takes place in an executive organ at the central level, instead of being dependent on the will of its leader or dispersed among several, independent local branches. There is one important aspect one should be careful about, namely that the excessive centralization might mean that the party is entirely subjected to the leader's whims. The second indicator refers to the national coverage of local branches, which should be distributed in a relatively homogenous way. The last dimension assesses to what extent a given party is professionalized, i.e. what is the percentage of stable, remunerated staff with respect to the total number of party functionaries (Protsyk, Bucătaru, and Volentir 2008).

Beginning with the first aspect, all the political parties under examination in this section are characterized by a high level of centralization. In fact, as it should be clear by now, the great majority of the mainstream parties in both countries is centred on a charismatic leader who, usually, "imposes himself or herself as the indisputable founder of the party's original ideological goals that become inseparable from this

person” (Perepechko et al. 2011, 584). This, by itself, does not automatically result in lower party institutionalization – in fact, some recent research on charismatic extreme right parties has revealed that consolidation is possible once charismatic leader manages to gain substantial and stable electoral support (Pedahzur and Brichta 2002). In line with this argument, even though far from being fully consolidated, the stability of leadership has been associated with general party stability – these are the cases of, *inter alia*, the UNM in Georgia and of the PCRM in Moldova.

At least formally, all the political parties under examination are governed by some sort of a collective central authority comprising a limited number of members (such as National Political Council as in the cases of PDM, PLDM and GD-DG or Executive Committees as in the case of Republican Party in Georgia and PSRM in Moldova). Furthermore, all of the analysed parties organize regular congresses, which are considered as the supreme decisional bodies, even though, in most cases (with the exception of the AMN) the leader remains the sole organ responsible for decision-making (Protsyk, Bucătaru, and Volentir 2008; Bucătaru and Moşneaga 2015).

The second dimension, which is used to examine the strength of party organizational structure is the extent to which a given political actor is represented in well-developed local branches, homogenously distributed across the national territory. In this respect, the empirical data shows quite extensive regional coverage with little variation among the parties in both Georgia and Moldova. The only two political actors, which appears to be less represented at the local level in Georgia are the LPG and the IWSG while in Moldova the only party with a negative coefficient is the AMN – in 2006 only 57 percent of its local branches had a physical office (Protsyk, Bucătaru, and Volentir 2008). Indeed, all of the other parties are represented on the entire national territories, which should be viewed as a positive step considering that at the initial stages of democratic transformation the establishment of local branches of political parties was significantly constrained by the provincial political and financial clans (Hale 2006). However, there is one important consideration that warrants emphasis, namely that such a strong territorial penetration of major parties in both countries is not a sign of an increased bottom-up civil mobilization, but rather a consistent strategy of territorial implantation of local offices administrated by the national leaders.

The last aspect of party organizational structure, i.e. the professionalization, is the most difficult to gauge. As mentioned in the introductory part of this section, in this analysis I consider professionalization as the extent to which a party resorts to remunerated staff for its regular activities. To measure this aspect, I use the amount spent on salaries by an individual party as a percentage of the total annual expenditure as a proxy.

The financial reports<sup>24</sup> of the major Moldovan political actors reveal that only two parties can be considered as professionalized. Indeed, in 2016 the PCRM dedicated 29 percent of its annual expenses to payment of salaries while in the case of PLDM this sum was equal to 59 percent. All the other formation devoted a very limited amount of their financial resources to the remuneration of personnel: respectively, 0 percent for PL, 1 percent for PDM, 9 percent for PSRM and 1 percent for AMN<sup>25</sup>. In Georgia, the situation is very similar. Indeed, only one party, namely the LPG devoted a substantive amount of its financial resources to salary payment (76 percent in 2011); for all the other formations the values were much lower – in 2011 IWSG allocated 19 percent, the Republican Party 13 percent, the New Rights 8 percent, the UNM 5 percent and the Conservative Party of Georgia only 1 percent for the remuneration of personnel (TI Georgia 2011b).

There is one additional way in which professionalization of political parties, or rather of politics as such, can be defined, namely as the extent to which parliaments are composed of the experienced members. In other words, it means “that men and women enter politics and seek elective office or party office not as temporary and part-time activity, but as a longer-term and almost full-time activity” (Linz 2002, 306). Such professionalization occurs, for instance, through the process of accumulation of political experience, i.e. participation in consecutive elections (Crowther 2014, 236). Considering that most parliamentarians in both countries come from political parties, the degree of their professionalization can give us some insights into the degree of party consolidation. The analysis of data retrieved from the lists of parliamentarians in Georgia and Moldova reveals an interesting finding: between the first and the most recent parliamentary term (respectively for eight legislatures, between 1994 and 2014 in Moldova and for seven legislatures, from 1992 to 2016, in Georgia) the changeover of parliamentary members in Georgia was equal to over 90 percent while it remained relatively more limited in Moldova where it amounted to approximately 65 percent. Furthermore, the discontinuity in parliamentary membership seems to be decreasing over time in Moldova while in Georgia its values are fluctuating. This allows concluding that Moldovan politics is more professionalized than Georgian politics.

### **3.6. Conclusions**

The central aim of the analysis conducted in this chapter was to assess to what extent political actors in Georgia and Moldova have developed internally coherent organizational structures and whether their routinization has displayed some stabilization over time. In doing so, I based the analysis on four indicators

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<sup>24</sup> Data obtained from <http://www.e-democracy.md/parties/>. When discussing parties’ self-reported information, however, a certain caution is advised. See chapter 7, section 7.1.2. for more details.

<sup>25</sup> This is confirmed by another study from 2006 in which the Democratic Party counted 8 percent of remunerated personnel among the party functionaries, the Communist Party of 7 percent and the Our Moldova Alliance of 7,2 percent. See Protsyk (2007) for more details.



measuring different, yet interrelated, aspects of individual parties' organizational features. The main finding that follows from this inquiry is that political parties in Georgia and Moldova fit into the more general trend in the post-communist region of weak organization and consolidation. Nevertheless, the study has revealed some interesting differences between the routinization trajectories of party organizational structures in both countries.

Firstly, the analysis has revealed some important difference between the two countries in terms of the formal rules regulating the registration of political parties, significantly more restrictive in Moldova than in Georgia. Consequently, I assume that the divergence in the number of existing parties in both party systems may, to certain extent, be affected by these requirements. Likewise, my study has shown that Georgia and Moldova are characterized by a relatively high frequency of organizational changes, in particular regarding splits and mergers. There is, however, an important divergence between their experiences, which also could be partially attributed to the formal registration requirements. At the aggregate level in Georgia, the number of splits is higher than that of mergers – according to the arguments advanced in the literature this is indicative of the highly personal character of these changes. In fact, the qualitative discussion from section 3.1 confirms that the personal clashes among high-profile party members are the most frequent cause of their eventual separation. In the Moldovan case, an inverse trend could be observed as the number of mergers outweighs that of splits, even though the fusions are not necessarily dictated by ideological closeness – for instance, this was the case of the Social Liberal Party in Moldova, which merged with the PDM instead of uniting with the ideologically closer PL. The divergence in this pattern is reflected at the systemic level by producing a multiparty system composed of a few formations of generally similar political weight and multiparty systems in Georgia clearly dominated by one formation contrasted with a highly fragmented opposition. These observations lead to the conclusion that the party system in Georgia has been more open to the penetration of new parties than it was the case in Moldova.

The available data does not allow to measure party switching in its entirety, yet it seems quite clear that in Georgia the defections are significantly more common among the candidates elected from single-member districts than those from party lists, and that they mostly regard the switching from one 'party of power' to another. In Moldova, on the other hand, since the 1998 parliamentary elections, the defections of high-profile politicians to other, frequently less successful parties, appears to be quite a common practice. In this context, the latest massive wave of defections in favour of the PDM, however, seems an anomaly rather than an indication of a stable trend. This is an interesting finding as it signals once again that launching an entirely new formation in Moldova might be politically and economically less convenient than it is in Georgia.

The second difference between the two countries, albeit slightly less pronounced, pertains to the frequency of leadership alternation. The discussion suggests that the attachment to individual leadership is more pronounced in Georgia than in Moldova where the leadership alternation is more frequent, even though still quite limited if compared to consolidated party systems. The predominantly leader-oriented attitude in Georgia can be further confirmed by the fact that in addition to their labels most of the political parties include the name of their leaders on the electoral lists. Secondly, at least formally, the replacement of party leaders appears more institutionalized in Moldova, where the decisions are voted at party congresses, than in Georgia where it mostly results from the incapacity of the leader to effectively perform his/her function (mostly through personal resignation). Following this finding, one may conclude that parties in Moldova are, somewhat, more autonomous as organizations than the Georgian ones. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the change of leader does not automatically introduce changes in the style of leadership which, in turn, renders it difficult to assess how parties would respond to internal, inter-generational conflicts.

Finally, the analysis has shown no substantial differences between the two countries in terms of the strength of the organizational structures of their main parties. In fact, in both, most political formations are characterized by a high level of centralization, even though they are often quite homogeneously distributed across the national territories. Furthermore, only one party in Georgia and two in Moldova appears to be professionalized in the sense that they employ a regularly remunerated staff. An interesting difference between the two can, however, be observed in terms of general political professionalization – in fact, the rate of replacement of parliamentary deputies since the initial stages of party development has been much higher in Georgia than in Moldova.

To conclude, the inquiry conducted in this chapter has revealed that the degree of the routinization of organizational structures of political parties in Moldova has been higher than in Georgia. Indeed, despite not having obtained entirely positive scores for all the four dimensions examined here, at least since 2005, the mainstream Moldovan parties have been progressively stabilizing in organizational terms. In Georgia this pattern has not uniformly affected the mainstream parties – if some of the ‘parties of power’ did not survive the departure of their leaders (i.e. the CUG and the All-Georgian Revival Union), the other (i.e.) the UNM remained the major opposition party even after it lost the dominant position and its leader. In Georgia, there has been quite a numerous group of smaller formations characterized by surprising longevity and ability to survive shocks of various nature. The following chapters will seek to understand the role of institutional factors in generating the above-discussed outcomes.



## Chapter 4. Patterns of inter-party relations

The context in which the post-communist polities built their political structures differed not only from the Western-type democracies but also from the other post-authoritarian regions such as Latin America or South-East Europe (Mair 1998). Its distinguishing traits included the three – or even four-dimensional transition (Offe 1991; Kuzio 2001)<sup>1</sup>, almost entirely missing, or very short, pre-communist democratic experience as well as very weakly defined social cleavages coupled with the “effective absence of a real civil society” (Mair 1998, 178)<sup>2</sup>. Consequently, the distinct stages of party-development have not unfolded in the sequence observed in Western democracies (Rokkan 1970) – the inclusion of electorate occurred long before the emergence of post-communist parties (Mair 1998, 182–83), while the elite strategies have assumed conflictual behaviour triggered by weakly defined voters’ preferences and volatile electoral markets (Lijphart 1984; Kitschelt 1992; Bielasiak 1997, 2005). In this context, the stabilization of patterns of inter-party competition was seen as a long-term process, rendering the nascent post-communist party systems void of *systemness*, requiring at least a certain degree of continuity (Mair 1998, 175). The early empirical findings of the post-communist party research have demonstrated, however, that, in many cases, the stabilization occurred faster than assumed (Toole 2000; Ágh 1994; Olson 1998).

In the Eurasian part of the post-communist world, the discouraging initial conditions were further amplified by the “neo-patrimonial political order” (Robinson 2012, 301) believed to strongly entangle the stabilization of parties and their mutual relations (Bruckner and Shevtsova 1997; Hale 2006; Reddaway 1994; Ordeshook 1995). Three decades of political development in the region have proved this intuition right: the post-Soviet party development has incessantly been affected by clientelism and personalism (Gel’man 2016; Hale 2014), and hardly anywhere (excluding the Baltic states) political parties resemble the Western-type programmatic, institutionalized organizations.

Nevertheless, empirical evidence demonstrates an interesting intra-regional variation not only in terms of political regimes per se – whether personal or party-based – but also regarding the nature of parties as well as the format and structure of political competition (Roberts 2012; Gel’man 2006). Finally, even if certainly nowhere near the full institutionalization, Eurasian party systems differ in terms of the degree of their stabilisation. These distinctive patterns of party development and their outcomes in the post-Soviet

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<sup>1</sup> Namely, democratization, market-oriented and state-building and, in addition, the nation-building as in many of the post-communist, and in particular in post-Soviet, states.

<sup>2</sup> To be precise, the social divisions were frequently very well defined and highly polarizing; yet, due to the overall fluidity of social structures, they could hardly be considered as determining “stable patterns of alignments” (Mair 1998, 182–83). In fact, at least at the initial stages of transition, those divides were largely missing the basic properties as to be analytically defined as cleavages (Bartolini and Mair 1990).

region encourage a critical reflection on the concepts and methods through which the post-authoritarian party systems have been studied.

The main objective of this chapter is to understand what types of party systems have emerged in Georgia and Moldova as well as to assess the degree of their stabilisation over time. In doing so, I first review the main theoretical and methodological underpinnings of party systems research relevant to my objectives. I also briefly discuss the specificities of the post-Soviet context and propose a slightly readjusted framework for the analysis of the Georgian and Moldovan party systems. Subsequently, I employ these methodological and analytical tools to complete the abovementioned research tasks. The conclusive part offers a summary of the discussion from a comparative perspective.

#### **4.1. Theoretical considerations**

Party systems' origins, evolution, and stabilization in different regimes have inspired a large number of theoretical and empirical studies. Time and space limits do not allow me to comprehensively discuss this rich literature, therefore the following sections highlight the main aspects relevant for the analysis of party systems in Georgia and Moldova.

##### **4.1.1. Party system types**

Traditional approaches to party systems categorization commonly refer to i) their static properties, i.e. the number of composing parts, determined through various mathematical methods; ii) their dynamics, i.e. the patterns of inter-party relations that give systemness to a party system.

Although indirectly referring to the mutual inter-party relations, the earliest classifications like that proposed by Duverger (1954) distinguishing between two- and multiparty systems, focused mostly on numerical criteria. This approach was further refined by Blondel (1968), who suggested its better operationalization by incorporating the number of parties and their relative size. Accordingly, Blondel's classification included new types of a two-and-a-half party system, in which the two largest parties accumulate more than 70 percent of total votes, as well as multipartism with/without a dominant party (with a threshold set at 40 percent of votes obtained by one party). Rokkan (1970) broke the multiparty class further down by determining the relative strengths of parties through their seat-shares and by linking these properties to patterns of party interactions in competition for the government.

The focus on party systems format as a continuous variable lies at the heart of cumulative indexes combining the party raw number and weight (votes/seats) (Caulier and Dumont 2005). The first embodiment of this approach – Rae's index of fractionalization (1967) – derived from the Herfindahl–Hirschman index of industrial concentration and was devised to gauge the probability that any two members of a given parliament

would belong to two different parties on a scale from 0 (only one party in the system) to 1 (as many parties as seats). The refined version of Rae's index – the “effective number of parties” (ENP)<sup>3</sup> – developed by Laakso and Taagepera in 1979 provides similar information on the number of relevant parties. As its values are easier to interpret (Casal Bértoa 2011), the ENP index has become one of the most widely applied tools in comparative political analysis (Cox 1997; Lijphart 1994).

Mathematical indexes, however, have been criticized for their limited explanatory power of the patterns of inter-party relations. It is not unusual that the same values of ENP mask “very different party configurations” (Bogaards 2004, 190), which translates into different patterns of mutual interactions. The second issue, especially relevant in the context of this study, is that being devised for western-type democracies the ENP index remains rather insensitive to highly concentrated/fragmented party systems, which are quite common in post-authoritarian contexts. The alternative indexes proposed to overcome this problem only partially solved it since they are based on the same computational method as the Laakso-Taagepera one (Molinar 1991; Dunleavy and Boucek 2003). That is why in this thesis I rely on Golosov's ENP index based on a different computational method<sup>4</sup> that captures more precisely the degree of fractionalization/concentration.

Yet regardless of the mathematical technique, the major issue with the numerical criterion lies with the inherent arbitrariness of its conversion into party system types. As compellingly argued by Bogaards (2004) the attempts to establish clear-cut thresholds to place the values of ENP into respective party system categories lack universal and systematic logic. In other words, it is quite difficult to convert a continuous mathematical index into categorical party system types. This certainly does not discard the usefulness of mathematical indexes, but it warns about the possible misinterpretations if they are applied without qualitative knowledge about the cases under analysis.

The scepticism towards considering party systems simply as constellations of parties sharing “a common political setting” (Bardi and Mair 2008, 152) was clearly expressed by Sartori (1975) who argued that the *systemness* of party systems derives from the interactions among its composing parts. Although Sartori agreed that “numbers are indicative of structural configurations that do contain *mechanical predispositions* and do harbour *systemic propensities*” (Sartori 1976, 252), the format, he claimed, is relevant

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<sup>3</sup> Including its derivatives, namely the effective number of electoral parties (ENEP) and the effective number of parliamentary parties (ENPP).

<sup>4</sup> Namely the “score of the largest party is always 1, while all smaller parties count less depending on the size of the largest party. If viewed in dynamics, smaller parties' scores change not only if their seat- or vote-shares change in absolute terms, but also if they change in relation to the seat- or vote-share of the largest party” (Golosov 2011, 183).

only for the way it affects party systems' mechanics (Sartori 1976, 113). In his conceptualisation, party systems acquired the value of a separate unit of analysis with their own distinctive attributes "that do not belong to consideration of its component elements" (Sartori 1976, 39).

Along this line of reasoning, Sartori constructed a typology based on two attributes of party systems: their format determined by the number of *relevant* constituent parts, i.e. those detaining the coalition/blackmail potential in the competition for office, and their mechanics defined by the ideological distance between the most divergent parties in the system. The 'number-of-party variable' allows distinguishing seven mutually exclusive classes: one-party, hegemonic, predominant, two-party, limited pluralism (three to five relevant parties), extreme pluralism (six to eight relevant parties) and the atomised one (Sartori 1976, 110). The length of the ideological distance yields either moderate (when it is shorter) or polarized (when it is larger) outcomes. The typology constructed by combining these two criteria includes two-party systems (two relevant parties with small polarization), moderate pluralism based on centripetal competition (limited pluralism with small polarization), and polarized pluralism (extreme pluralism with high polarization). Finally, one-party systems and the extreme, atomised pluralism lack of systemness.

Sartori also envisaged a separate, predominant party system type defined as "power configuration in which one party governs alone, without being subjected to alternation, as long as it continues to win, electorally, an absolute majority" (Sartori 1976, 127). Independent of the other two-variables, it proves particularly useful in the context of post-authoritarian party systems, prone to power concentration.

The Sartori's taxonomy became the most widely applied framework in party system research and little theoretical innovation followed until political realignments in Western democracies started to take form in the 1980s (Wolinetz 2004; 2006). The fading of strong ideologies and the enfeebling of traditional cleavages weakened the ideological polarization, nearly emptying the Sartori's category of polarized multipartism. Likewise, the unequivocal one- and two-partism became rare, while the moderate multipartism category increasingly overfilled (Bardi and Mair 2008; Mair 2006). These transformations within the advanced democracies along with the development of party systems in post-authoritarian polities shifted the scholarly attention from constructing party systems' typologies towards defining new ways of assessing their change and dynamics.

#### **4.1.2. Party system stability and change**

As Peter Mair put it, "party system change occurs when a party system is transformed from one class or type of party system to another" (1998, 51–52); following this logic party system stabilizes when "patterns of competition become routine and predictable, so as to keep the system in one class or type over a long period" (Toole 2000, 443). Both phenomena have been analysed from different perspectives.

The change of party system format has been primarily measured by the variation in the number/strength of parties, large enough to justify the reclassification. However, the sole reliance on the numerical indicator comes with considerable analytical limitations given the omission of time as a critical variable. Hence, as argued by Pedersen, the variance in numbers of parties “measure *states* of systems, not *change* in systems” (1980, 398), that is, captures “the states of systems resulting from change” (1980, 388). Alternatively, he proposed to employ the electoral volatility index tracking the “net change within the electoral party system resulting from individual vote transfers” (Pedersen 1990, 198) as a methodological tool to analyse the systemic changes.

What this approach measure, however, are the shifts in “patterns of party strength” (Wolinetz 2006, 58) resulting from electoral outcomes rather than changes in recurring patterns of inter-party relations. While Pedersen understood party system change as “the total set of changes in patterns of interaction and competition” at and between the “levels of parliament and government, the level of the party as an organization, and the level of the electorate” (1990, 197), he chose to focus mostly on the latter dimension. Consequently, the major analytical limit of the party-number variable in measuring the swings in party system dynamics remains unsolved as further confirmed by studies demonstrating that ENP scores frequently suggest “relevant change where there is none and may obscure change when it does take place” (2004, 192).

A more suitable method to track the changes in the dynamics of inter-party relations is the Peter Mair’s concept of party system closure (Mair 1998), further refined by Casal Bértoa and Enyedi (2016). From this perspective, inspired by Sartori, “the control of executive” becomes the main arena in which “power is contested” (Mair 2006, 65). Hence, the stability of a party system rests on predictable patterns of competition for government, determined by three components: the alternation of government (partial, wholesale or none); the governing alternatives (consistent or innovative); and the opening or closure of the access to government (Mair 2001; 1998; Casal Bértoa and Enyedi 2016). The variation in party system stabilization is, therefore, assessed through the variation of its openness/closure – higher closure indicating higher consolidation while higher openness suggesting higher instability and unpredictability of inter-party relations.

But how to measure stability/change of unconsolidated party systems? Firstly, despite a certain confusion surrounding this problem, it is important to emphasize the analytical distinctiveness between party system stability and its overall institutionalization. In fact, the stability of inter-party relations is just one of the aspects measured by the multidimensional concept of institutionalization, along with the entrenchment of parties in society, the strength of their organizational structures, and the “legitimacy of the electoral process and parties” (Mainwaring and Scully 1995, 5–6). Accordingly, as empirical studies demonstrate, the stabilization of competition patterns can occur without the complete party system institutionalization



(Nwokora and Pelizzo 2018). Furthermore, the levels of stabilization of parties' mutual relations are not necessarily correlated with the levels of electoral volatility, employed in the institutionalization literature as a proxy of party system stability (Mair 1998). Indeed, as argued by several scholars, volatility relates more to party-voter than to inter-party relations (Toole 2000, 441) while party system stabilizes when the competition patterns become predictable, "not simply when patterns of party-voter electoral alignment become clear" (Toole 2000, 442).

Some scholars have proposed to rely on the Mair's index of party system closure as an indicator of "the stability of the interactions of parties in the governmental arena" (Casal Bértoa and Enyedi 2016, 265). Nevertheless, while its application is useful in the context of parliamentary multipartism, it "may not capture the dynamics of party politics to the same extent" when applied to presidential regimes or other types of party systems, such as the predominant or two-party ones (Casal Bértoa and Enyedi 2016, 275). It is also insensitive to party systems' changes from one type to another, considered as relatively rare in the context of consolidated democracies (Mair 1998), yet not so unusual in other political settings. This latter problem has been recently tackled by Nwokora and Pelizzo (2018) who constructed an apposite fluidity index based on the frequency, scope, and variety of changes of party system types, determined through criteria proposed by Sartori (1976). Although tested only in the context of African party systems for which it was originally devised, the index may prove useful in detecting the fluctuations of the structure of political competition in other less consolidated settings.

#### **4.2. Party systems in Georgia and Moldova**

There are a few additional considerations regarding the analysis of party systems in the post-Soviet region affected by neopatrimonialism. Firstly, the political parties in Eurasian regimes frequently serve as channels through which "political-economic networks" compete for power undermining their primary function of aggregation and representation of citizens' interests (Hale 2014; Gel'man 2016). Secondly, most of the Eurasian polities experienced increasing concentration of power after the first, more or less chaotic, stages of party building in the hands of strong presidents, usually supported by 'parties of power' defined as "inherently nondemocratic political vehicles, dedicated to representing the interests of state authorities and not the population as a whole, and benefit from the subversion of the system practiced by those state authorities" (Lavery 2015, 71). Consequently, in the attempt to understand the patterns and dynamics of Eurasian party systems, the emphasis should primarily be put on the structure of the political competition and the respective "structural position (of parties) within the overall system" (Stykov 2016, 10).

Generally, the typology of Eurasian party systems can be constructed through the analytical framework proposed by Sartori (1976), including the predominant party system type. His approach, however,

requires readjustments to the post-Soviet context. Firstly, considering the shorter time-span of party development if compared to consolidated democracies, post-Soviet party systems are considered predominant through slightly modified conditions, i.e. when a party (or pre-electoral coalition)<sup>5</sup> winning the absolute majority of seats and holding the presidency in presidential and semi-presidential regimes for two consecutive elections (against three proposed by Sartori). Furthermore, it is useful to keep track of the nature of predominance, which has not been uniform across cases: as suggested by empirical studies, it can be continuous (long-lasting of the same party), interrupted (restored by the same party/coalition after a non-dominant interlude), alternating (the predominance of one party/coalition is immediately followed by the predominance of its opponent) or discrete (the end of predominance is followed by the party system's change) (Nwokora and Pelizzo 2014). As such, the nature of predominance may affect the competition structure to a different degree.

Sartori rightly observed that predominant party systems are “subject to a peculiar kind of fragility: Small differences in returns, or the mere changing of the electoral system, can more easily transform the nature of the system” (Sartori 2005, 177). Hence, the excessive focus on domination without a deeper analysis of the underlying dynamics of party systems can conceal structural differences between Eurasian polities. This is especially true since the predominance can occur independently from party system's format – as long as it is a “more-than-one party system” (Sartori 1976, 173) – and the degree of its ideological polarisation. Consequently, the analytical approach should be more comprehensive and integrate other party systems' attributes to better understand the nature and mechanisms of the post-Soviet party systems. This can be done by examining party system format, polarization, and degree of power alternations.

Firstly, in contrast with Sartori's argument, the ENP (Golosov index) appears more suitable to determine the party system format since the governmental arena may not necessarily be the primary arena of inter-party competition, thus limiting the usefulness of categorizing parties through their coalition/blackmail potential. Secondly, the ideological variable, as conceived by Sartori, seems to have little relevance in the post-Soviet context where social cleavages are weakly defined and parties remain programmatically feeble. Nevertheless, empirical evidence reveals a highly polarized political competition in some Eurasian states. This suggests that looking into the nature of this polarization more closely may provide some useful insights into the dynamics of inter-party relations.

Finally, as a few studies argue (Roberts 2012; Makarenko 2012; Nwokora and Pelizzo 2018; 2014), determining the degree to which power can alternate between the ruling party and the opposition is

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<sup>5</sup> Sartori also did not consider the possibility of electoral coalitions to detain unimodal power concentration, yet in post-Soviet party systems this should not be excluded.

particularly convenient in the analysis of party systems outside the context of established democracies where the political competition is often constrained by non-democratic processes and means. Doing so allows distinguishing between party system types of which predominance of the ruling party is a common attribute, namely the one-party and hegemonic party systems (where power alternation is not possible), a predominant one (where power alternation can occur but is infrequent), and the two-party system (where power alternation takes place regularly and entirely). From this perspective, the regular power alternation would be an attribute of limited (partial or wholesale) and polarized (partial) multiparty systems while in atomized type it takes place in a non-patterned way (Nwokora and Pelizzo 2018, 103–4).

Bearing in mind that party system stability is not equivalent to its overall institutionalization, the degree of systemic stabilization can be captured by exploring the shifts between party system types as proposed by Nwokora and Pelizzo (2018) integrated into a comprehensive, qualitative discussion on the evolution of party systems' dynamics in the governmental, legislative and electoral arenas.

#### **4.2.1. Patterns of inter-party relations: towards a typology**

##### **4.2.1.1. Polarization**

The weakly defined programmatic profiles of the Georgian and Moldovan mainstream parties undermines the classification of their party systems based on the degree of polarization, understood as the ideological distance between its extreme components. Yet it is useful to verify whether there may be some other dimensions of political competition, polarizing enough to affect the patterns of inter-party relations.

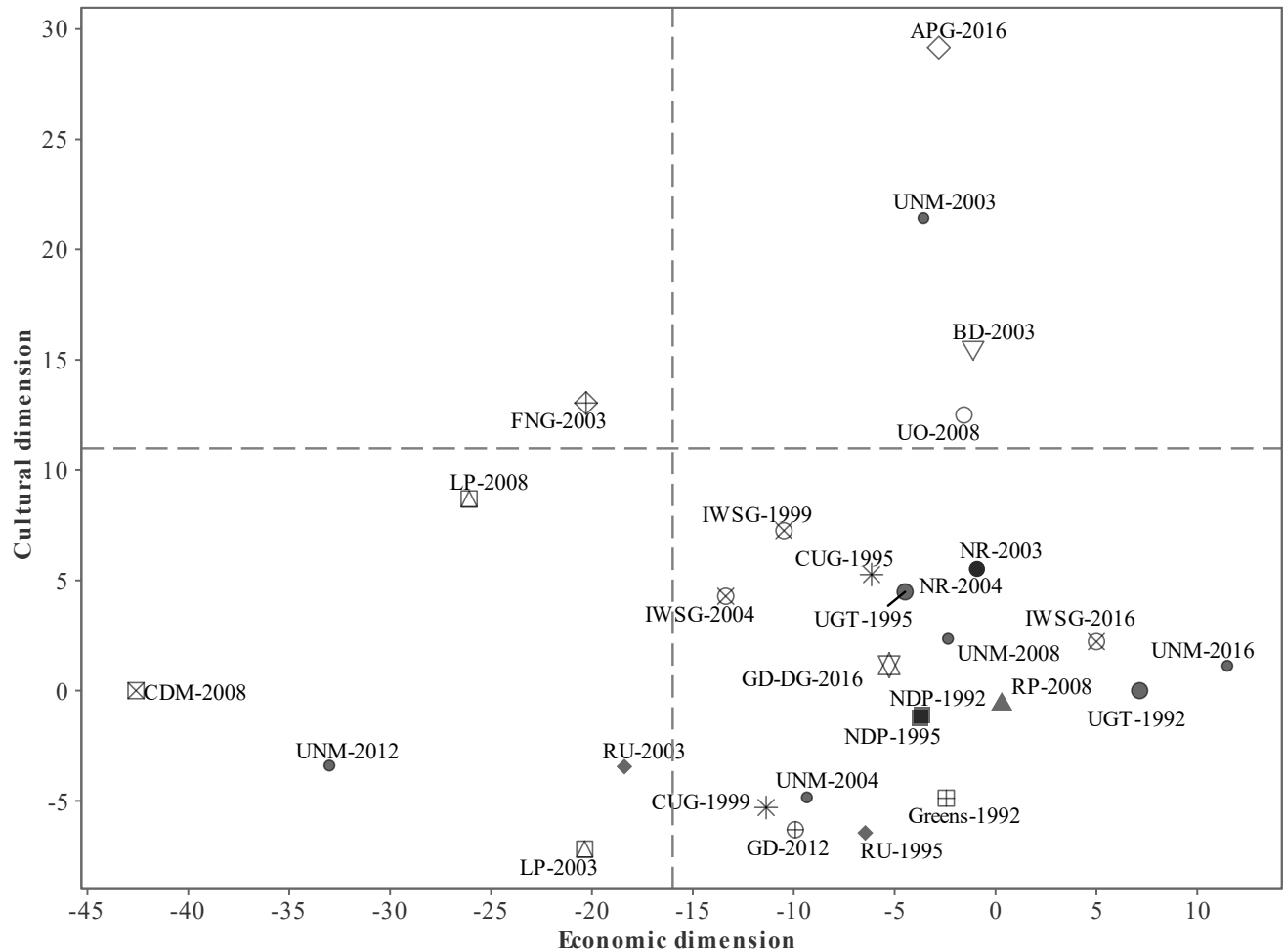
Against this backdrop, I map the ideological positions of the Georgian and Moldova parties by crossing the economic and cultural dimensions ranging from the state-controlled economy to economic liberalism while the latter spreads from cultural liberalism to conservatism (Evans and Whitefield 1993; 2000; Kitschelt 1992; Rafałowski 2014; Tavits and Letki 2014)<sup>6</sup>. This is seen in figures 4.1 and 4.2 which depict party positions<sup>7</sup> over time along the economic and cultural dimensions.

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix IV for more details on how party positions have been determined.

<sup>7</sup> In determining party positions, I rely on data collected by Comparative Manifesto Project. Despite its limits, it appears as most useful for the goals of this thesis, particularly as it comprises the cross-temporal dimension, which allows for comparative cross-country and within-country analysis. For its advantages and limits see Benoit & Laver (2006), Ray (2007) and Volkens (2007).

**Figure 4.1 Party positions on cultural/economic dimensions in Georgia (1992-2016)**



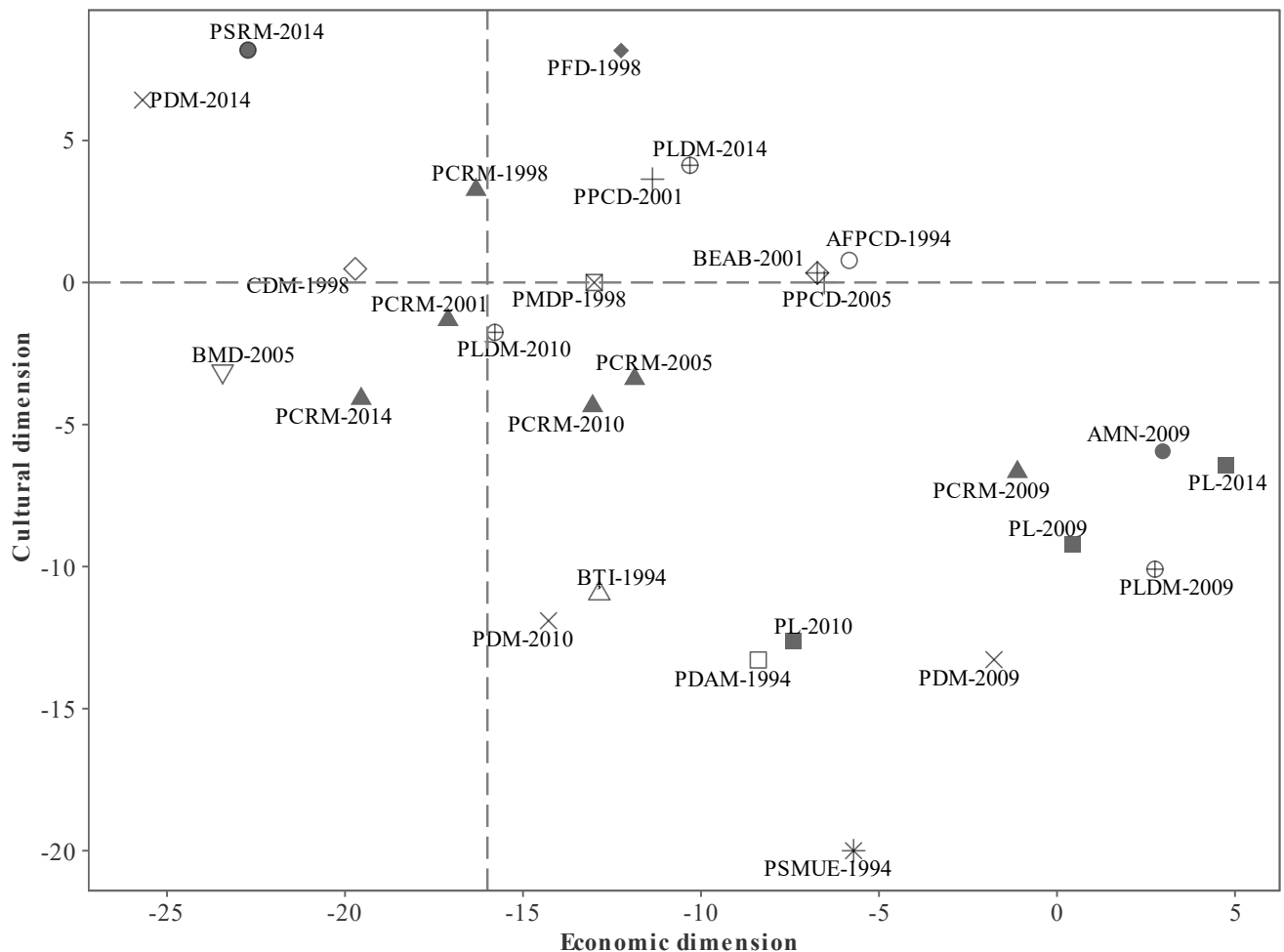
Note: Party positions are distributed along cultural (placed on the y-axis; lower values indicate cultural conservatism while higher indicate cultural liberalism) and an economic dimension (placed on the x-axis; lower values indicate support for the state-controlled economy, higher values indicate support for economic liberalism). Source: own elaboration based on Comparative Manifesto Project (2017)

Figure 4.1 shows that most of the Georgian mainstream parties are generally inclined towards cultural conservatism and tend to be more supportive of economic liberalism. Such a convergence provides a tentative explanation of the Georgian voters' disorientation in distinguishing between parties based on their ideological profiles (Nodia 2006). Indeed, party identification has rarely been associated with "its political programme, but rather with the personality of its leader" (Areshidze 2007, 86). Accordingly, figure 4.1 confirms the findings of the previous chapters on the generally weakly defined programmatic nature of the mainstream Georgian parties. It also proves the catch-all nature of the two dominant parties, i.e. the CUG and the UNM, by highlighting their ideological incoherence. In particular, the positioning of the latter seems to have shifted significantly from one election to another based on campaign-specific issues. For instance, in the

2012 campaign, the incumbent UNM focused mostly on social policies (Sichinava 2015), hence moving away from its initial support for economic liberalism.

Figure 4.2 mapping the ideological placement of the Moldovan parties depicts a slightly different picture.

**Figure 4.2 Party positions on cultural/economic dimensions in Moldova (1994-2014)**



Note: Party positions are distributed along cultural (placed on the y-axis; lower values indicate cultural conservatism while higher indicate cultural liberalism) and an economic dimension (placed on the x-axis; lower values indicate support for the state-controlled economy, higher values indicate support for economic liberalism). Source: own elaboration based on Comparative Manifesto Project (2017)

At first glance, it suggests a greater ideological distance for both dimensions, although Moldovan parties seem to be generally less conservative than the Georgian ones in economic terms. Yet such interpretation is quite misleading – a closer look at the positions of single parties reveals their relative ideological proximity at almost every individual electoral campaign, including parties from clearly opposing camps such as, for instance, the PCR and PLDM in 2010 or PSRM and PDM in 2014. The second important

observation that can be drawn from this spatial configuration of the Moldovan parties is their ideological incoherence displayed by quite important shifts along the two dimensions from one electoral campaign to another. The only formation with a relatively coherent programme appears to be the Liberal Party. Moreover, figure 4.2 highlights the programmatic incongruence of parties, which formed the ruling coalitions between 2010 and 2014 (see the respective positions of PDM, PLDM, and PL). This seems to underscore the fact that their alliance was based on a single coalescing factor, i.e. their formal pro-European orientation as opposed to the pro-Russian attitude of the other two mainstream parties (PSRM and PCRM).

The picture displayed in figures 4.1 and 4.2 finds corroboration in Rafałowski (2014) who discusses the sources of ideological polarization across the post-communist region over time and concludes that economic and cultural polarization, measured by the Taylor-Herman index, has been very low in Georgia and Moldova (see tables 4.1 and 4.2).

**Table 4.1 Party system polarization in Georgia (1992-1999)**

Electoral year	Dimension		
	economic	cultural	total
<b>1992</b>	18.23	36.41	54.64
<b>1995</b>	4.53	10.35	14.88
<b>1999</b>	12.45	3.29	15.74

Source: Rafałowski (2014)

Although certainly puzzling given the structural conditions, which would suggest an opposite trend<sup>8</sup>, his calculations not only confirm my conclusions on the non-ideological sources of party competition in both countries but also prove right the initial intuition that classifying their party systems according to the degree of ideological polarization does not appear particularly useful.

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<sup>8</sup> Based on indicators discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.2.

**Table 4.2 Party system polarization in Moldova (1994-2010)**

Electoral year	Dimension		
	economic	cultural	total
<b>1994</b>	5.43	30.16	35.59
<b>1998</b>	1635	5.15	21.50
<b>2001</b>	24.40	1.85	26.25
<b>2005</b>	36.51	1.08	37.59
<b>2009a</b>	-	-	-
<b>2009b</b>	2.87	5.44	8.32
<b>2010</b>	6.63	15.12	21.75

Source: Rafałowski (2014)

At this point, however, it is necessary to briefly discuss the nature of political competition in Georgia and Moldova as the weak programmatic dimension in both countries does not imply the absence of polarization; quite the contrary. The Georgian party politics has been predominantly personalized and marked by the individual – including physical – confrontations between charismatic party leaders<sup>9</sup>. In other words, by pitting the pro-governmental (usually consisting solely of the incumbent party) and the opposition camps (usually highly fragmented, but united in a common struggle against the ruling elite), the Georgian party system has been characterized by high political – rather than ideological – polarization. This dynamic seems to be rooted in the past legacy going back to the civil war that outburst in early years of transition from the Soviet rule between the supporters of the first Georgian president, Zviad Gamsakhurdia and his opponents. During the conflict “the two visions of the democratic Georgia were confronted: one, based on “romantic conceptions of ethnic solidarity, family and historic longevity” and the other based on “heterogeneous and ‘secular’ nation” tolerant of internal autonomies and open towards integration within west-type modern European pluralism” (Jones 2012, 14). Nevertheless, the nature of today’s political confrontation seems to have assumed a much more personalized nature and could, perhaps, be linked to more general cultural determinants.

These personalized clashes, dictated by the logic of emotional politics and focused on personal valence rather than issue-based debates, have increased even further since the 2012 parliamentary elections,

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<sup>9</sup> In his book from 2006, Nodia mentioned that most of the Georgian parties relied at certain point on ‘Sonderkommandos’- organized groups composed of young men, often with a criminal past – employed for such, often physical, confrontations (Nodia 2006, 116).

which saw the entry of a new, powerful actor – the GD-DG party led by Bidzina Ivanishvili, an oligarch and a fervent critic of the incumbent president. Most recently, the significantly reduced presidential role in the political process introduced by the constitutional changes entered into force in 2013 has been slightly redirecting the voters’ attention from party leadership to the party programmes (CRRC Georgia 2019). This gives hope that parties will eventually follow suit (Kakhishvili 2017).

Although not strongly programmatic, the core of political competition in Moldova has revolved around an ideological dimension, namely the highly polarizing ethno-nationalist issue rooted in the country’s politics since the early phases of its post-Soviet development. The Moldovan parties have always clearly positioned themselves on this aspect, which underwent a certain transformation from the question of language (Romanian/Moldovan vs. Russian) in the first phase of transition, towards the issue of statehood (pro-Romanian, pro-Moldovan or pro-Russian) at the later stages, ending up to assume a geopolitical nature (pro-European vs. pro-Russian). Hence, it can be argued that the political competition in Moldova has been more ideologically driven than in the Georgian case. It is interesting to note, however, that since the outset of transition this ethnic/geopolitical division has been often instrumentalized by political actors who did not shy away from adjusting their positions according to the immediate political needs, giving way to some unnatural cross-ideological coalitions (Oleksy 2019). Nevertheless, engaging in this kind of behaviour came at a high cost of losing the voters’ support and risking ‘political oblivion’<sup>10</sup>.

What can be concluded from this discussion is that the ideological criterion as conceived by Sartori is not of particular use when attempting to understand the patterns of inter-party relations in Georgia and Moldova. Nevertheless, even if not arising from policy attitudes towards economic and cultural issues polarization does exist and often does influence the shape of political competition, albeit to a different degree in different polities. Along this line, in Georgia, the political polarization stemming from personalized competition enhanced the pro/anti-incumbent alignment, even though it can hardly be considered as contributing to the predictability of inter-party relations considering that the composition of the respective

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<sup>10</sup> This was, for instance, the case of the first Moldovan president, Mircea Snegur, who switched at his convenience from supporting the pro-Romanian Popular Front to the moderate pro-Moldovan Agrarians back again to pro-Romanian forces in seeking support for his presidential bid. This also happened with the clearly pro-Russian PCRM party when, despite having won the 2005 elections, its majority felt short of four votes to elect its leader to the position of the head of state – to this end, the party sought the alliance with its most natural rival, the pro-Romanian PPCD and following the logic of the coalition agreement (besides granting its junior partner some key administrative and political positions as well as committing to some reforms) its publicly displayed more pro-European stances, supported by some concrete steps like rejecting the Russian-sponsored plan of Transnistrian conflict settlement. While the PCRM appeared to have come out intact from this unnatural marriage in electoral terms, the PPCD lost around 70 percent of voters’ support in the following, April 2009 elections.



camps remained unstable<sup>11</sup>. The initial stages of party development in Moldova were marked by a fairly clear identity-based division between the pro-Russian, pro-Moldovan, and pro-Romanian forces, which, in itself, was not sufficiently polarizing to prevent the respective representatives from cooperation. This pattern, however, changed once the pro-Russian PCRM came to power with the overwhelming victory in the realigning 2001 elections. Since then, the geopolitical polarization between the two camps – the pro-Russian and the pro-Western – gained in strength to the point to render the patterns of inter-party relations quite predictable, albeit with certain exceptions as discussed earlier in this chapter. Hence, certain prudence is still advised, especially considering that political competition is not free from personal rivalries, which may also run counter to the expected patterns.

#### **4.2.1.2. Format**

Despite being justly criticised for not capturing well the patterns of inter-party relations (Lijphart 1994; Amorim Neto and Cox 1997; Moser 1999; Górecki and Kukołowicz 2017), counting parties is still useful in a sense that “simply by knowing how many parties there are we are alerted to the number of possible 'interaction streams' that are involved” (Sartori 2005, 106). Furthermore, identifying the format is also valuable for understanding the underlying structure of political landscapes in polities characterized by dominant party systems.

In the introductory part of the thesis, I argue that the ENP index developed by Golosov (G) (2010) is more suitable to determine party system formats in post-authoritarian contexts, compared to the widely used Laakso & Taagepera (1979) (LT) one, in political contexts featuring high levels of fragmentation/concentration<sup>12</sup>. To support this claim, figure 4.3 depicts the ENPP scores based on these calculation methods<sup>13</sup>. It highlights some visible differences between the Indexes' values which, in many instances, lead to divergent classifications of the Georgian and Moldovan party systems. Indeed, depending on the chosen formula for party counting, one may conclude that in 1998 Moldova had a two-and-a-half party system (G) or limited pluralism (LT). Furthermore, the Moldovan case endorses the suitability of Golosov's

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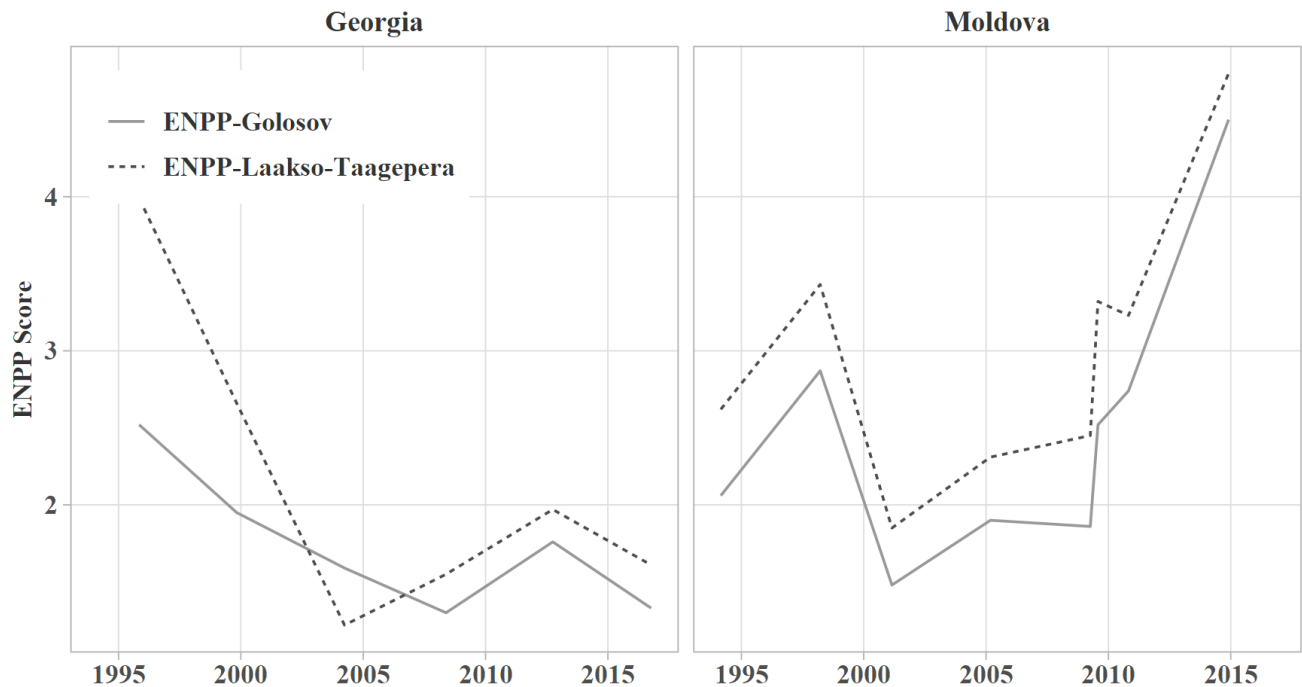
<sup>11</sup> For instance, a few small formations that participated in the 2004 elections on the list of the winning National Movement – Democrats (later UNM) have passed in opposition soon after. Likewise, some of the former opponents of the UNM backed the UNM-sponsored candidate in the second round of presidential elections held in 2018 in a common “Power Is In Unity” initiative (Georgia Today 2018).

<sup>12</sup> Based on the ENPP scores, party systems can be classified as follows: 1) two-party system (ENPP≈2), 2) two-and-a-half party system (ENPP=2.5-2.9), 3) limited pluralism (ENPP=3.0-3.9), 4) extreme pluralism (ENPP=4.0-5.9) and 5) atomized party systems (ENPP=6.0 and above) (Casal Bértoa 2011). Furthermore, under this interpretation and depending on the pattern of power alternation, the ENPP lower than 2 suggest either one-party or a hegemonic party systems (in non-democratic regimes) or predominant party systems (in democratic regimes) (Golosov 2014).

<sup>13</sup> In the Georgian case the Abkhazian representatives with 12 seats are not included in the calculations.

method to capture better the instances of predominance: contrary to the Laakso & Taagepera ENPP index, it consistently displays the ENPP values below 2, which reflects the PCRM's absolute majority hold between 2001 and 2009. What can also be observed, however, is that party system concentration has been considerably higher in Georgia than in Moldova.

**Figure 4.3 ENPP scores in Georgia and Moldova (1995-2015)**



Note: 1992 Georgian elections are excluded from the figure in order not to excessively skew the results. Source: own calculations based on indications from Golosov (2010) and Laakso and Taagepera (1979)

Nevertheless, regardless of the index, the ENPP scores epitomize the analytical limits of the numeric methods in classifying party systems and analysing their internal dynamics. Firstly, they confirm the problems related to the conversion of a continuous variable into party system types. This can be noted from table 4.3 suggesting the presence of a two-and-a-half party system in Moldova between 1998 and 2001 (ENPP=2.87) and between July 2009 and 2010 (ENPP=2.52 and 2.74). The same applies to Georgia between 1995 and 1999 (ENPP=2.52). Yet, such a conclusion is misleading. In the Moldovan case, the ENPP score of 2.87 masks a structure with PCRM holding 1.5 times (40 out of 101 seats) more seats than the second CDM (26) and the third PMDP (24) followed by PDF (11) while the ENPP score of 2.74 hides a much lower distance between the two leading parties (PCRM - 42 and PLDM - 32 seats) followed by other two formations of a similar size (PDM - 16 and PL - 13 seats).

Even more striking differences are concealed by the same ENPP score of 2.52 if both countries are compared. In the Georgian case, a single party – the CUG – disposing of near-absolute majority of seats (108 out of 221)<sup>14</sup> holds 3.2 times more seats than the second NDP (34) followed by Revival Union (31) and a group of independent MPs (29) along with eight smaller formations (with 1 to 4 seats). In the Moldovan case, the leading PCRM with 2.5 more seats (46) than the second-placed PLDM (18), followed by the two others with a similar number of seats (PL – 15 and PDM – 13) and the AMN with 7 seats. This confirms that “different party configurations can hide behind the same effective number of parties” (Bogaards 2004, 190).

**Table 4.3 ENEP<sub>G</sub> and ENPP<sub>G</sub> in Georgia and Moldova (1992-2016)**

<b>Georgia</b>		<b>1992</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1999</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2012</b>	<b>2016</b>	
	ENEP	12.80	9.11	2.82	1.43	1.89	1.90	2.52	
	ENPP	11.56	2.52	1.95	1.59	1.30	1.76	1.33	
<b>Moldova</b>		<b>1994</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2009a</b>	<b>2009b</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2014</b>
	ENEP	3.11	4.94	2.63	2.68	2.57	2.81	3.21	7.12
	ENPP	2.06	2.87	1.48	1.90	1.86	2.52	2.74	4.50

Source: own calculations based on indications from Golosov (2010)

Numerical indexes are, indeed, “unable to make strong distinctions among party system formats that are significantly different” (Golosov 2014, 735). Another proof comes from the Georgian case with very close ENPP scores for the 2004 (ENPP=1.59) and 2012 (ENPP=1.76) elections. Yet, in 2004, the largest party - UNM - held 5 times more seats<sup>15</sup> relative to the runner-up coalition of smaller opposition formations, while in 2012 the electoral distance between the two sole parliamentary parties was of approximately 30 percent in terms of seats. Finally, the ENPP scores do not capture the fact that in Georgia the number of individual political formations entering the system was higher than table 4.3 would suggest considering the electoral coalitions of smaller parties with a different composition in each election held between 2004 and 2012.

Although my focus rests mainly on the patterns of inter-party interactions in the legislative and governmental arenas for which the ENPP is more relevant, looking into the ENEP is still insightful for a better understanding of the underlying political dynamics in both countries. The ENEP values reported in table 4.3 confirm the general trajectory of the Georgian party system towards concentration, especially

<sup>14</sup> Excluding the Abkhazian representatives (12) and vacant seats (2) out of total available seats = 235.

<sup>15</sup> 7 if only the parliamentary repeated tier is taken into account. Consult Appendix I for detailed results.

marked by the sharp decline of electoral parties between 1995 and 1999. The index reflects also the more or less balanced multiparty character of the electoral party system in Moldova.

The discussion of the merits and shortcomings of the numerical indexes and their application to analyse party systems of Georgia and Moldova recalls that measuring the fluctuation in the number of parties from election to election seems to disregard the idea that “party systems consist of recurring rather than one-off relationships” (Wolinetz 2006, 58). Nevertheless, they still convey some interesting insights. As the ENPP scores have shown, party systems in both countries are far from being inchoate given the low level of systemic fragmentation except the first phase of transformation in Georgia (1992-1995) and following the 2014 elections in Moldova. The evolution of party system format (see table 4.3) contains also a hint on the direction of changes, e.g. contrary to the Moldovan experience, in Georgia, after the first years of quite a chaotic transformation, it has undertaken a quite consistent trajectory towards concentration.

#### 4.2.1.3. Typology

Before attempting to compose a typology of party systems in Georgia and Moldova based on the two criteria discussed in the previous section, there is one final aspect that needs to be addressed, namely the patterns of power alternation between the ruling and the opposition formations. Both Georgia and Moldova are not considered fully democratic (Freedom House 2016). Yet, they both do hold regular and relatively free and fair elections in which the opposition can successfully challenge the incumbent, even though the electoral malpractices have been consistently reported by the opposition parties in Georgia. As such, it can be assumed that since power alternation is possible in both countries in principle and practice, none of them can be regarded as one-party or hegemonic party systems. Having said that, table 4.4 presents the types of party systems in Georgia and Moldova determined through the combination of the three above-discussed criteria: format, polarization. and degree of power alternations.

**Table 4.4 Types of party systems in Georgia and Moldova (1992-2016)**

year	1992	1995	1999	2004	2008	2012	2016	
<b>Georgia</b>	extreme multipartism	multi-partism	pre-dominant	pre-dominant	pre-dominant	pre-dominant	pre-dominant	
year	1994	1998	2001	2005	2009a	2009b	2010	2014
<b>Moldova</b>	multi-partism	multi-partism	pre-dominant	pre-dominant	pre-dominant	multi-partism	multi-partism	multi-partism

Source: own estimations

#### 4.2.2. Patterns of inter-party interactions: evolution and stability

The typology of the Georgian and Moldovan party systems constructed in table 4.6 conveys quite clearly the nature of inter-party relations in both countries as well as their overall dynamic over time. Nevertheless, it still merits to be discussed more thoroughly not only to understand better the underlying dynamics of political competition in the governmental, legislative and electoral arenas<sup>16</sup> but also to identify any potential differences in the nature of predominance in both countries.

In general terms, the governmental formation in Georgia remained a dominion of one political actor – either president (between 1992-2012)<sup>17</sup> or a party/pre-electoral coalition (2012-2016), and only after 2012, Georgia gained a party-based cabinet. Between 1992 and 1999, however, the Georgian party system had a multiparty character in the legislative and electoral arenas. The first parliamentary term in Georgia (1992-1995) was marked by extreme multipartism, determined by the attitude towards the shape of the future Constitution between the proponents and opponents of a strong presidency. The pro/anti-incumbent pattern was reproduced in the subsequent parliament (1995-1999) when, despite outdistancing its opponents, the pro-presidential ‘party of power’, the CUG, fell short of a handful of votes to gain an absolute majority, imposing inter-party cooperation in the legislative arena. The 1999 elections brought the absolute victory of the CUG, inaugurating the predominant identity of the Georgian party system as the assembly has been monopolized by one party, leaving the opposition without any real influence. The predominant identity of the Georgian party system persisted after the ousting of the CUG from power when it was succeeded by the UNM in 2004, then replaced by the GD in 2012.

As for the electoral arena, since the outset of transition, it has been a common practice for smaller formations to unite in electoral blocs to increase their electoral odds. As such, the constituent parts of these coalitions have had generally very little in common, except for the pro- or anti-incumbent position. This was, *inter alia*, the case of the 1999 elections, when the Union for Democratic Revival ran in a curious, programmatically incoherent alliance with “the Union of Georgian Traditionalists (who aimed at the restoration of the Georgian monarchy), the Socialist Party of Georgia, the former Communist Party leader Patiashvili, and the XXI Century, supporters of former President Gamsakhurdia” (Chiaberashvili and Tevzadze 2005, 202).

The pro/anti-incumbent patterns were not always consistent between the electoral and legislative arenas. For instance, once in parliament, the Union for Democratic Revival often collaborated with the

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<sup>16</sup> The trajectories of party and party system development is discussed in more detail in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

<sup>17</sup> To be precise, between 1992 and 1995 Georgia operated in a specific, transitory condition under the Rule of Military Council, see Chapter 1.

incumbent President, upon an alleged informal, personal agreement exchanging its parliamentary support for presidential initiatives for non-interference in Adjarian internal affairs. This was also the case of the smaller formations participating in the elections on the list of a stronger party or in coalition with it to pass in opposition once in parliament (as in 2004 and 2012). These frequent regroupings were reflected at the legislative level by the number and composition of parliamentary factions regularly exceeding the number of parties winning mandates (see TI Georgia 2016).

In Moldova, the inter-party relations were more complex. By the founding elections held in 1994, the political elite managed to organize in a few but well-distinguished parties, thus narrowing down the political supply offered to voters. This resulted in a low-fragmented parliament dominated by the PDAM but with a quite clear identity-related competition structure. Although the second parliamentary term (1998-2001) followed a similar pattern, it was marked by less structured inter-party relations stemming from the internal rivalries within the anti-Russian camp opposed to the pro-Russian PCRM. This resulted in a series of technocratic governments installed with the intervention of a more active independent president. It also led to ad-hoc alliances between the representatives of the two camps in support of the PCRM's presidential candidate following the 2000 constitutional amendment that introduced parliamentarism.

The 2001-2009 period was characterized by the absolute dominance of the PCRM in governmental and parliamentary arenas. Nevertheless, it was also affected by a peculiar institutional feature introduced with the 2000 constitutional amendment, namely the three-fifths majority requirement for the presidential election by the parliament. As the failure to elect the head of the state would lead to the dissolution of the legislative, the competition for president gained much relevance. If after the 2001 parliamentary contest the ruling PCRM disposed of a sufficient number of seats to elect the president on its own, then following the 2005 and the April 2009 elections, it was forced to negotiate over the necessary support for its presidential candidate, increasing the political relevance of the opposition and diminishing the weight of its own dominance. After the 2010 parliamentary contest, the Moldovan party system realigned fully to its multiparty nature in the governmental and legislative arenas, marked by a higher fragmentation and a clearer ideological identity of its constituent parts relative to the Georgian case. As far as the legislative composition is concerned, parliamentary factions were generally composed on a partisan basis.

This brief sketch of patterns of inter-party relations reveals that the nature of the predominance in both countries differed – in Georgia, it was continuous while in Moldova discrete, which is ultimately reflected by the dissimilar structure of party competition. Along this line, in Georgia, “the party system itself [which] is anchored in the relatively stable power of the executive branch” (Lavery 2015, 74), thus follows a quite “predictable and manageable pattern” dictated by the dominant position of the “executive authority”

and its supporting party (Turovsky 2011, 198). As a result, the Georgian political landscape has been structured around a strong executive party prevailing over a fragmented anti-incumbent camp encompassing many small and relatively weak formations. By contrast, without the pressure from the dominant executive in shaping party relations, political competition in Moldova assumed a stronger ideological dimension around identity/geopolitical issues and was structured around the fewer, more coherent formation. This pattern, however, was not always consistent as marked by the occasional inter-bloc cooperation stemming from personal rivalries and/or institutional constraints.

There is one additional difference between the two cases, namely the nature of the dominant party. I argued earlier that post-Soviet party systems have been distinctive for the existence of a specific type of party, i.e. the ‘party of power’ – an organization of the executive origin “specifically designed to support president and his policies and (with) little independent existence” (Lavery 2015, 72–73). From a strictly theoretical perspective, only the Georgian CUG unambiguously qualifies as a ‘party of power’ as a “nomenklatura-based party” bounded by loyalty to the president, established with the sole aim of granting the head of state the necessary parliamentary support for his political initiatives (Chiaberashvili and Tevzadze 2005, 202). As such, the party disintegrated as soon as it became clear that President Shevardnadze would not seek the extension of his mandate limited constitutionally to two terms. The other two ruling parties, the UNM, and the DG-GD, slightly deviate from the ideal-type, but nonetheless, they ultimately ended up as subordinated to “the state, specifically to the executive administration” (Lavery 2015, 73).

By contrast, the Moldovan PCRM was created as a post-communist successor party in 1993 and since then systematically worked on strengthening its organizational structures and building up a stable electorate. Consequently, the party did not originate from the executive nor its electoral success in 1998, and in particular, the overwhelming victory in 2001, was linked to the strength of the executive<sup>18</sup>. To be sure, once in power all these parties served mostly as supporters of the presidential initiatives and largely benefited from the administrative resources to the disadvantage of their political opponents. Nevertheless, in my understanding, simply by being ‘in power’ does not, *per se*, define a party as ‘party of power’. In my view, this difference is quite important for understanding better the structure of political competition considering the role of the dominant party’s nature in shaping it.

#### **4.2.2.1. Stability vs Institutionalisation**

The last aspect addressed by the chapter concerns the degree of the overall stabilisation of inter-party relations in both countries. The scores of fluidity index proposed by Nwokora and Pelizzo (2018) indicate a higher

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<sup>18</sup> It was rather due to a mix of a protest vote against the inability of the then-incumbents in tackling the “the dramatic economic collapse” (March 2006, 355), increasing Soviet nostalgia, and its organizational coherence.

overall systemic stability in Moldova than in Georgia as all the three indicators of fluidity, i.e. the frequency, the scope and the variety of change<sup>19</sup> has been relatively contained. By contrast, the Georgian party system evolving from extreme multipartism (pulverized in Sartorian terms), through multipartism to predominant type, results in the fluidity score equal to 3.42 as compared to 1 in the Moldovan case.

However, it is worth remembering that after the first few chaotic years of party development, the Georgian party system acquired and stabilized a predominant “systemic identity” (Bardi and Mair 2008, 153), preserved regardless of the identity of the ruling party/coalition – the dominance of CUG was succeeded by that of the UNM, which, in turn, was followed by that of the GD and GD-DG. In this way, the Georgian case confirms the theoretical argument of the distinctiveness of party systems from political parties (Nwokora and Pelizzo 2014). By contrast, the Moldovan party system remained more fragmented, with the balance of power interrupted by the absolute dominance of PCRM between 2001 and 2009. Yet, once the PCRM lost office the system realigned to its previous state, endorsing its multiparty character. Quite expectedly, the higher closure (thus, stability) of the Georgian party system is confirmed by a higher score of the index of closure equal to 93.3 points (for the period between 2004 and 2013) against the 88.5 calculated for Moldova (between 1994 and 2013) (Casal Bértoa and Enyedi 2016, 274).

There is one final aspect worth clarifying, namely the relationship between party system stability and its institutionalisation. Overall, after the first stages of political transformation, the Georgian party system assumed and preserved its predominant identity, while the Moldovan multipartism was interrupted by a predominant spell. Nevertheless, if the original criteria proposed by Mainwaring and Scully (1995) are applied, the Moldovan party system turns out to be more institutionalized than the Georgian one. Indeed, according to the findings from Chapters 2 and 3, the Moldovan political parties have been observably more socially anchored and organizationally stable than the Georgian ones, even though, generally, in both countries they have remained personalized and programmatically weak. Likewise, the strength of the party-voter relationship has been higher in Moldova as denoted by the lower levels of electoral volatility. Finally, the electoral process has had higher legitimacy in Moldova as, except for the civil unrest in 2009, the electoral results have been widely accepted and followed by a peaceful power turnover between the ruling party and the opposition. The same cannot be said about Georgia where the electoral outcomes, in particular the parliamentary ones, have been systematically contested by the opposition through mass protests as in the case

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<sup>19</sup> The number of party system changes is determined by counting “the number of reclassifications of a country’s party system”, the scope by establishing “the difference between the two most different types” and the variety by counting “the number of different types observed during a historical period”. The overall index is then calculated by multiplying these indicators (Nwokora and Pelizzo 2018, 107–8).



of Rose Revolution in 2004, rejecting parliamentary mandates in 2008 and denouncing electoral frauds in favour of the ruling party 2016<sup>20</sup>.

### **4.3. Conclusions**

In this chapter, I investigated the nature of party systems in Georgia and Moldova by applying the methodological and analytical tools of traditional party system research. Furthermore, I analysed the patterns and stabilization of inter-party relations in terms of their commonalities and differences. A few insights can be drawn from this discussion.

First, to capture better the peculiarities of post-Soviet party systems one needs to readjust the existent conceptual and methodological tools. As pointed out by some scholars, the emphasis should fall on both the overall structure of competition and the role of the dominant party in shaping it. The analysis has also provided arguments in favour of an integrated approach in the debate on the suitability of specific variables in constructing party system typologies. As pointed out by Wolinetz, building taxonomies based on simple and parsimonious criteria is “inherently difficult” (2004, 9) and should not be preferred over the qualitative, in-depth understanding of cases under examination (Sartori 1976). Finally, the analysis of Georgian and the Moldovan cases have corroborated the argument that the stability and institutionalization of party systems are analytically distinctive and that the pattern of inter-party relations operates as separate units of analysis, thus independently from political parties.

Second, the study has revealed that, despite certain similarities, the patterns of inter-party relations in both countries present some important differences. More specifically, the Georgian political competition followed a ‘winner-takes-all’ logic leading to the concentration of power in the legislative and governmental arenas to “the point that the whole political history of the country since independence can be retold with just four names: Gamsakhurdia, Shevardnadze, and (Saakashvili and Ivanishvili)” (Casal Bértoa 2019, 7). Consequently, the Georgian political scene has been organized around one strong party (more or less resembling the ‘party of power’ type) and several smaller formations, either co-opted by the dominant actor or in quasi-/total opposition to it. A similar statement could not apply to Moldova where political power remained more dispersed among fewer but increasingly stabilising formations aligned around identity and geopolitical issues, despite the PCRM’s control over the governmental and legislative arenas between 2001 and 2009. Indeed, the weight of its governmental and legislative dominance was reduced by the three-fifths majority required for the election of the president during the second term of incumbency (2005-2009).

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<sup>20</sup> See Chapter 5 for more details.

Consequently, over time, the Georgian party system acquired a clear predominant identity, while the Moldovan one fluctuated between the multiparty and predominant type. Nevertheless, my analysis has also revealed the difference in nature of the predominance at the systemic level – continuous in Georgia and discrete in Moldova – as well as in the character of the dominant parties, which, in turn, affected party competition differently.

To summarise, this chapter has discussed the evolution and stabilisation of the patterns of inter-party relations in Georgia and Moldova and revealed the similarities and differences of their experiences. In doing so, it has also provided a preliminary hunch on the role of institutional features in affecting the type of party system and the patterns of inter-party relations. The next part of the thesis provides a fine-grained analysis of this relationship.



## Chapter 5. The system of government and the party system

The neo-institutional debate, relaunched at the beginning of the 1990s by Juan Linz's two seminal articles (1990a, 1990b) revived the academic interest in regime types, understood as frameworks for executive-legislative relations within a given polity. The field has long been dominated by studies of the traditional *presidentialism versus parliamentarism* dichotomy and its potential to affect democratization outcomes (Alvarez et al. 1996; Cheibub and Limongi 2002; Linz and Valenzuela 1994; Shugart and Carey 1992; Stepan and Skach 1993). In this respect, the analysis of the factors impinging upon "the initial formation of these regimes" (Mahoney and Snyder 1999, 103) as well as their possible consequences for party and party system development have relatively recently gained ground as distinctive research agendas.

That said, this vigorous debate is still ongoing, and the systematic infusion of new inputs leads to the refinement of traditional theoretical arguments. In other words, "the normal process of accumulation of knowledge, gathering of facts, crystallization of theories and methods takes place" (Meleshevich 2007, 139). The main goal of this chapter is to contribute to this process of knowledge accumulation by providing new empirical data from the study of regime type impact on the development of parties and party systems in Georgia and Moldova. In this respect, their experience is particularly beneficial for a qualitative analysis of such a potential causal relationship considering that both have been labelled by political scientists as "natural experiments" (Casal Bértoa 2012) due to their condition of having undergone formal regime changes in the period examined in this dissertation: from a purely presidential to semi-presidential (and ultimately parliamentary system) in Georgia<sup>1</sup> and a from semi-presidential to parliamentary, and semi-presidential system again, in Moldova.

The remainder of the chapter has the following structure. In the initial section, I briefly discuss the *ideal types* of the forms of government distinguished in the literature, including mixed semi-presidentialism due to its wide popularity in the post-communist context. The discussion is followed by a summary of the main theoretical arguments pertaining to the impact of regime types on party development as well as by the analytical framework, which will guide the empirical analysis. In the subsequent section, I provide a qualitative account of the evolution of regime types in both countries with an aim to sketch a broader political context in which the changes occurred. The analytical core of the study consists of an empirical investigation of the possible consequences that the regime types may have exerted on political development in Georgia and Moldova. The conclusive section will serve as a summary of the main findings from a comparative perspective.

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<sup>1</sup> In force beginning from presidential elections scheduled for 2023. See section 5.2.1.

## 5.1. Theoretical considerations and analytical framework

The three-decades-long neo-institutional debate pertaining to the systems of government has generated an impressive record of studies, from both theoretical (Linz 1990a; 1990b; Linz and Valenzuela 1994; Sartori 1994; Siaroff 2003) and empirical perspectives (Alvarez et al. 1996; Mainwaring 1993; Mainwaring, Brinks, and Pérez-Liñán 2001; Power and Gasiorowski 1997; Stepan and Skach 1993). The traditional scholarship in the field has revolved around two research agendas: the analytical focus of the first has been constituted by the conceptual categorization of regimes into *ideal types* based on the specific aspects of the executive-legislative relationship; the second has concentrated on unveiling the effects that the real-world derivatives of those pure types have exerted on broadly understood democratization.

### 5.1.1. Type of government: *ideal types*

With regard to the first strand of research, the long-standing academic scholarship traditionally distinguished between two ideal types of government – the presidential and the parliamentary – based on their specific dispositional attributes (Lijphart 1999, 17). Building on the rich literature, the presidential system can be distinguished by the following properties: a) president is elected via popular vote (directly or indirectly, through electoral college), and b) is not subjected to parliamentary control, i.e. cannot be discharged by the assembly (save impeachment) nor can s/he dissolve the assembly. Furthermore, s/he c) controls the executive (either by leading or managing the cabinet), which is not accountable to the parliament; thus, does not require parliamentary investiture nor can be discharged by the censure motion (Lijphart 1984; Linz and Valenzuela 1994; Sartori 1994, 83; Shugart and Carey 1992, 19). In their examination of the presidential regimes, Shugart and Carey added another criterion, namely that the president shall have “some constitutionally granted law-making authority”, which allows him/her to be a creator, and not a mere executor, of legislation (Shugart and Carey 1992, 19).

More recently, scholars of post-communist polities have suggested that many of the former Soviet republics have developed a distinctive regime type – a variation of ‘plebiscitary Caesarism’ – labelled as super-presidentialism (Holmes 1994, 123). The model was crafted in 1993 to solve legislative-executive stalemates in Russia and subsequently spread across the region: super-presidentialism has been adopted, among others, in Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, and Ukraine at different moments of their existence as independent states (Colton 1995; Holmes 1994; Ishiyama and Kennedy 2001). The peculiar feature of this form of government is constituted by the fusion of legislative and executive competencies in the hands of presidents resulting in their central role in the political process. In this respect, for instance, s/he can block the parliamentary legislative initiatives and rule by decrees, which cannot be vetoed by the assembly as well as dissolve the parliament and dismiss the prime minister on his/her own initiative. Super-presidentialism,

however, differs from autocratic regimes as the dominance of president in the political process is not absolute: s/he still is subjected to popular scrutiny through competitive elections or can be revoked through impeachment, even though the excessively tough requirements for its initiation renders this procedure virtually impossible to apply in practice (Fish 2001b).

The main principles underpinning the parliamentary regime are the “legislative-executive power-sharing” and “mutual dependence” of these two branches (Sartori 1994, 101). In other words, the cabinet “cannot survive without at least passive support of a legislative majority”; on the other hand, however, the assembly, disposing of the legitimacy deriving from the popular vote, can be dissolved under specific circumstances by the president (Stepan and Skach 1994, 129). These basic principles are general enough to encompass a few sub-types of parliamentarism based on the dominance of one branch over the other. At least three such variants can be distinguished: an English model, in which it is the government that dominates over the assembly; the French model (of III and IV Republic) with an “assembly-type government”; and a “party-controlled parliamentarism” in between the two former types (Sartori 1994, 101).

In sum, it can be argued that the “defining distinction between presidentialism and parliamentarism concerns the degree of interdependence between the executive and the legislature” (Cheibub, Elkins, and Ginsburg 2014, 6). In other words, in the presidential regime, the head of the executive as well as the legislature, both elected through a popular vote, are “not contingent on mutual confidence” (Shugart and Carey 1992, 19). By contrast, in the parliamentary system, this dependency is clear as the executive branch “emerges from the legislature and it depends on legislative support” (Shugart and Carey 1992, 18–22).

The third type of government, namely semi-presidentialism, was individuated by Maurice Duverger who, in the 1980s, pointed out to the peculiar features of the system of government emerged in his native France after the 1962 constitutional revision introduced the popular election of the president. The semi-presidential type of government, dissimilar from the other two *ideal types*, introduced a “dual executive” structure within which the power alternated between its two *heads* based on the political configuration of the assembly. Furthermore, the executive-legislative relationship was determined by the institutional arrangement according to which the president could be removed from office (if not under specific circumstances such as through impeachment), while the prime minister, together with his entire cabinet, could be dismissed through the parliamentary motion of censure<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> In successive studies, Duverger expanded the universe of cases he classified as semi-presidential, which included Austria, Finland, France, Iceland, Ireland and Portugal in addition to a historical case of the Weimar Republic. However, this selection was critically revised by subsequent studies: for instance, Shugart and Carey (1992) have suggested that Ireland should be classified as a parliamentary system, while Sri Lanka and the Weimar Republic

In sum, Duverger suggested that the semi-presidential type of government is not “a synthesis of parliamentary and presidential systems, but an alteration between presidential and parliamentary phases” (Duverger 1980, 186) based on whether the majorities controlling the two executive heads are congruent or split. In his conceptualization, Sartori defined semi-presidentialism as “a truly *mixed system* based on a *flexible* dual authority structure, that is to say, a bi-cephalous executive whose ‘first hand’ changes (oscillates) as the majority combinations change” (Sartori 1994, 125). He further argued that what distinguishes semi-presidentialism from the presidential regime is that the first version of “gridlock-avoiding machinery”, which allows for a more effective power-sharing within the bi-cephalous executive authority (Sartori, 1994, 124).

The preference given to this mixed regime type by the majority of emerging democracies at the initial stage of their democratic transition offered an excellent opportunity to further reflect on the concept (Elgie 1998; Elgie and Moestrup 2008; 2016)<sup>3</sup>. In their first systematic classification of semi-presidential regimes, Shugart & Carey (1992) have suggested to split them into two distinctive categories – premier-presidential and presidential-parliamentary – based on the supremacy of one executive authority over another stemming from the constitutionally attributed powers. In this vein, the first regime type coincides with the Duverger’s idea of semi-presidentialism as it can be distinguished by the following institutional properties: a) the president chosen through popular election (direct/indirect), who b) disposes of “considerable powers”, in co-presence of c) a cabinet dependent on parliamentary support.

Alternatively, in the presidential-parliamentary regime, derived from real-world constitutional experiences, a) the popularly elected head of state, who b) has the right to dissolve the assembly as well as c) controls the executive as s/he nominates and revokes governmental ministries, which, however, d) hinge on parliamentary confidence (Shugart and Carey 1992, 18–27). This distinction was rejected by Sartori who, instead, proposed to treat the semi-presidential regime as a unique, broader category within which one still can find a variety of cases based on the specific distribution of constitutional powers. In this respect, the case of the 1993 Russian Constitution, which allowed for presidential supremacy in case of intra-executive conflict, should be placed at the powerful extreme of the semi-presidential continuum while the Finnish case, which, except for direct presidential election, functions as a parliamentary system, should be placed at its weak extreme (Sartori, 1994).

Based on this categorization, Sartori’s definition of semi-presidentialism includes four defining features: a) the election of the president (indirect or direct) by popular vote for a fixed term; b) dual executive

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are examples of presidential-parliamentary types. Likewise, Sartori (1994) considered Austria, Iceland and Ireland as parliamentary regimes.

<sup>3</sup> In 2011 there were more than fifty states that adopted a mixed system of government regime (Elgie, Moestrup, and Wu 2011).

structure; c) the prime minister and cabinet unconstrained by the president, but depending on the support of a parliamentary majority which disposes of controlling mechanisms such as confidence or/and no-confidence vote; and d) a possible alternation of power equilibrium between the two executive heads stemming from parliamentary majority configurations, but only if the ‘autonomy potential’ of each of them is preserved (Sartori, 1994, p.132).

The analytical confusion surrounding the concept has been reflected by the significant variation in case selection: for instance, in their article from 1993, Stepan and Skach individuated two cases of semi-presidentialism, namely France and Portugal (Stepan and Skach 1993, 9) while Shugart included twenty-six polities: sixteen of premier-presidential and ten of presidential-parliamentary type (Shugart 2005, 336–37). To avoid theoretical and analytical inconsistency, scholars have advocated for a minimal definition of semi-presidential regime: for instance, Elgie and Moestrup suggested that it is “(A) regime where there is both a popularly elected fixed-term president and a prime minister and cabinet responsible to the legislature”; logically, their sample increased and included fifty-five cases (Elgie and Moestrup 2008, 4).

### **5.1.2. The consequences of regime type on party and party system development**

Empirical studies of emerging democracies have provided sufficient evidence to corroborate the theoretical expectation according to which the regime choice is of crucial importance as it frames the “strategic calculations of voters and political elite alike” (Stoll 2001). The logic underpinning this theoretical argument suggests that the specific features of each system of government lead to the concentration of powers in different branches which, in turn, induces political actors to seek the maximum control over that respective branch. In other words, a specific form of government generates “greater consolidatory pressure on the party system surrounding it” (Stoll, 2001).

What becomes clear from these considerations is that the potential of a given regime type to influence party and party system development derives precisely from the way it regulates the access of political actors, namely the presidents and the parties, to influence political outcomes. This can occur in two ways. The first pertains to the institutional incentives offered by a specific system of government to the president in order to facilitate his intervention in the political process through his/her autonomy to manipulate and control the support of political parties. Thus, it has been argued that the strength of the presidential position as a separate political actor able to pursue his/her own political agenda is negatively correlated with party development and stabilization of the party system. In this vein, the presidential authority is determined by the dispositional attributes of a given regime such as, *inter alia*, method of the presidential election, the role of political parties in the selection of presidential candidates, independence of presidential cabinets from parliamentary support and the role of the president as main decision-making centre.



The second aspect is related to the way in which regime types incentivize party discipline in providing executive support for the government. It can be assumed that when parties are constricted by the legislative discipline the formation of stable party structures is enhanced. Likewise, the responsibility for executive support tends to strengthen the role of the parliamentary leadership of parties which, in turn, enforces parties. These theoretical considerations would suggest that, in general terms, those forms of government in which the executive is subjected to parliamentary control – exercised through confidence vote and motion of censure – are more favourable to the consolidation of parties and party systems. But how exactly does this relationship occur? In seeking an answer to this puzzle scholars have suggested that the impact of a given regime type on party and party system development in post-communist context should be seen as an interplay of broader political context, the content of formal institutional design as well as “personal agency”, that is the actors’ inclination towards cooperation or conflict (Beliaev 2006; Sartori 1994). Nevertheless, there are a few specific hypotheses that can be formulated regarding the effects of different forms of government on party development<sup>4</sup>.

Firstly, it can be expected that presidential and semi-presidential regimes will be detrimental for party consolidation due to their potential to strengthen the role of the president in the political process stemming from a combination of his/her election by a popular vote and the constitutionally assigned prerogatives. With regard to the first component, the direct election “gave the president no new powers – but it gave him power” (Duverger in Morris 1994, 28). This appears particularly important in the post-Soviet context where the legitimacy granted through popular elections frequently bestows on the president the status of the supra-party “leader of the nation”, often equivalent to the “embodiment of the state” (Beliaev 2006). In this way, the head of state<sup>5</sup> is frequently conferred with *central* if not *the central* role in the political process (Elgie 1998; Sartori 1994; Siaroff 2003).

Furthermore, the winner-take-all nature of the plurality run-off presidential election can be conducive to party system concentration by providing an impetus for smaller parties to coalesce around presidential candidates (Amorim Neto and Cox 1997; Cox 1997; Shugart and Carey 1992). Yet it can also have an inverse effect by incentivizing smaller formations to propose their own candidates in the first-round to enhance their

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<sup>4</sup> At this point it is useful to recall that most of the studies focus on the relationship between the regime type and prospects for democratic consolidation, however the specific effects of various systems of government on the democratization path of post-authoritarian polities do not constitute the analytical focus of this chapter. For a comprehensive discussion on this aspect consult, *inter alia*, Elgie and Moestrup (2008), Frye (1997), Holmes (1994), Horowitz (1993), Linz (1990a), Mainwaring (1993), Mainwaring & Shugart (1997), Pasquino (1997), Power and Gasiorowski (1997).

<sup>5</sup> As in the post-communist context the position of the president is equivalent to that of the head of state, I use these terms interchangeably through this chapter.

visibility (Elgie 2001, 219; Filippov, Ordeshook, and Shvetova 1993); and can also increase the risk of engaging extremist parties seeking rewards for electoral support offered to presidential candidates in the second-round (Meleshevich 2007). Finally, the ‘double electoral process’ (Bartolini 1984) of legislative (parliament) and executive (president) branches of power are believed to have a destabilizing potential for the patterns of party competition as it may affect the coordination strategies of voters and political actors, especially in terms of pre-electoral alliances. In line with the argument on the coattail effect generated by the direct presidential election, it can be expected that the electoral success of a given party in the parliamentary contest may be affected by the performance of its candidate in the presidential one (Shugart, 1993).

The final assumption that can be made is that the direct presidential election will stimulate the personalized presidential campaign on “platforms that are wider than that of any given party (including their own) and frequently build electoral coalitions across parties or even above parties” (Amorim Neto and Strøm 2006). In this way, “the relevance of party platforms and organization” (Samuels 2002, 480) will diminish along with the increased risk of political instrumentalization by both the established actors and the improvised dilettantes (Elgie 2001). In fact, Sartori warned about this danger in the early 1990s while he suggested that outsiders’ political participation is further enhanced by what he labelled as ‘videopolitics’ (Sartori 1994, 133–34). In line with this argument, it can also be expected that president-based regime types will incentivize the formation of “ephemeral parties, most often the personal vehicles of presidential candidates” (Cadoux 2007, 96; see also Colton 1995; Croissant and Merkel 2004; Fish 2001b).

The second component, i.e. the extent to which powers<sup>6</sup> are concentrated in the hands of presidents, is generally considered an important intervening variable in the process of party development and consolidation. The bottom-line argument is that the “higher the *de jure* concentration of authority in the hands of the president, the higher the value that office should have for potential office holders” (Hicken and Stoll 2008, 1111; see also Cox 1997, 189). In other words, “the reductive influence of presidentialism upon the number of legislative parties is conditioned by the scope of presidential powers” (2017, 131). It can be thus assumed that the systemic institutionalization of a party system is negatively correlated with powerful presidents (Mainwaring and Shugart 1997; Shugart and Carey 1992; Skach 2011) and proves detrimental for the development of well-organized, programmatic political parties (Colton 1995; Colton and Skach 2005; Fish 2001b; Mainwaring 1993; Moser 1998). The logic behind this latter argument is that strong presidential authority fosters personal ties between candidates and the head of state (Ishiyama 2008; Meleshevich 2007)

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<sup>6</sup> Following the traditional scholarship, I define presidential powers as prerogatives granted by the constitutional wording, which include the controlling powers, the political powers (such as the dismissal of prime minister at presidential discretion), and governing powers to be shared with the cabinet (Duverger 1980, 178) as well as those deriving from political practice, labelled as material constitutionalism by Sartori (1994).

and diminishes the importance of partisan loyalties (Linz 1994; Moser 2001b). This, in turn, provides fewer incentives for political parties to act as channels through which political actors seek representation (Fish 2001a; 2003).

The final potentially hindering effect of the presidential and semi-presidential systems of government pertains to the dual executive structure. From this perspective, they both provide more opportunities for presidential interference in government formation, which increases the unpredictability of inter-party competition (Bartolini 1984; Linz and Valenzuela 1994; Protsyk 2006). Furthermore, the shared competency in cabinet formation and dismissal reduce partisan role in the political process (Protsyk 2005; Shugart 2005; Shugart and Carey 1992; Siaroff 2003). In this respect, the increased presidential authority also stems from the institutional structure of semi-presidentialism, which confers control over strategic ministerial portfolios to the president (Schleiter and Morgan-Jones 2009; Warwick and Druckman 2006)<sup>7</sup>. Indeed, several studies have shown that presidential interference in this process result in a higher number of non-partisan cabinet members (Amorim Neto and Strøm 2006; Protsyk 2006), in particular when the establishment of partisan government is difficult (Blondel and Andreev 2001). In other words, the semi-presidential regime is expected, in general terms, to be more prone to “induce greater variation in the relationship between parties and governments than parliamentary democracies” (Schleiter and Morgan-Jones 2009, 669).

In parliamentary regimes, parties play a crucial role in the selection of candidates as “gatekeepers to public office” and once in the parliament, they control the access to leadership positions in both, the assembly and the cabinet (Schleiter and Morgan-Jones 2009). Consequently, the central role of parties in the political process can, in general, be expected to increase their internal stability and programmatic development (Laver and Shepsle 1994). Furthermore, parliamentary regimes have been considered as beneficial for political consolidation through structural incentives to stabilize party competition as the mutual control exercised by the parliamentary majority and the government over each other has further reinforced party discipline (Merkel 1996, 35–36; Schleiter and Morgan-Jones 2009). Certainly, in parliamentary systems, the presidents can also influence, to a certain extent, the composition of the cabinet. The diversifying element is constituted, however, by the lack of separate presidential mandate: in other words, it can be expected that parliamentarian presidents

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<sup>7</sup> In this respect, in most of the polities which adopted a semi-presidential system of government, presidents traditionally have control over the Minister of Foreign Affairs stemming from his constitutionally prescribed competencies in this field. However, the authority is extended to the Minister of Defence due to presidential position as supreme commander of military forces as well as, to lesser extent, Interior Minister (Schleiter and Morgan-Jones, 2009).

act as arbiter or mediator in cabinet formation rather than active participants in the process pursuing distinctive political goals (Schleiter and Morgan-Jones, 2009, 670).

### **5.1.3. Analytical framework**

The essence of the analytical part of this chapter is constituted by an investigation of mechanisms linking regime types with political development and consolidation in Georgia and Moldova in a cross-temporary lens. In line with the theoretical arguments discussed in the previous section, the analysis is based on the assumption that these institutional arrangements that allow for more presidential intervention in the political process through the control and manipulation of party support will be less conducive to the emergence of stable parties and will hinder the systemic consolidation; to the contrary, regimes that require partisan discipline and responsibility for the executive support of the government will have the opposite effect.

In order to put these expectations to the test, the analytical part of this chapter is built on a number of law-like general theoretical claims advanced by the traditional neo-institutional debate, yet it puts significantly more emphasis on specific national contexts. In this respect, while fully embracing the suggestion that the institutional factors can exert an autonomous impact, the underpinning argument of the following analysis emphasizes the contingency of this relationship on country-specific circumstances. Against this backdrop, firstly I provide a qualitative account of the evolution of regime types in both countries, offered with a twofold intention: firstly, it discusses why a given form of government was adopted and by which actors; secondly, it offers a critical reflection as to the extent to which the regimes were tailor-made for the actors who crafted them by analysing their resemblance with the ideal types. Finally, I believe that the comprehension of contextual background is a crucial prerequisite for analytical accuracy.

The analytical framework guiding the empirical analysis considers two sources of the strength of presidential authority, namely the method of the election as well as the scope of powers. While the first of these elements is quite straightforward, the second requires some elaboration. Well aware of the scholarly confusion on the choice of reference point for analysing the content of presidential powers pointed out by Sartori (1994), I base my inquiry on formal (i.e. *de jure*) and material (*de facto*) prerogatives granted to presidents in Georgia and Moldova<sup>8</sup> (Duverger 1980, 178–80). Yet this choice is also dictated by the context of post-Soviet politics where “traditions of strong uni-personal leadership or the strains of an ongoing crisis [that] can lend a president more power than he would receive from the constitutional text alone” (Holmes 1993, 36). There is one additional analytical constraint posed by the constitutions of the post-Soviet regimes,

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<sup>8</sup> At this point is useful to recall that, in line with the analytical choices outlined in the Introductory remarks to this thesis, the informal presidential powers are accounted here only to a limited extent.

namely the fact that their wording is often contradictory and their provisions can be mutually exclusive (Taghiyev 2006); thus, references to material constitutions are unavoidable.

These considerations bring me to the second important point, namely to the operationalization of the extent of formal presidential powers, which, following the footprints of scholars working on similar themes, will be measured in this chapter through a scaling Index of Presidential Powers (IPP), built on existent models and based on constitutional texts of the two countries. The IPP that I propose is based on twenty-one competencies, divided into legislative and political categories, to which scores are assigned on a 0-4 scale<sup>9</sup>. The main advantage of this alternative IPP is its ability to measure the specific aspects of the post-Soviet institutional context, which the traditional indexes often fail to capture. Needless to say, analyses based on imprecise indexes may lead to equally imprecise conclusions (Stykwow 2019)<sup>10</sup>. Secondly, the proposed IPP aims at overcoming the shortcoming of composite indexes based on binary categories by assigning relative weight to each presidential prerogative and, in this way, enhance the effective strength of presidential position. Finally, although some scholars have argued that all the indices of presidential powers suffer from limited validity (Fortin 2013), I agree with Doyle and Elgie (2016) in their claim that a similar conclusion may be actually drawn for the majority of concepts coined in political science, leaving the IPP a still useful tool in gauging the role of presidents in political processes.

The analysis of the content of presidential powers serves yet another important purpose, namely to allow to trace the regime dynamics more accurately (Zaznaev 2014). After all, it may well be the case that the formal change of regime – for instance through mutation of the presidential election method – does not automatically translate into a considerate alternation of the balance of powers among the main political actors if such a change is not accompanied by the revision of presidential powers. Furthermore, by observing the changes in terms of constitutional prerogatives within the same system of government, it is possible to establish the direction of its evolution. Indeed, as pointed out by Siaroff (2003) the configuration of powers may vary, even within the semi-presidential category, which, in turn, may have a different impact on political

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<sup>9</sup> For details, see Appendix II.

<sup>10</sup> In this respect, the main flaw of most indexes is that, besides ignoring the context-specific presidential prerogatives such as emergency powers, they often assign equal scores to the powers, which, in practice, generate fundamentally different outcomes. In this respect, in his study of post-Soviet presidencies, Taghiyev (2006) provides a suggestive example of such imprecision by reporting the equal score assigned by Krouwel (2003) to the presidential right to nominate a prime minister in Azerbaijan and in Estonia: what the Krouwel's index fails to account for is that in the case of Azerbaijan it is the president who ultimately prevails over the assembly (as he can still nominate his own candidate even in the case of three consecutive rejections by the parliament) while in Estonia the exact opposite takes place - in case of the assembly's rejection of the presidential candidate, this competency shifts into the hands of the parliament.

outcomes. The case of Moldova will illustrate the first, while the Georgian experience will prove the second of these two points. Regime types in the present chapter are defined according to the classification proposed by Shugart and Carey (1992).

Finally, the constitutional rules guiding the parliamentary instruments of control, namely the confidence vote and the censure motion along with the frequency in which these tools have been applied will serve as proxies to determine how specific forms of government incentivize partisan discipline and responsibility for the executive support. Unfortunately, the unavailability of cross-temporal data regarding rollcall voting patterns renders their application impossible to the assessment of party legislative discipline. Nevertheless, I believe that the combination of the two abovementioned elements constitutes a reasonable yardstick in understanding the parliamentary strength.

## **5.2. Types of regimes**

The subsequent section offers a qualitative discussion of the evolution of regime types in Georgia and Moldova from a cross-temporal perspective by taking their first post-Soviet Constitutions as the starting point in order to provide a more comprehensive contextual background essential for better understanding the linkages between specific forms of government and political outcomes.

### **5.2.1. Georgia**

In the period of its independence from the Soviet rule Georgia has functioned under two different regime types, namely the presidentialism (1991-2003) and semi-presidentialism (from 2004)<sup>11</sup>; furthermore, a constitutional revision of 2010 introduced an important change in terms of presidential prerogatives which, *de facto*, switched the balance of powers in favour of the assembly. It can be, thus argued that, following the classification of Shugart and Carey (1992), from the 2004 thru the 2012 parliamentary elections the system of government in Georgia resembled the presidential-parliamentary type while since 2012 it has assumed the premier-presidential nature.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the 1995 Georgian Constitution introduced a presidential form of government and its exact shape resulted from a number of contextual circumstances. As a reminder, the newly installed form of government envisaged for a strong presidential executive with extensive legislative and political powers, including the almost exclusive control over the cabinet's formation and functioning<sup>12</sup>, but it also envisaged an important institutional counterbalance to his/her dominance by investing "meaningful power in parliament" (Fish 2001a, 79).

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<sup>11</sup> The most recent reform carried out in 2017 foresees the switch towards full parliamentarianism from 2023 presidential elections.

<sup>12</sup> For details see section 5.3.1.

There are two noteworthy consequences that the 1995 Constitution had on the subsequent political developments in Georgia. Firstly, it formalized a strong presidential executive in institutional terms (Jones 2012), but it also required the head of state to seek coherent and disciplined legislative support in order to perform his functions effectively. Secondly, it provided a firm ground for “hierarchical and centralized” state structure (Wheatley 2005, 108), which proved especially important for local politics. The president was granted a number of “patronage powers” such as the right to nominate officials at the regional level, which Shevardnadze promptly used to promote corrupted personalities in the local administrative structures, generating “cynicism and undermin[ing] the growth of civic activity at the local level” (Jones 1996, 342).

The initially smooth functioning of the regime facilitated by the victory of Shevardnadze and his supporting party, the CUG, in the concurrent presidential and parliamentary elections held in November 1995<sup>13</sup>, was soon disrupted by the internal divisions within the CUG along the hardliners-reformists line<sup>14</sup>. In this context, a series of legislative stalemates, including the two consecutive attempts to approve the state budget, which resulted in the cabinet’s resignation (Civil.ge 2001e), raised a wave of criticism towards the system of government. It also intensified the demands to introduce party-based government accountable to the assembly along with the restoration of premiership: while initially in favour of the reform, Shevardnadze soon repositioned himself in sustaining the presidential model and suggesting its improvement rather than altering its nature (RFE/RL 2001d).

A more substantial debate was re-launched after the April 2000 presidential elections, which unquestionably reconfirmed Shevardnadze as president with 82 percent of the vote. Shortly after that, one of the parliamentary factions presented a draft proposal based on the Finnish constitutional model endorsed by all of the opposition forces – yet, although initially supported by a substantial part of the CUG’s reformers, the project failed to gain the necessary two-thirds majority after the intervention of the president (RFE/RL 2001d)<sup>15</sup>. In spring 2001 Shevardnadze himself suggested a uniquely Georgian variant of regime, which entailed “a strong president, a strong parliament, and an authoritative government” (RFE/RL 2001d): the project included the extension of the governmental powers that should bear “broad authorities and considerable responsibilities” and the reintroduction of the premiership<sup>16</sup> along with a few important concessions to the assembly, including the introduction of censure motion (RFE/RL 2001d). Yet, as the

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<sup>13</sup> The pro-Presidential party gained 108 seats (out of 235) in the parliamentary elections. See Appendix I.

<sup>14</sup> See Chapter 3, section 3.2.

<sup>15</sup> Paradoxically, two of the most prominent representatives of the reformers, namely Zurab Zhvania and Mikheil Saakashvili, who would play decisive roles in ousting Shevardnadze from power a few years later, deemed the introduction of the party-based cabinet as premature and inappropriate at that moment (RFE/RL 2001d; 2000c).

<sup>16</sup> A post which would be assigned to one of the leaders of the reformist wing of CUG, and Parliamentary Speaker, Zurab Zhvania.

proposal would ultimately strengthen the presidential position, it was rejected by all the opposition factions united within the reformist wing of the ruling party<sup>17</sup>.

The issue of regime change continued to score high in terms of salience throughout the second presidential term of Eduard Shevardnadze. Besides politically driven debates, the issue was widely discussed among the academic and civil society circles, which seemed to agree that while the presidential form of government was certainly not flawless, the parliamentary one would be even more inadequate in the Georgian context<sup>18</sup>. However, eventually, the problem of constitutional revision did not move forward beyond intense discussions mainly due to the impossibility of attracting sufficient consensus to fulfil the requirement of the two-thirds majority, but also due to the radicalization of Shevardnadze's position who clearly stated he would no longer support any draft aimed at decreasing presidential powers (Civil.ge 2002d; 2002e).

The constitutional talks resumed right after the election of the young reformer, Mikheil Saakashvili, as the new head of state in January 2004 following the 2003 Rose Revolution in the framework of – not particularly appreciated by the opposition – rushed constitutional revision aimed at clarifying the institutional set up before the parliamentary elections to be held in March 2004 (Civil.ge 2004a). There are two crucial factors that influenced the content of the amendments. Firstly, the recently held presidential elections, which saw the overwhelming victory of Saakashvili with approximately 97 percent of the votes, definitively removed parliamentarism from the possible options (Civil.ge 2004a). Secondly, as pointed out by some Georgian scholars, the revision had to reflect the informal division of powers agreed upon by the three Rose Revolution leaders, namely Mikheil Saakashvili (head of state), Zurab Zhvania (head of government), and Nino Burjanadze (head of parliament) as well as their respective political agendas: while freshly elected president announced on various occasions that he did not intend to be “a president who has no powers”, the

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<sup>17</sup> The proposal would grant the head of state with the right to dissolve the assembly under specific circumstances such as the rejection of the Presidential candidate for three consecutive times (Par. 80, Point 5), after the failure to grant confidence to the Cabinet (Par. 811. Point 2) or after the failure to adopt the state budget prior to the beginning of the budgetary year (in this latter case the president could adopt the budget unilaterally with a decree and might dissolve the assembly; Par.812, point 6, sub-point e) (RFE/RL 2001d). The reformists from the CUG claimed that Shevardnadze's proposal would not give the government even a “minimum dose of independence” instead introducing “the worst regime type in the world”. All in all, in the words of one of the Industrialist deputies, Vakhtang Khmaladze, the reform proposed by Shevardnadze would *de facto* grant the president a status of “a constitutional monarch”. For more details see the reports by RFE/RL (2001b) and Civil.ge (2001).

<sup>18</sup> In this vein, some experts, like the then-head of the research Liberty Institute David Zurabashvili, claimed that lack of democratic traditions, programmatic political parties and responsible political elite represented important obstacles to the introduction of the parliamentary system of government in Georgia. Others, like the Constitutional Court Chairman Avtandil Demetrashvili, emphasized the fact that the introduction of a parliamentary system would require the revision of “up to 80 percent of the constitution” (Civil.ge 2001e).



parliamentary speaker claimed that she would not head a “weak parliament” unable to counterbalance the presidential position (Civil.ge 2004f)<sup>19</sup>.

Against this backdrop, and in the words of its proponents, the semi-presidential system of government of presidential-premier type was intended to establish a more viable and effective government, crucial for carrying out indispensable reforms in post-revolutionary Georgia, through a more flexible executive and a more balanced division of competencies among the various branches of power. With this aim in mind, it also envisaged concrete mechanisms to solve protracted political deadlock (Civil.ge 2004a). Nevertheless, the 2004 draft amendments *de facto* strengthened the position of the president vis-à-vis the other two branches to the point that his/her effective powers exceeded those of the head of state under the presidential system (Civil.ge 2004h). Unsurprisingly, this latter aspect generated a wave of criticism from civil society and the opposition, who considered the amendments as a “threat to democracy in Georgia”<sup>20</sup>. Nevertheless, the final draft was presented on the 4<sup>th</sup> of February and was adopted just two days later without undergoing substantial changes (Law № 3272, 2004; Civil.ge 2004g).

As anticipated earlier, despite granting the president a central role in the political process, the content of the 2004 amendment was an outcome of the informally established division of powers among the three revolutionary leaders who cooperated, quite harmoniously, under the newly established institutional structure. Indeed, it was not until the tragic death of one of them, Prime Minister Zurab Zhvania,<sup>21</sup> that the dominance of the president, further reinforced by the parliamentary majority composed of his own party became clearly visible.

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<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, besides the formal distribution of powers, the negotiations on the constitution regarded the distribution of political portfolios: Saakashvili, for instance, proposed the economic sphere to be carried out by the prime minister while the president would assume control over political issues (Civil.ge 2004a).

<sup>20</sup> The content of the 2004 constitutional amendments caused an immediate rift inside the president’s own party, the National Movement. In protest, one of its prominent members, the key legal advisor of the party and one of the closest allies of its leader, Koba Davitashvili, had warned against a “threat of dictatorship in case these amendments (were) approved” before he withdraw his party membership (Civil.ge 2004c).

<sup>21</sup> According to the official sources Zhvania’s death on 3<sup>rd</sup> February was caused by the carbon monoxide intoxication from a malfunctioning gas heater. Immediately after, several concerns were raised on alleged murder, yet the investigation by Georgian forces and FBI investigators concluded that there were “no signs of foul play” (BBC News 2005; Corso 2006). The question remains open as the family does not believe in accidental death (RFE/RL 2013a; Corso 2006). The implications of his death for the functioning of the regime will be discussed in more detail in section 4.3.2.

The most comprehensive<sup>22</sup> Constitutional revision<sup>23</sup> took place in October 2010 – with effective entry into force after the 2013 presidential elections – with an aim to introduce the premier-presidential system of government. In this vein, while the amendments were welcomed by western observers, many domestic experts claimed that the main purpose of the significant transfer of powers to the prime minister was to create conditions for Saakashvili, constitutionally prevented from seeking the third presidential mandate, to maintain power (Matusiak 2010; Jackson 2010). Yet, again, despite disposing of the required two-thirds majority, the incumbent engaged in some negotiations with the opposition – consequently the amendments were approved also with votes of the biggest opposition faction, the CDMG, which managed to extract some minor changes with regard to the premier’s prerogatives (Corso 2010a; 2010b).

The final round of constitutional amendments was initiated in 2013, after the governmental changeover, which stripped the ruling UNM of its eight-year-long incumbency in favour of the GD coalition, with a goal to introduce fully-fledged parliamentarism. In this vein, an intra-party Constitutional Commission composed of 73 members was set up in December 2013<sup>24</sup>, yet the consensus on the ultimate shape of the constitutional amendments proved to be a tortuous endeavour, especially considering that the ruling GD coalition did not dispose of the required two-thirds majority. Indeed, the main works were pursued after the 2016 parliamentary elections, in which the Georgian Dream party (GD-DG) won the constitutional majority<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>22</sup> The first clearly politically motivated constitutional amendment was adopted in December 2006 to introduce the concurrent presidential and parliamentary elections, which prolonged the parliamentary terms for over eight months. In the words of the ruling party the main reason behind such a move was the concern over ‘serious risk of Russian manipulation’ in Georgian elections (Civil.ge 2006e). In this context, despite disposing of the necessary two-thirds majority, to somehow appease the harsh criticism from the opposition the incumbents proposed a second amendment according to which the president would not preside any longer over the Justice Council responsible for overseeing the judiciary system. This, in practice, meant that the s/he would not be entitled anymore to appoint and dismiss judges. As both the projects were to be voted on in a single package, this put the opposition supporting the second, but not the first, in a difficult position. See, Law № 4133 (2006).

<sup>23</sup> Based on a draft prepared by the State Constitutional Commission set up by a presidential decree on 8 June 2009. See, Law № 3710 (2010).

<sup>24</sup> The commission included, along with national experts, a total of twenty-one lawmakers of which thirteen were from the GD parliamentary majority group, six from the UNM parliamentary minority group and two were independent MPs (Civil.ge 2013d).

<sup>25</sup> Considering that the analysis conducted in this dissertation encompasses the period until 2016, a more detailed analysis of the revision of the Georgian basic law adopted in September 2017 is beyond the scope of this study. It is, nevertheless, useful to provide a brief summary of its few key aspects pertaining to the path leading to its adoption. In this respect, the main change proposed by the ruling party was to introduce indirect presidential election through an electoral college. In the conflict over the institutional design, the opposition found a surprising ally, namely the president, Giorgi Margvelashvili, elected as a GD candidate in November 2013 who, in March 2017, launched a national campaign called “Constitution Belongs to Everyone”, calling for a more inclusive, national discussion on the shape of revision (Civil.ge 2017c). Margvelashvili, indeed, fully endorsed the thirty opposition parties in their mobilization under the nation-wide campaign ‘Protect the Constitution’ by claiming that the basic law “should serve as a unifying document, instead of accumulating the ambitions of individual

### 5.2.2. Moldova

For the last three decades of its independence from the Soviet rule, Moldova switched from parliamentarism (1990-1991) to semi-presidentialism (1991-2000), back to the parliamentary regime (2000-2016) and, since 2016, back again to semi-presidentialism. As we shall see, similar to the Georgian case, the choices regarding the institutional arrangements largely reflected the then-political context.

The discussion from Chapter 1 already sketched the context in which the 1994 Constitution was adopted as well as outlined the role of the historical-contextual factors in determining its final content, in particular, the somehow puzzling choice of the mixed, premier-presidential form of government performed by the Agrarian-dominated Assembly. Regardless of the reasons behind its adoption, the form of government, already in function during the first parliamentary term of independent Moldova (1990-1994) proved particularly prone to generate continuous executive-legislative tensions, paralyzing the functioning of state institutions. Consequently, for both directly elected Moldovan presidents, respectively Mircea Snegur (1991-1996) and Petru Lucinschi (1996-2001), the introduction of a presidential regime had become the top political priority. Neither of the two, however, could gather enough support for their revisionary projects.

Against this background, the presidential activism related to the reform of the system of government intensified from 1998 onwards following the passiveness of the cabinet in enacting measures against the deteriorating economic conditions of the country<sup>26</sup>. According to President Lucinschi, who won the presidential elections in 1996<sup>27</sup>, his pursuing the change to a presidential regime was not dictated by his “personal ambition”, but by “the general interests of society” as the then “parliamentary (sic) system” was the main source of the governmental inefficiency in solving the most pressing problems (RFE/RL 1999d). In

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politicians” clearly alluding to the accusations that the proposed changes were tailor-made to suit the ruling party (Civil.ge 2017d; 2017e). The overall assessment of the constitutional changes was judged positively by the international experts as it “completes the evolution of Georgia’s political system towards a parliamentary system” (Venice Commission 2017b). Despite the firm rejection from the opposition claiming the Georgian citizens were not in favour of indirect presidential election (Civil.ge 2017i), the final draft was adopted in September 2017 with 117 votes (Civil.ge 2017g), signed into law a month later after the rejection of the presidential veto (Civil.ge 2017h). The changes introduced by the 2017 amendment will enter into force from the 2020 parliamentary and 2023 presidential elections.

<sup>26</sup> The economic crisis that hit Russia in 1998 had disastrous repercussions for the Moldovan economy significantly tied to the Russian market. In this respect, throughout the 1990s Russia was not only the recipient of around 62 percent of total Moldovan exports, but was also its biggest gas supplier. As a result of the crisis, Moldova lost around eighty percent of its foreign-currency reserves, while the country’s insolvency provoked cuts in gas supplies from the Russian side. In sum, between 1997 and 1998 the Moldovan GDP growth fell from +1.6 to -6.5 along with a significant decrease of industrial (-11 percent) and agricultural production (-7 percent). At the same time inflation grew from 11.7 percent to 18.2 percent in 1998 while the delay in redistribution of salaries and pensions forced the parliament to adopt a law establishing payments in kind for up to 50 percent of arrears (Quinlan 2002; EECR 1999).

<sup>27</sup> See Appendix I.

particular, in his view, the unclear division of executive competencies outlined in the 1994 Constitution led to the “loose authority” of all the branches of power and should have been entirely transferred to the president (RFE/RL 1998b). The somehow unexpected resignation of the then Prime Minister, Ion Ciubuc, motivated by the impossibility to find a compromise within the coalition government, further reinforced Lucinschi’s quest in favour of a presidential regime (RFE/RL 1999a). To this end he took some more concrete steps: for instance, as the mass protests against the government were intensifying (Quinlan 2002), the president used his right of legislative initiative to propose a “bill that would permit the government to enact decrees, for a two-year period, on issues of the budget, privatization, tax policy, and social protection” that would be automatically transformed into law in case parliament did not discuss them in three days (EECR 1999).

The presidential determination found its culminating point in May 1999 when he proposed a consultative referendum on the switch to the presidential system of government (Crowther 2007). Although it was invalidated due to insufficient turnout<sup>28</sup>, the fact that around sixty percent of participating voters supported the presidential design gave Lucinschi sufficient reason to unilaterally initiate the constitutional revision in summer 1999<sup>29</sup>. However, even though according to the bill the president would have the right to nominate the prime minister, the cabinet would still be subjected to the parliamentary confidence vote, which, in practice, indicated that the changes were directed rather towards the presidential-parliamentary than to a pure presidential regime (Roper 2008b, 120).

At this point, there is one important aspect pertaining to the functioning of the regime type in Moldova that warrants emphasis, namely the role of the judiciary branch in the executive-legislative struggle. In this respect, the Constitutional Court acted as important arbiter preventing unlawful takeover of power by one of the two remaining bodies: for instance, President Lucinschi’s attempt to organize another consultative referendum on regime change was impeded by the Court, which established that it was the parliament to have the ultimate say in the matter of organizing referendums (EECR 1999; RFE/RL 2000b). Even more importantly, it confirmed the parliament’s supremacy in the process of constitutional revision as the changes proposed by the president could only be considered for further voting if “presented to parliament and endorsed by at least four of the seven justices on the Constitutional Court” (EECR 1999).

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<sup>28</sup> With just “fifty-five percent of voters taking part, the referendum was short of the 60 percent required to be considered valid” (RFE/RL 1999c).

<sup>29</sup> Including, *inter alia*, the strengthened presidential control over the cabinet, the prolongation of his\her mandate from four to five years, the right to appoint the prosecutor-general and judges as well as the prerogative to dissolve the parliament in case of legislative deadlock for over 60 days. The draft also included the decrease of the number of deputies from 101 to 71 as well as a shift to majoritarian electoral system (RFE/RL 1999e; 1999f).

By summer 2000 the conflict over the system of government reached its apex when the normally undisciplined parliament<sup>30</sup> rejected the presidential bill and adopted its own, transforming Moldova into a parliamentary republic with the majority of ninety-four deputies (out of 101; RFE/RL 2000e). The move, in words of its proponent, the PPCD deputy, Sergiu Burca, represented a parliamentary response to Lucinschi's attempt to "usurp power" (RFE/RL 2000d). Eventually, the President signed the legislature's bill into law on 27<sup>th</sup> July 2000 (Law № 1234, 2000), after having been threatened with impeachment for passiveness (Quinlan 2002).

Besides broadening the competencies of the parliament<sup>31</sup>, the most crucial element of that change affected the method of the presidential election – since then shifted to the indirect choice performed by the assembly with a three-fifths majority (equal to 61 deputies out of 101). As it will be discussed in more detail in section 5.3.1, the 2000 constitutional amendment did not entail a substantial revision of the presidential powers. In this respect, even though s/he would no longer be entitled to participate in cabinet meetings, s/he would still be elected for a fixed term and retain the right to nominate the prime minister, after consulting parliamentary factions. In this vein, in the words of some scholars, the 2000 constitutional revision introduced a sort of semi-parliamentary form of government (Mazo 2004).

The switch to parliamentarism constituted the final act of the protracted political conflict between the legislature and the executive in which the first found an unusual consensus<sup>32</sup> to defeat the 'common enemy', but certainly not to improve governability as they often claimed to justify the 2000 constitutional amendment. In fact, only a few months later the very same deputies failed for three consecutive times to gather the three-fifths majority to elect the head of state (Jamestown Foundation 2000b; 2001). Consequently, at the end of December 2000, the Constitutional Court empowered the president to dissolve the assembly (art. 78 of the basic law) and to call snap parliamentary elections, scheduled for the 25<sup>th</sup> of February 2001.

The introduction of parliamentarism coincided with the overwhelming victory of the PCRM which gained a constitutional majority (71 out of 101 mandates) in the 2001 parliamentary elections. The

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<sup>30</sup> Insubordinate deputies rarely showed voting discipline, which not only inhibited reforms, but also led to frequent suspensions of funds from international organizations, crucial for the country's economic recovery (Quinlan 2002, 97). In this context, the opposition only showed discipline on a few occasions such as voting for the bill on privatizing state-owned wine and tobacco companies, as a requirement for receiving funding from the IMF and World Bank- the earlier failure to adopt these provisions resulted in a suspension of the USD 20 million tranche (RFE/RL 2000a; 2000b).

<sup>31</sup> From then onwards the assembly would, *inter alia*, nominate "members of the Constitutional and the Supreme Courts, president of the Audit Chamber, prosecutor general as well as the top administrators of national broadcasters" (Jamestown Foundation 2000a).

<sup>32</sup> Drafted by a deputy from the right-wing PPCD, they gathered support of the forces from across all of the political spectrum, including the clearly left-wing PCRM, the votes of which were crucial in gathering the required two-thirds majority.

implications of this outcome will be discussed at length in section 6.3.2, yet it is useful to anticipate here that none of the components of the former ruling coalition<sup>33</sup>, which also voted in favour of constitutional revision, managed to gain representation in the newly elected assembly. In other words, as eloquently summarized by Quinlan “(A)fter almost a dozen years of government by coalitions, alliances, factions, and squabbling, often corrupt, highly ambitious politicians, the majority of voters opted for a major housecleaning that resulted in a return to one-party rule” (2002, 100). Consequently, the institutional structure set by the 2000 constitutional revision allowed for a significant concentration of power in the hands of a single party provided it managed to obtain enough mandates to elect the head of state who, in turn, proved to be “more powerful in a parliamentary regime than previous presidents were in a semi-presidential regime” (L. March 2005).

Somehow surprisingly, the PCRM domination – especially between 2001 and 2005 when it disposed of the constitutional majority – did not translate into any attempt to revise the basic law regarding the system of government. Indeed, it was not until almost a decade later that the issue returned to the mainstream political debate – the main reason for that being its dysfunctionality in terms of the method of presidential elections. In this vein, as soon as the PCRM lost its monopoly of power following the April 2009 parliamentary elections, the three-fifths majority required for a successful presidential election proved to be an insurmountable hurdle for the mainstream Moldovan parties.

Therefore, unsurprisingly, the ruling coalition (Alliance for European Integration, AIE) that emerged after the July 2009 snap parliamentary elections<sup>34</sup>, attempted to solve the problem through a popular referendum (Moldova Liberă 2010b), also in front of the citizens’ dissatisfaction with the increasing political instability in the country<sup>35</sup>. At the same time, even though three out of four respondents supported the idea of the reintroduction of the direct election of the president, the referendum on this issue organized by the AEI coalition in September 2010 was declared invalid due to insufficient turnout (33 percent against the 60 percent required, Moldova Liberă 2010b).

The abovementioned institutional drawback was addressed by the Constitutional Court only in 2016, following a motion filed by a group of eighteen parliamentarians – according to its ruling, the 2000 amendments were adopted in violation of procedural rules, thus, they were deemed unconstitutional (Constitutional Court of Moldova 2016). The decision was motivated by the fact that the bill eventually adopted by the Parliament in 2000 contained several significant changes in comparison with the one opinionated by the Court as part of the legislative process. More specifically, without the Court’s approval,

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<sup>33</sup> Namely, the Democratic Party (former Bloc for a Democratic and Prosperous Moldova), PDF and the PCRM.

<sup>34</sup> Held precisely due to the consecutive failures of the parliament to elect the president.

<sup>35</sup> An opinion poll conducted by an independent Moldovan think tank in December 2008 revealed that around 56 percent of respondents were unhappy with holding repetitive parliamentary elections (Moldova Liberă 2009e).

the assembly increased the majority requirement (from a simple majority to three-fifths) as well as added the provision on the legislature's dissolution in case of three consecutive failures to elect the president. The 2016 decision also contained a number of conclusions pertaining to the dysfunctionality of the entire method of presidential election (art.78) – not only did the amendment “allow, but also required repeated dissolution of Parliament if it proves to be incapable of electing the President of the country”, which in practice meant that the assembly could be “dissolved for the same reason for an indefinite number of times”<sup>36</sup>.

The decision of the Constitutional Court, although based on a certain logical rationale, was not well received among the opposition and national expert community – firstly and foremostly, for its perception as yet another instrument in an attempt to monopolize power by Vlad Plahotniuc, leader of the PDM party<sup>37</sup>. Observers have also emphasized the fact that, despite the general popular support for direct presidential election, its re-introduction bears significant consequences and, thus, it was not the Court's role to take the decision of such an important political weight (Moldova Liberă 2016d; All-Moldova 2017).

### **5.3. Political consequences of the system of government**

The discussion conducted in section 4.2 has revealed that in most cases the lawmakers were not entirely free from external pressures when making their constitutional choices nor have their designs always produced the expected outcomes. Having this in mind, the following section constitutes the core analytical part of the present chapter as it aims at unveiling the relationship between the regime types, and the development and consolidation of political outcomes in Georgia and Moldova.

#### **5.3.1. Sources of power**

In line with the analytical framework outlined in section 4.1.3., the first step preceding the analysis is to establish the sources of legislative and partisan competencies of the two actors.

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<sup>36</sup> The Court has noted that the procedure on the assembly's dissolution as outlined by the revised art.78 was conceived as an exceptional measure, but instead it was enacted with frequency typical of ordinary mechanisms: indeed, in the period between 2009 and 2016 Moldova held three snap elections two of which were organized just between 2009 and 2010, following the failure to elect the head of state. Furthermore, the Court has also pointed out that in the period between 2009-2012, the interim president was in office for a period which almost equalled that of the regular presidential mandate (respectively, three and a half years, and four years), which constituted a clear violation of the basic principle for which the interim presidency was introduced, namely to allow the institutional continuity for a maximum of two months, awaiting the standard electoral procedure to be completed.

<sup>37</sup> In this respect, despite the appeal to the Constitutional Court, eighteen opposition candidates from the Liberal-Democratic Party (PLDM) presented themselves, and several observers have concluded that Plahotniuc could have acted as its main initiator and supporter for a number of political reasons. This claim assumes particular importance given the fact that Plahotniuc had successfully managed to gain control over the Constitutional Court, along with several other state institutions, in the most recent years (Moldova Liberă 2016e).

### *Presidential elections*

The President has been directly elected in Georgia for the entire period under examination in this dissertation<sup>38</sup> according to the absolute, double-majority majority system, with a plurality-based run-off between the two best-placed candidates if none of the competitors obtains the majority of votes in the first ballot<sup>39</sup>. According to the Georgian Electoral Code the “right to nominate a candidate for the presidency is vested in a political party or an initiative group whose initiative is confirmed by the signatures of no less than 0.75 percent of the total number of Georgian electorate” (EC, art.97.2)<sup>40</sup>.

As mentioned in the previous sections, in Moldova the method of the presidential election underwent a radical change following the 2016 ruling of the Constitutional Court. Consequently, since 2016 (and between 1991 and 2000), the president of the Republic of Moldova is directly elected for a fixed mandate of four years in the run-off majority contest with a second-round organized between the two best-placed candidates in case none of the competitors obtains at least half of the votes of the participating electorate. The candidate gaining the largest number of votes from participating electors in the second ballot wins the contest. The right to propose candidates is reserved for “parties and other socio-political organizations officially registered” or by the citizens’ initiative supported by at least 20 thousand signatures from one-third of districts and municipalities<sup>41</sup>.

The revision carried out by the Moldovan parliament in 2000 introduced the indirect elections of the president chosen among candidates proposed by at least fifteen MPs according to the secret parliamentary ballot<sup>42</sup>. To be selected, the candidate needed to garner the support of a three-fifths majority of the elected deputies. If this was not possible, a run-off round was foreseen among the two best-placed candidates and, if neither managed to gain the required three-fifths majority, the same majority was requested during the third, final round. Failure to gain a consensus during the voting would result in the Assembly’s dissolution (yet no more than once a year) and the snap parliamentary elections (RFE/RL 2000e)<sup>43</sup>.

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<sup>38</sup> The amendment introduced in 2006 fixed a stable date for presidential elections for October of the year in which the presidential mandate expires. Following the 2017 Constitutional amendment, the president will be elected by the parliament from 2023. For detail see section 5.2.1.

<sup>39</sup> To be held two weeks after the first round. Furthermore, until 2004 there was a turnout threshold set for both rounds of presidential elections: to win in the first round, the candidate must have obtained a plurality of valid votes of at least 20 percent of total registered voters, while the elections were considered valid with the participation of at least half of the registered voters in the first ballot and at least one-third in the second ballot (art.70, 1995).

<sup>40</sup> Until 2004 the requirement was of fifty thousand electors as stated by art.70.3 of the Constitution of Georgia.

<sup>41</sup> For 1996 presidential elections see Law № 833 (1996).

<sup>42</sup> For 1990 presidential elections, see Law № 250 (1990).

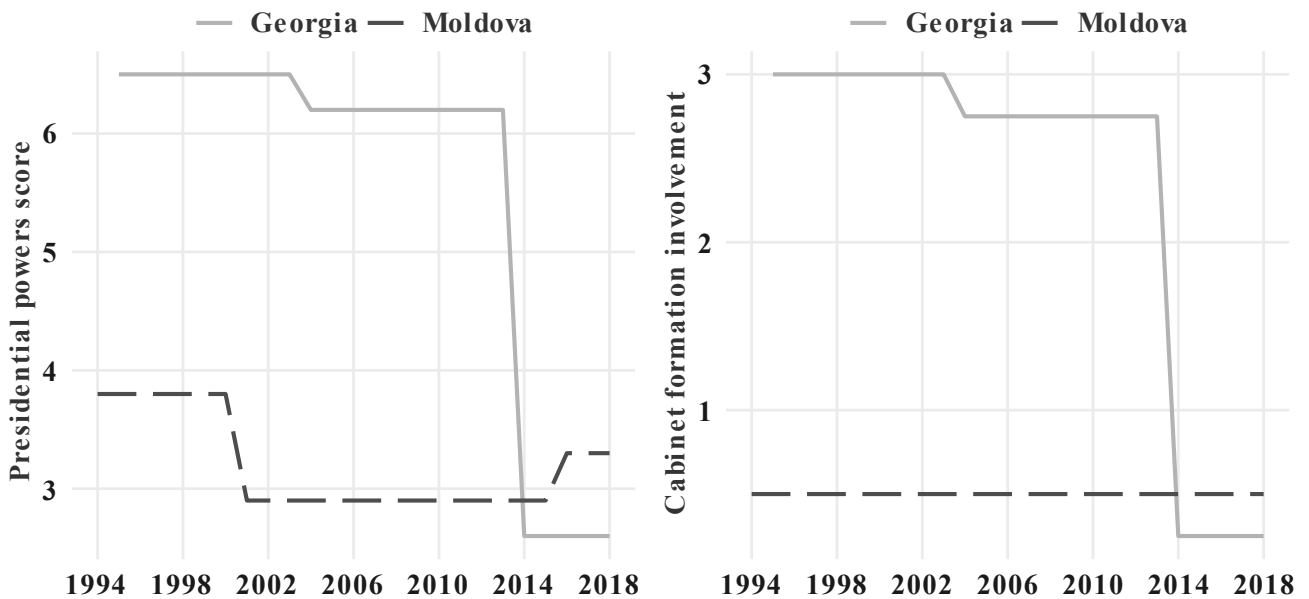
<sup>43</sup> 2000 Constitution of Moldova, art. 78.5.



### Constitutional powers

Regarding the second source of strength, namely the constitutionally granted prerogatives, figure 5.1 depicts the aggregated IPP score of political powers (legislative and pertaining to cabinet formation)<sup>44</sup> as set out by the Georgian and Moldovan Constitutions in a cross-temporal perspective. The respective regime changes discussed in the previous sections of this chapter are marked along the *x*-ax.

**Figure 5.1 Presidential political powers in Georgia and Moldova (1994-2016)**



Source: own elaboration based on weighted IPP scores

The first immediate finding that follows from figure 5.1 is that until the 2013 regime change (adopted in 2010), the Georgian president was clearly more powerful in terms of his/her ability to intervene in the political process than the Moldovan one. This, certainly, is hardly surprising, considering that in that period Georgia functioned under the president-dominated system of government in contrast with the Moldovan, parliament-dominated experience.

Regarding the individual experiences of each country, figure 5.1 shows that despite the 2004 change of regime from presidential to the mixed one in Georgia the content of the presidential political prerogatives remained almost untouched. Furthermore, the graph clearly illustrates the extent of changes introduced by the 2010 constitutional revision in terms of reducing the presidential role in the political process to the point that the still directly elected Georgian president became weaker than his/her – also directly elected – Moldovan counterpart. At the same time, the line depicting the extent of political powers of the latter confirms

<sup>44</sup> For more details on IPP data and measurement, see Appendix II.

that the 2016 re-introduction of popular presidential election in Moldova was not accompanied by an increase in terms of his/her prerogatives: in other words, since 2016 the directly elected Moldovan head of state has at his/her disposal practically the same formal means to influence the political outcomes as the indirectly elected one between 2000 and 2016.

The right side of figure 5.1 depicting the presidential powers related to cabinet formation provides a somehow clearer picture regarding the position of the president within a broader political structure. I expect that this domain grants presidents precisely with the largest institutional leverage to intervene in the political process and a careful look at the right side of figure 5.1 immediately shows the conspicuous difference between the Georgian and the Moldovan presidents in this regard. While the Georgian case is somehow straightforward in the sense that the reduction of general political powers is followed by the same reduction in terms of his formal role in cabinet formation, the Moldovan experience reveals an interesting trend – regardless of the method of presidential election, the Moldovan head of state appears to have had the same formal role in cabinet formation. This is particularly important in the context of analysing the role of the direct presidential election in determining his/her political position.

Against this backdrop, there are a few crucial aspects that are worthy of note. Beginning with the Georgian case, figure 5.1 shows that, unsurprisingly, under the presidential system of government, the head of state disposed of the largest formal political authority. In this respect, s/he was the sole responsible for carrying out the executive functions (1995, art.69.1) and had an almost exclusive control over the formation and functioning of the government: s/he disposed of the right to appoint prime minister (1995, art. 73.1b) with the consent of the parliament and dismiss ministers without it (1995, art. 73.1c). The 1995 Constitution did not foresee a premier, but a state minister<sup>45</sup> – a sort of ‘ministerial co-coordinator’ (not equivalent to premier) and responsible only to the president (1995, artt.79 & 81) (Wheatley 2005, 94).

Besides that, the president disposed of a large package of legislative powers, including the right to “abrogate acts of bodies of the executive branch accountable to him/her” (1995, art.73.3), the right to veto and amend the legislative bills approved by the assembly (1995, art.68), which could be overturn by the parliament with the three-fifths majority of elected MPs (or two-thirds in case of constitutional amendments)<sup>46</sup> as well as the exclusive right to authorise the cabinet to present state budget for parliamentary approval (1995, art.73.1e). The right of legislative initiative (1995, art. 67) accompanied by the provision according to which

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<sup>45</sup> The position of state minister was introduced at the suggestion of Shevardnadze who, perhaps well aware of the extensive powers granted to him by the constitution, claimed not to be able to coordinate efficiently all the aspects of Georgian politics (Wheatley 2005).

<sup>46</sup> As established by the Law on Normative Acts (1996) no amendments could be done to the Presidential remarks on legislative bills.

the presidential bills could be considered outside the standard legislative procedure not only constituted a deviation from the American model but also equipped Georgian president with an additional tool to intervene in the political process. In sum, the president, responsible for exercising a domestic and foreign policy of the state (1995, art.69.2), was the centre of day-to-day decision-making (Jones 2012).

The 2004 constitutional revision, along with its subsequent minor amendments, formally aimed at introducing more balance to the executive-legislative relations by establishing the premiership and increasing the control of the parliament over the cabinet. Yet as evidenced by figure 4.1 the reduction of the presidential role in the political process was rather minor. Indeed, the 2004 amendments maintained most of the previous powers and upheld the presidential capacity to intervene in the political decision-making by conferring him/her with “with quasi-judicial functions” (Venice Commission 2004b). Furthermore, even though the right to the legislative initiative was formally reduced to exclusive cases, the vague constitutional wording meant that, in practice, any issue could be defined as “exclusive” (Nakashidze 2016). Finally, the presidential drafts could take priority in the parliamentary discussions upon his request (2004, art.67.2).

In this vein, even though following the 2004 amendments the executive power became formally divided between the president and the cabinet led by the newly introduced premier, the constitutional wording was relatively clear in outlining the institutional hierarchy in favour of the president: art. 73.1 granted him/her the right to appoint the premier, after the consultations with parliamentary factions (2004, art.80.2) – which nevertheless, was rather a formality (Nakashidze 2016) – and to give consent to appoint members of the cabinet (2004, art.73.1b). In addition, the president had the right to dismiss the cabinet on his/her own initiative and had exclusive control over the ministers of power, i.e. the ministers of internal affairs and defence (2004, art.73.1c)<sup>47</sup> as well as, since 2008, the minister of justice<sup>48</sup>.

After 2004, the position of the parliament towards the president was not only not strengthened, but, in the words of many national experts, even weakened, following the amendment granting him/her the right to dissolve the assembly<sup>49</sup>. Furthermore, if from 2004 the parliament shared the responsibility for control of the cabinet with the president through the confirmation vote and newly introduced motion of non-confidence, the rules governing the concrete application of these instruments still left a significant margin for presidential manoeuvre. More specifically, the non-confidence vote towards the cabinet, adopted by the majority of

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<sup>47</sup> Until 2005 also State Security which merged into Ministry of Internal Affairs. See, Law № 2494 (2005).

<sup>48</sup> Considering that that the same 2008 amendment fused the Ministry of Justice with the General Prosecutor’s Office, the control over the minister of justice gave the president a considerate amount of power over that sector (Civil.ge 2008h).

<sup>49</sup> For instance, in case of parliamentary rejection of the budget, the president was entitled to approve the budget through a decree (2004, art.93.3) as well as to revoke the cabinet or dissolve the assembly (2004, art.93.6).

elected MPs, could be rejected by the president (2004, art.81.1); only in case of the successfully repeated procedure between 90 and 100 days, the head of state was obliged to dismiss the cabinet or dissolve the assembly (Civil.ge 2004g). The fact that the president was not obliged to revoke censured cabinet without further delay, along with time constraints and the risk of the assembly of being dissolved, certainly left a large space for manipulating party support. Finally, even though the parliament did dispose of the right to move an unconditioned vote of no confidence, the three-fifths majority requirement (2004, art.81.3) constituted quite a significant hurdle for its effective use.

Likewise, the constitutional provision protected the presidential interests in the cabinet formation even in the lack of the confirmation vote<sup>50</sup>: after three unsuccessful attempts of receiving parliamentary confirmation, the president could appoint the prime minister of his/her choice (including the candidate who did not obtain parliamentary consent) and dissolve the assembly (2004, art. 80.5). The crucial aspect of this procedure lay in the fact that the cabinet was required to resign only after the presidential elections, and not after the parliamentary ones, as the semi-presidentialism would suggest. This, in practice, meant that the presidential government could remain in place without the legitimacy stemming from the parliamentary confidence<sup>51</sup>.

The 2010 amendments (in force since 2013), significantly reduced the presidential ability to manipulate the political outcomes through a number of substantial changes (Matusiak 2010; Civil.ge 2010a)<sup>52</sup>. Firstly, and foremostly, the role of the head of state in cabinet formation is now very limited as reflected by the constitutional wording specifically stating that the PM is appointed on the indication of “the electoral subject having the best results in parliamentary elections” (art.80.2, 2010). Furthermore, the responsibility of the cabinet formation and coordination has been transferred to the premier – crucially, the president is no longer conferred with the right to dismiss the government on his/her own initiative. By the same token, the

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<sup>50</sup> The confirmation vote to the new Cabinet was required either after the presidential elections or after the reshuffle of one-third of ministers during the legislative term.

<sup>51</sup> An amendment on establishing the right of the assembly to express confidence vote after the parliamentary election was only endorsed by the 2010 revision and became effective only in 2013 (Civil.ge 2008h; Venice Commission 2009).

<sup>52</sup> The position of the president has also been weakened by reducing his/her legislative prerogatives, even though s/he still maintains the right to important nominations such as the three constitutional judges (out of 9, art. 88.2). More concretely, the head of state lost his/her role in budgetary matters (art.93, 2010) and has no longer the right to legislative nor referendum initiative. Furthermore, besides being no longer entitled to suspend nor abrogate the legislative bills of executive bodies, art.73 introduced the counter-signature of prime minister for presidential acts while the majority required for the overruling of presidential veto decreased from three-fifths to the majority of the full list of MPs and three-quarter for constitutional amendments (art.68.4, 2010).

presidential role in the political process has been restraint as the cabinet is now the supreme organ of the executive branch exercising the domestic and foreign policy of the State<sup>53</sup>.

Finally, the revised Georgian constitution explicitly establishes the accountability of the cabinet exclusively towards the assembly as reflected by the modified procedure of granting the confirmation vote to the government (art.80, 2010)<sup>54</sup>. At the same time, however, the complex method of enacting the constructive motion of censure (art.81, 2010) runs somehow counter to the general inclination of the constitutional amendments towards strengthening the parliament at the expense of the president. More precisely, the three separate votes and the possibility for the president to reject the candidate for premier approved by the parliament generated a significant amount of concerns from both, national and international experts<sup>55</sup> (Civil.ge 2010b; Venice Commission 2010).

As depicted by figure 5.1 the content of the presidential prerogatives in Moldova underwent more limited modifications than in the Georgian case. The second glaring difference is that the Georgian constitutional wording is significantly more detailed than the Moldovan one when it comes to delineating the sphere of competencies of the three branches of powers, which renders the two quite different in terms of the extent of interpretative leeway in case of institutional conflicts.

Turning back to the main discussion, the examination of the content of the 1994 Constitution reveals its premier-presidential nature. In this respect, for the entire period under examination, the president's role in cabinet formation has formally been limited to the nomination of the prime minister – until 2000 following consultations with the parliamentary majority (1994, art.82; art.98), and since then, after consulting parliamentary factions (2016, art.98). Furthermore, the head of state has been entitled to designate individual ministers only on request of the PM (art.82, 1994). Consequently, in constitutional terms, once the parliamentary confidence vote is granted to the cabinet, it is by no means accountable to the president, nor

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<sup>53</sup> Although, the final version of the 2010 constitutional amendments did not include many of the initially envisaged provisions, which would allow for presidential interference with the work of the cabinet, a certain degree of confusion is provoked by the unclear division of competencies in the field of foreign relations. As it will be discussed in section 4.3.2 this has a high potential for generating intra-executive institutional conflicts.

<sup>54</sup> After the failure of two consecutive attempts to grant the confidence with the majority of elected MPs, a candidate “proposed by at least two fifths of the full list of MPs” is nominated by the president, and only when this proves unsuccessful, s/he can dissolve the parliament and schedule snap elections.

<sup>55</sup> Since 2013, parliament is entitled to present a confidence motion on a proposal of at least two-fifths and supported by the majority of elected deputies only provided that an alternative candidate for premiership is presented (also by at least two-fifths of elected deputies with the support of a majority of elected deputies in the case of presidential acceptance of the candidate). Nevertheless, the president can refuse to accept the assembly nominee and his/her veto can only be overruled by the three-fifths majority: this seems to be an elevated requirement (90 MPs), considering that presidential veto on regular bills can be overruled with absolute majority (76 MPs).

does s/he bear any political responsibility for the cabinet's functions<sup>56</sup>. Nevertheless, the Constitution does allow the president to reject – only once and for sufficiently serious reasons – the candidate for the position of a cabinet member, including prime minister (art.98, 4-6)<sup>57</sup>. Furthermore, until 2000, s/he was entitled to participate and chair governmental meetings as well as consult the government “on urgent matters of particular importance” (1994, art.83) while the premier was required to “inform the president on matters of particular importance for the country” (1994, art.101).

While the position of the president towards the executive is formally relatively confined and had been so also under the parliamentary-presidential system, the Moldovan head of state still disposes of an important disciplinary measure towards the assembly, namely the dissolution of the parliament. This right can be enacted after the second failed attempt of government formation, after the third failed attempt to elect the head of state (between 2000-2016) or in case of an over three-month-long legislative deadlock, even though its use still required the consultation with parliamentary factions (art.85) and is limited in frequency<sup>58</sup>.

The 1994 Constitution conferred to the president some legislative powers, which have remained untouched by the subsequent revisions. More concretely, the head of state is entitled to the legislative initiative, including constitutional amendments (art.73), right to call a referendum (art.88.f) as well as to issue decrees within his/her sphere of competencies which, however, requires the counter-signature of the PM (art.94.2). Furthermore, the president has the right to pose a suspensory legislative veto (art. 93) – only once with reference to concrete law – which can be overruled by the parliament according to the regular voting procedures<sup>59</sup>. The main difference introduced by the 2000 amendment concerning presidential powers was the abrogation of the presidential right to nominate Constitutional Court judges (art. 136, sec. 2), which was not re-introduced following the switch to direct presidential elections in 2016.

Against this background, the Moldovan legislature has at its disposal a few important mechanisms of control, which places it at least on an equal, if not superior, position within the institutional structure with respect to the executive. Firstly, the lack of a clearly defined sphere of competencies under the premier-presidential regime type (1994-2000) “required consensus-building between the executive and the legislative

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<sup>56</sup> For details see, Constitutional Court of Moldova (1999).

<sup>57</sup> In case the presidential objection is rejected by the prime minister or the parliamentary majority which may indicate the same candidature for the second time, the role of the president in the process extinguishes as s/he is obliged to accept the proposed candidate. See, Constitutional Court of Moldova (2017).

<sup>58</sup> According to the Moldovan Constitution the parliament cannot be dissolved more than once in a calendar year (art.85.3) nor “during the last 6 months of the mandate of the President of the Republic of Moldova, nor during the state of emergency, siege or war” (art.85.4).

<sup>59</sup> Respectively: two-thirds majority of elected MPs for constitutional laws, majority of elected MPs for organic laws and majority of present MPs for ordinary laws, decisions and other acts. See Art.87(75) amended by the Law № 430 (2006) and art.74 of the Moldovan Constitution.

branch” and prevented the president from dominating the political process (Roper 2008b, 118). Secondly, the assembly is the only body to control the cabinet through confirmation vote – with most elected deputies (1994, art. 98) – and the no-confidence vote, initiated by at least one-quarter and adopted by the simple majority of elected deputies. Unlike in the Georgian case, a successful no-confidence vote results in the resignation, within three days, of the prime minister and the entire cabinet<sup>60</sup>. Finally, it can also censure the head of state through impeachment, even though the procedure differed depending on the method of the presidential election<sup>61</sup>.

To conclude, this brief sketch suggests that the institutional structure in Georgia has been, at least until the changes enforced by the 2013 presidential election, significantly more favourable for presidential intervention in the political process than the Moldovan one. Furthermore, the within-country variation in terms of formal powers of respective actors, namely the presidents and the political parties, hints at the probability that the institutional arrangements within the same system of government (in particular, the semi-presidential one) may generate diverse political outcomes. Bearing this in mind, the following section will attempt to trace mechanisms linking the specific form of governments with political development and consolidation over time in both countries.

### **5.3.2. The executive-legislative relations**

Scholars have for long argued that the exact functioning of different forms of government depends on specific political configurations surrounding them. But is the inverse relationship possible? And if so, how exactly does the institutional structure, defined by specific regime type, shape the political outcomes?

As a first step in seeking to answer this puzzle, figure 5.2 depicts the cross-temporal relationship between the regime change, marked by the interrupted lines, and party system evolution, expressed by the variation in Effective Number of Electoral Parties (ENEP) in both countries<sup>62</sup>.

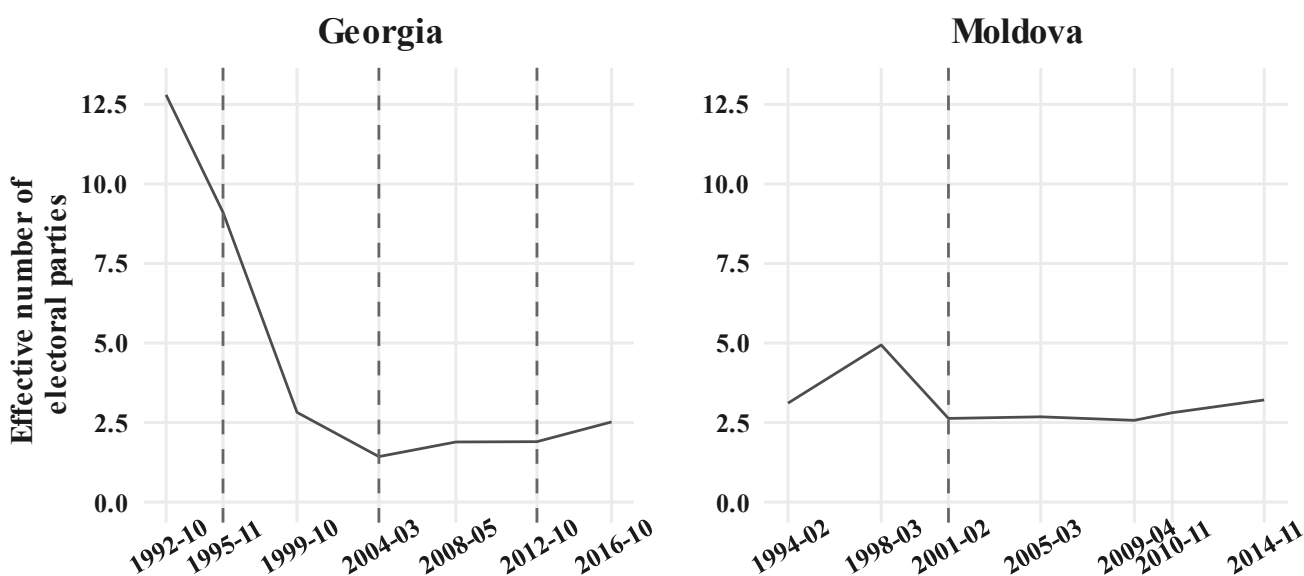
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<sup>60</sup> A rejection of the censure motion means that its proponents cannot represent another motion on the same ground within the same session. See, article 106 of the Constitution as well as the artt.116-118 (Regulation № 797-XIII, 1996).

<sup>61</sup> The directly elected president can be suspended from the office following a motion of one-third and confirmation of two-thirds of elected MPs, and eventually dismissed from the office through a popular referendum to be called within 30 days from the entering into force of suspension motion; the indirectly elected president could be dismissed through impeachment procedure based on the same voting procedure (art.89).

<sup>62</sup> Considering that, in line with the theoretical arguments, the regime type is believed to provide specific incentives for parties to participate in elections, the ENEP, expressed in terms of vote share, seems to be the most appropriate indicator to measure such an effect. Contrariwise, the ENPP, expressed in terms of seat share, will be a product of electoral system as discussed in Chapter 6 (Casal Bértoa 2011).

**Figure 5.2 Regime change and the effective number of electoral parties in Georgia and Moldova (1992-2016)**



Source: own elaboration

At first, it suggests a rather clear correlation between the regime change and the variation of the ENEP, particularly visible in the Georgian case – more specifically, under the presidential regime the legislative party system appears significantly more pluralistic than under the presidential-premier one; furthermore, the fragmentation slightly increased following the switch to premier-presidential form of government. Yet, considering the previously discussed political context of the constitutional revisions leading to regime changes in both countries, one must be careful with drawing premature, deterministic conclusions about the causality of such a relationship.

More specifically, the cross-temporal discussion on regime type in Georgia conducted in section 5.2.1 of this chapter revealed that the switch from a presidential to a semi-presidential form of government took place following mass protests against the rigged parliamentary elections held in November 2003<sup>63</sup>: the most immediate outcome of the so-called Rose Revolution was the ousting from power of President Shevardnadze and the disintegration of his party, the CUG (as well as that of regional leader, Abashidze and his Union of Democratic Revival).

<sup>63</sup> The annulled elections of 2003 are not included in figure 4.2 due to lack of data useful for calculating the ENEP. However, twenty-two electoral subjects contested the elections and six cleared the threshold of 7 percent. Thus, it may be assumed that the ENEP, even though lower than in 1999, was nevertheless relatively high - according to approximate calculations it would be higher than 7 (Civil.ge 2003j).



In this context, the effect of the regime change, approved by the outgoing assembly in February 2004, certainly could not fully manifest itself in such a short time span. In fact, the reduction of the number of parties in 2004 has been ascribed to two major factors, unrelated to the form of government: firstly, the excessively high electoral threshold set at 7 percent for the March parliamentary elections constituted a significant entry barrier for smaller formations which, given the short distance between the two electoral contests<sup>64</sup>, did not have sufficient time to re-think their electoral strategies. Secondly, the opposition parties, besides lacking funds for effective campaigning, were rather unpopular among citizens given their distancing from the revolutionary movement (Civil.ge 2004j). All this acted in favour of the revolutionary leaders who, united in one bloc (the National Movement – Democrats), gained 68 percent of votes<sup>65</sup>. What can, however, be observed is that the reduction of the ENEP following the regime change in 2004 has remained relatively stable in time and this, indeed, may suggest a certain correlation between the two.

In a similar vein, as anticipated in section 5.2.2, the change of regime enacted in 2000 in Moldova coincided with a significant reconfiguration of its political scene, which is reflected by the reduced fragmentation: following the snap 2001 parliamentary elections only three electoral subjects obtained seats, namely PCRM with constitutional majority, PPCD and Braghîş Alliance. Yet such an outcome can hardly be attributed to the regime change – instead, it was mostly dictated by the increased electoral barrier<sup>66</sup> as well as the mass popular dissatisfaction with the incumbent political elite, ineffective in reforming the country plunged by a severe economic crisis<sup>67</sup>. However, there seems to be a scholarly agreement in claiming that the switch towards parliamentarism had a reductive impact on political pluralism in the country (Casal Bértoa 2012; Crowther and Roper 1996; Mazo 2004; Roper 2008a; Way 2002). Figure 5.2 seems to corroborate such a claim, but only to a certain extent: the most recent parliamentary elections held in 2014 had a multiplying impact without being accompanied by any regime change. This observation suggests that stabilization of the political competition in Moldova may have been caused by factors exogenous to regime type.

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<sup>64</sup> The date was initially set for 25<sup>th</sup> of January by the CEC which, according to the constitution was obliged to set a new date within two months (Civil.ge 2003l).

<sup>65</sup> Only one other bloc, the Rightists Opposition composed of New Rights and Industry Will Save Georgia, managed to clear the threshold with 7.8 percent. For detailed electoral results, see Appendix I.

<sup>66</sup> The electoral threshold was increased from 4 to 6 percent just before the elections: should it have been maintained at the same level, two other formations would enter the parliament, which, in turn, would significantly diminish the dominance of the PCRM party. For more details see Chapter 6.

<sup>67</sup> The extent of popular dissatisfaction is reflected by the opinion polls conducted in Moldova right before the 2001 parliamentary elections. For instance, approximately three weeks before the contest a poll revealed that the PCRM would obtain 48.2 percent of votes, followed by Braghîş Alliance (15.3), PCRM with 9.2 and the PPCD with 6 percent (RFE/RL 2001a).

Having in mind these considerations the following part of the chapter provides a more fine-grained analysis of the extent to which the form of government affected political development and consolidation in both countries over time.

### **5.3.2.1. Georgia**

The first step on this path, consistent with the analytical suggestions deriving from empirical studies on similar themes, is constituted by a closer look at the possible consequences of direct presidential elections on the party and party systems development. Table 4.1 provides the scores of, respectively, the ENEP and the Effective Number of Presidential Candidates (ENPC)<sup>68</sup> as well as of the difference between the first two candidates. The idea here is to investigate whether – through a possible relationship between these indicators – it is possible to determine the deflationary/inflationary effect of the presidential contest on a party system. The difference in terms of votes between the two best-placed candidates will provide an indication of the structure of the presidential competition.

A careful look at data displayed in table 5.1 suggests no such link: between 1995 and 2000 the low ENPC score coexisted with the relatively high ENEP which only diminished following the 2004 elections. Furthermore, only between 2008 and 2013, there seems to be more proximity between the two indicators, yet the 2016 parliamentary elections again mark an increase in terms of the ENEP. However, although no clear relationship can be established between the two, if controlled for regime type (marked with the bold lines), table 5.1, still offers interesting insights, which merit further investigation. More exactly, as displayed in the last row the first three presidential elections (respectively, in 1995, 2000 and, particularly, those in 2004) had a rather plebiscitary nature while in the most recent two (held in 2008 and in 2013) the number of the electoral candidates increased, even if modestly.

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<sup>68</sup> Calculated based on formula as in M. P. Jones (1999, 175), i.e.  $N = 1 / \text{the sum of the squared vote share of every candidate in the first or only round of the presidential election.}$

**Table 5.1 ENEP and ENPC in Georgia (1995-2016)**

Georgia	Electoral year							
	<i>1995</i>	<i>1999</i>	<i>2000</i>	<i>2004</i>	<i>2008</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2016</i>
<b>ENEP</b>	12.68	11.47		2.15	2.52	2.15		3.17
<b>ENPC</b>	1.58		1.42	1.05	2.63		2.25	
<b>Difference between the first two candidates (% votes)</b>	54.9		64.9	94.1	28.4		40.4	

Note: Concurrent parliamentary and presidential elections are indicated in italic while the regime changes with the bold line. The elections held prior to the adoption of the 1995 Constitutions (i.e. the 1991 presidential and the 1992 parliamentary contest) are not included in the table; Source: own calculations

As discussed in Chapter 1, the first presidential election held in 1991 in which the opposition leader, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, obtained 87.6 percent, preceded by the victory of his Round Table-Free Georgia with 155 mandates (out of 235) a year earlier, initiated a long sequence of elections generating a strong executives supported by equally strong parliamentary majorities. In this context, the second presidential contest held in November 1995, simultaneously with the parliamentary one, resulted in the victory of Shevardnadze and his supporting CUG party. As indicated by the last row of table 4.1, the distance between him and the second-placed candidate was quite pronounced<sup>69</sup>. The 2000 presidential elections did not substantially change this pattern – following the parliamentary elections held a few months earlier won by the presidential CUG (44.5 percent), Shevardnadze was reconfirmed at his post with 82 percent of votes against six other candidates with Jumber Patiashvili placed second (17.1 percent) and the remaining four not crossing 1 percent.

The 2004 presidential elections saw the victory of one of the Rose Revolution leaders, Mikheil Saakashvili, with 96 percent of votes and his supporting coalition with 67.75 (Civil.ge 2003m; 2003k), but the 2008 snap presidential elections called by the incumbent president in response to anti-governmental protests<sup>70</sup> evidenced some signs of incumbency fatigue from Saakashvili’s part. Indeed, as depicted by the

<sup>69</sup> Among the other five candidates, only Jumber Patiashvili – former first secretary of the 12<sup>th</sup> Central Committee of the Georgian SSR Communist Party between 1985 and 1989 – who ran on an independent ticket obtained a surprisingly good result of 20.1 percent while the remaining four did not even reach 2 percent.

<sup>70</sup> Protests against the alleged abuse of power and corruption of the Saakashvili government organized by the opposition was dispersed by force after “tear gas, rubber bullets and water cannons were used against thousands of protesters” (BBC News 2007). As a response, Saakashvili introduced a state emergency and called snap presidential elections which he considered a sort of confirmation vote for his actions (Civil.ge 2007c; 2007d; 2007e).

table 4.1 in 2008 the ENPC more than doubled with respect to 2004. Although Saakashvili eventually won with 54.7 percent the distance between him and other competitors diminished: the second candidate Levan Gachechiladze, proposed by the opposition coalition National Council, obtained 26.3 percent of votes (Civil.ge 2007g).

The 2013 presidential elections were held in different circumstances: firstly, changeover of power took place a year earlier with the victory of the GD coalition, which ended the eight-year incumbency of the UNM party. Secondly, the new president would see his powers significantly reduced following the 2010 constitutional amendments. Thirdly, Mikhail Saakashvili, the incumbent president who had dominated the political scene during the previous eight years, was prevented from running for office by the constitutionally prescribed limit. Although a surprisingly high number of twenty-three candidates participated in the elections, the major race took place between the GD-DG candidate, formerly independent, Giorgi Margvelashvili who obtained 62.1 percent of votes, and the UNM candidate Davit Bakradze (21.7 percent), which mirrored the competition in parliamentary elections held a year earlier.

Having said that, there are a few possible consequences that presidential elections may have had on party development in Georgia. Firstly, even though no coattail effect could be observed in terms of parties' realignment in providing support for the run-off candidates as all the presidential contests under examination were resolved in the first round, the very close proximity (or, even, concurrency) with the parliamentary elections served as an institutional tool to formalize the 'winner-take-all' nature of the Georgian political system. Indeed, the country has never experienced a formal cohabitation, except for a very brief period between the 2012 parliamentary and 2013 presidential elections. The coalescing effect of electoral proximity, which, on almost all occasions, generated a mono-coloured executive/legislature could be observed even after the 2010 regime change when the 2012 parliamentary and the 2013 presidential contest were won by the GD coalition (Civil.ge 2013b).

In other words, even though the electoral cycle did not follow a uniform logic as in 1995, 2004, and 2008 the presidential contest preceded the parliamentary one, while in 1999 and 2012 the order was reversed, it displayed a self-reinforcing character – winning one type of contest offered a significant electoral advantage in the other.

Secondly, until 2008 the Georgian experience ran somehow counter to the theoretical expectation according to which presidential and president-parliamentary regimes constitute an incentive for smaller parties to engage in the presidential contest in order to increase their visibility (Elgie 2001). In fact, besides the ruling party, none of the other parliamentary actors presented their own presidential candidate while the total number of contestants was relatively limited. It is only since 2008 that the presidential contest has started

to attract more participants: in 2008 five out of seven candidates were nominated by political movements, the most important of which were presented by a coalition of smaller, opposition parties (Civil.ge 2007f; RFE/RL 2007), while in 2013 ten among the 23 candidates were supported by a political party, the remaining 13 being presented by citizens' initiative groups. It can appear somehow puzzling, with the reference to 2013 elections, why the participation rate increased if the importance of presidential role was significantly limited. In my understanding, this could, exactly, be the reason: more precisely, for the first time in its history, "Georgia's presidential race wasn't about the big names" (Cecire 2013), which may have offered an incentive to participate in something that was perceived as a more pluralistic and open race without powerful incumbent personalities' dominance.

This observation brings me to the third crucial finding, namely that those regime types in which the president assumed a dominant position, lead to the excessive personalization of the political process, which, in turn, undermines the development of policy-driven, ideologically coherent, programmatic political parties – as we saw in Chapter 2, this has been exactly the Georgian case. However, at this point, one important caveat needs to be signalled, namely that the search for strong leadership in Georgia may be culturally determined: in this vein, the political structure constitutes a mere reflection of this tradition rather than an autonomous consequence of a specific regime type<sup>71</sup>. Yet, regardless of the origin, it is undeniable that the presidential and presidential-parliamentary forms of government enhanced the persistence of leader-oriented formations with vague ideological profiles, especially visible in case of the catch-all nature of the incumbent parties. It is yet to be seen whether changing to the premier-presidential system and full parliamentarism in the future will reverse this trend.

The final, but equally important, conclusion pertains to the possible effects of regime types at the systemic level or, more precisely, on the patterns of inter-party competition. With this respect, there are interesting differences in terms of consequences generated by the three systems of government in Georgia that can be best explained through the lens of specific leverages granted to political actors in terms of controlling and manipulating political outcomes.

The Georgian party system under the presidential regime operated under a specific logic dictated by the dominance of the president in political terms, who, however, was constrained by both institutional and circumstantial factors. In this context, if the Georgian president disposed of extensive formal powers, the regime functioned in a highly fragmented political environment, labelled by scholars as "feckless pluralism" (Carothers 2002), which rendered their effective exercise much more difficult. In fact, even though for almost

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<sup>71</sup> For more details on Georgian political culture as traditional and Soviet legacy, see chapter 1 of this dissertation as well as, *inter alia*, Jones (2012) and Wheatley (2005).

the entire length of his mandate, Shevardnadze was backed by a parliamentary majority provided mostly by the CUG party, the “relatively harmonious relationship between the legislative and executive branches of power” (Wheatley 2005, 95) lasted for only a few years. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter 3, the internal division within the CUG along the hardliner-reformist line triggered an increasing inter-branch conflict and forced the president to resort to partisan controlling tools in order to maintain his supremacy.

Secondly, considering the existence of several distinctive networks of power, discussed at length in Chapter 1, the Shevardnadze regime functioned according to the logic of “patronal presidentialism” (Hale 2014). In this context, the role of the head of state as arbiter manipulating support of those power networks, among which none “had sufficient organizational resources to gain hegemonic control” (Wheatley 2005, 134), was mostly dictated by the institutional features of presidentialism reinforcing his position as the crucial source of power. Besides significantly undermining state structures, by enhancing the persistence of these informal channels of power the patronal presidentialism suppressed the capacity of parties in performing their traditional functions.

Thirdly, and in connection with the first, it encouraged political actors to coalesce around the president in seeking access to resources instead of establishing links with society to gain parliamentary representation through voters’ support. In other words, loyalty/disloyalty to the president rather than ideological orientation became the main identity trait of parties. Such a trend was particularly visible in the case of the presidential party, which constitutes a classic example of the ‘party of power’ (Gel’Man 2008b). In this context, the first instance of open criticism towards Shevardnadze’s leadership expressed by its important members generated a major identity crisis within the CUG<sup>72</sup>.

The constitutional limitation of the presidential mandate to two consecutive terms and his public declaration on the intention to respect it further evidenced the nature of this political conflict (Hale 2014). Indeed, his second term (2000-2003) in office, saw an increasingly manifested inability of the president to manipulate party support: besides frequent inter-governmental clashes over policy issues and cabinet nominations<sup>73</sup>, it was marked by increasing legislative-executive confrontation, including the reformist part

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<sup>72</sup> The crisis followed after the declarations of the Chair of Economic Committee, Vano Merabishvili, to The Washington Post in which he claimed that President Shevardnadze was too old and too tired to engage in any substantial reforms (very much needed in a country where over 60 percent of the population lived below the poverty line), while all his pledges to fight the endemic corruption were made only “to keep the West supporting him” (The Washington Post 2001). Unsurprisingly, these statements provoked strong reactions, yet it soon turned out that Merabishvili’s position was shared by many members of the reformist wing of the CUG (The Washington Post 2002; RFE/RL 2001d).

<sup>73</sup> For instance, in 1999, the reformist wing of the CUG forced Shevardnadze not to re-appoint his candidate for premiership, the hardliner Vazha Lortkipanidze (Wheatley 2005, 126). Frequent inter-governmental clashes like,

of the presidential party, over a number of salient issues such as the local government and constitutional reforms (Civil.ge 2001c; 2001b; 2001d). In sum, the exacerbating executive-legislative conflict and lack of an effective mechanism to solve it due to the logic of presidentialism eventually led to the collapse of the parliamentary majority, and, ultimately, provoked the regime's implosion as the main drivers of the Rose Revolution came from within the CUG.

The presidential-parliamentary form of government introduced by the 2004 constitutional amendments operated in a different political context. Firstly, as mentioned in the earlier section of this chapter, the March 2004 parliamentary elections generated a significant reduction in terms of political pluralism (from 11.47 to 2.15 ENEP). Secondly, as discussed in Chapter 2, the new ruling elite managed to neutralize the majority of the rivalling informal power networks (Mitchell 2009), but upheld, to certain extent, the "single-pyramid system" – here again the institutionally prescribed position of the head of state as the main source of power seems to have played a crucial role (Hale 2014).

Having said that, by upholding the executive dominance over the legislature stemming from both, the constitutional powers and popular legitimacy, the presidential-parliamentary system significantly undermined the role of parties in the political process. In fact, the executive continued to dictate the legislative agenda: between 2004 and 2008, over 2.5 thousand bills out of 3.5 thousand came from the presidential team (563 initiated by the president and 1961 by his government), while only 970 were the fruit of the legislature's initiative (Jones 2012, 161). Furthermore, the parliament was less reactive in terms of engaging in discussion on the legislative proposals than it used to be under the presidential regime: if between 1995-2004 the president posed nineteen vetoes (five of which were overturned by the assembly), during the two subsequent terms (2004-2012), president Saakashvili never had to resort to this instrument (Jones 2012, 163). This passive attitude was also evidenced by the fact that, in the majority of cases, the assembly would not engage in legislative activities unless a clear indication to do so came from the president (Wheatley 2005, 208).

Now, a legitimate point could be raised, namely that the unwillingness of the legislature to exercise its controlling function was mostly dictated by the circumstances external to regime type, i.e. by the fact that a parliamentary majority was composed of the presidential party, thus – given the unquestionable leadership of Saakashvili – it can hardly be expected that the UNM would engage in anti-presidential activities. The experience of the first, and so far only, very brief cohabitation provides a clear example of what were the effective possibilities of the assembly towards the executive – between October 2012 and October 2013,

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the confrontation between the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Finance over budget for armed units, forced Shevardandze to intervene, which further undermined the loyalty of the disregarded party wing (Civil.ge 2001a).

Saakashvili exercised his veto right twenty times, all of which were overturned by the parliament. During the same period, only 5.1 percent of all legislative proposals came from the president (TI Georgia 2014a)<sup>74</sup>.

This certainly is a valid point as the support of the compacted majority has undoubtedly enhanced the presidential informal powers beyond those formally assigned through constitutional provisions. In fact, the role of parties as gatekeepers to leadership positions within the parliament was significantly undermined by the presidential control over the process of cabinet nominations, which he often exercised by completely surpassing his own party. In fact, only the first government led by one of the Rose Revolution co-leaders Zurab Zhvania constituted, until his premature death in February 2005, a “counterweight to presidential authority” (Nakashidze 2016). Furthermore, only the first cabinet reshuffle following Zhvania’s death was generally free from presidential intervention as his succeeding prime minister, Zurab Noghaideli, who was chosen from Zhvania’s deputies and only two changes were made to the government (RFE/RL 2005a). Yet the newly designated premier, and the former minister of finance, basically focused on economic issues without publicly questioning Saakashvili’s decision in any other sphere. In sum, since Zhvania’s death, there had been no serious political opponent that could challenge Saakashvili’s rule (Nakashidze 2016).

Consequently, during the presidential-parliamentary regime (2004-2012) only one out of five prime ministers was a party member,<sup>75</sup> while the nominations of the cabinet members were rarely the independent premier’s decision despite the clear constitutional mandate. This trend became even more visible during the second Saakashvili term. In this respect, after winning the presidential elections in January 2008 he publicly declared his intention to establish a “more all-inclusive cabinet”, including also opposition representatives, but at the same time underlined that the governmental nominations will be disentangled from party affiliation (Civil.ge 2008a). In words of Saakashvili, this was motivated by his desire to “bequeath a democratic Georgia and not a party-based Georgia” (Civil.ge 2008b) – with this statement the Georgian president further undermined the importance of political parties as indispensable participants of the political process by picturing them as an obstacle to democratization.

Yet I would argue that, while disposing of a coherent, disciplined majority certainly did contribute to strengthening the presidential control over the political process, the institutional factors should not be underestimated. In fact, it is useful to recall that the Constitution provided some important institutional

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<sup>74</sup> At this point it should be recalled that in that period the president still disposed of formal extensive powers to be diminished only after the 2013 presidential elections. Nevertheless, the changed context stemming from the victory of the opposition coalition rendered its exercise politically risky – more concretely, for instance, the president could have rejected the premier candidate nominated by the victorious alliance. Such a move, however, would inevitably lead to constitutional and political crises as well as, most likely, to some sort of civil unrest.

<sup>75</sup> Vano Merabishvili, appointed in July 2012, just a few months before parliamentary elections. For a more detailed information on cabinet structure in Georgia consult Appendix III.



limitations to the effectiveness of the parliamentary controlling instruments for instance by granting the president with the possibility to circumvent the assembly's no-confidence vote through its dissolution or by the fact that the cabinet was required to resign following the presidential and not the parliamentary elections as discussed in section 5.3.1. This undoubtedly weakened the weight of the legislature in the checks-and-balances system. Its structural weakness was also reflected by the frequently used practice of disengagement enacted by the opposition parties, which did not consider the parliament as an arena for effective policymaking<sup>76</sup>. Lastly, it was precisely the direct presidential election that significantly increased the probability of a single-party dominance over the executive and the legislature.

All in all, the structure of the regime established in 2004 did not substantially improve in terms of offering incentives for parties' evolution towards more pronounced programmatic coherence; on the contrary, following the visibility of the president as party leader, it further enhanced the leader-oriented nature of the Georgian political formations. Yet the example of the incumbent party, the UNM offers a curious insight: contrary to the previous party of power, the presidential-supporting UNM did display traits of "something resembling actual ideology" (Hale 2014, 364), namely the neoliberal economic and reformist course, despite its clearly catch-all nature. In contrast to the argument that its relative coherence stemmed mostly from the loyalty to the leader, the party survived and continued to play a crucial role as opposition even after the Saakashvili's departure in 2012<sup>77</sup>. In sum, however, the president-dominated regimes exalted the personalized nature of political competition providing little incentives for parties to develop clear policy-oriented programmes and detach them from charismatic leaders (Nodia 2006).

Likewise, as it could be presumed from the discussion conducted thus far, the structure of inter-party competition did not substantially change under the mixed regime type. Indeed, the pro-presidential/anti-presidential antagonism not only persisted but became even more accentuated. In this respect, the attitude

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<sup>76</sup> More specifically, the opposition parties boycotted parliamentary proceedings, (with an exception for economic-related issues) between March and October 2006 in protest against stripping the parliamentary mandate of an opposition lawmaker from the Republican Party. The decision was motivated by his alleged involvement in business practices, which was prohibited by the Georgian Constitution. As a result the opposition factions announced the boycott along with several additional demands, including the resignation of the minister of internal affairs allegedly involved in a high-profile murder (Civil.ge 2006b; 2006a; 2006c). In a similar vein, the opposition parties threatened to boycott the 2006 local elections, disapproving of the changes to the electoral code proposed by the government and backed by the UNM parliamentary majority (Civil.ge 2005) as well as renouncing the mandates obtained in the 2008 parliamentary elections in sign of protest against the alleged electoral frauds and more generally defined uneven playing field (Civil.ge 2008f).

<sup>77</sup> However, despite the formal leadership replacement, it is hard to assess it as complete: even though Saakashvili left the country in order to avoid what he considered as political persecution by the current incumbents, he has certainly continued to be significantly involved in the party's internal affairs: at least since 2015 he is an informal leader of the UNM (Jamestown Foundation 2019).

towards the ruling elite gave impetus to the establishment of broad coalitions at both, national and local levels, by bringing together parties from across the political spectrum. Unsurprisingly, such coalitions with no common programmatic ground proved to be relatively short-lived: the cases of the United Opposition participating in 2008 elections, which struggled to find a compromise on how to concretely enact their more general goal of boycotting the parliamentary procedures<sup>78</sup> as well as that of the Georgian Dream electoral bloc, which disintegrated before the end of the parliamentary term, clearly prove the point. Perhaps this competition structure is among the causes of the persistence of fragmented opposition.

By moving Georgia towards the premier-presidential system of government, the 2010 constitutional amendments significantly enhanced the role of parties in the political process at the expense of the president. However, the regime alteration was also surrounded by two important political circumstances, namely the peaceful power changeover as well as the instauration of a government composed by more than one party<sup>79</sup>, both occurring for the first time in the history of the post-Soviet Georgia. Given the temporary limit of the analysis conducted in this dissertation, the assessment of the possible autonomous consequences of the premier-presidential regime on political outcomes constitutes a potentially perilous task. Nevertheless, and having this caveat in mind, it is still possible to track a few important implications that this regime remodelling to party development.

The first plausible expectation, in line with theoretical arguments, is that the decreased weight of the president in the checks-and-balances system should, logically, be conducive to the increased capacity of the assembly to dictate legislative agenda as well as to control the access to leadership positions. In other words, the shift towards premier-presidential form of government should provide institutional incentives for parties to restore their role as channels through which political actors seek representation (Fish 2003) and, in turn, should lead to their policy-oriented evolution. The brief Georgian experience provides partial confirmation to these arguments.

As a way of background, as briefly mentioned in the previous section, the 2013 presidential elections evidenced the increased role of parties in candidates' selection reflected by the change of parties' nomination

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<sup>78</sup> See fn. 76.

<sup>79</sup> Political experts have not been unanimous in labelling the GD government as a coalition one – according to this argument, the possible division of governmental posts had taken place long before the actual contest and, thus, did not follow the logic of standard negotiations in setting up the coalition government. Nevertheless, as the empirical reality demonstrated, the ministerial portfolios constituted a bargaining object among the coalition partners even after the government was installed.

strategies shifted away from the tendency of naming party leaders as presidential candidates<sup>80</sup>. In fact, only three, out of twenty-three candidates, were party leaders<sup>81</sup>, while the GD coalition nominated a relatively unknown and moderately popular, non-partisan figure, Giorgi Margvelashvili, and the former incumbent party organized few-rounds primaries (Civil.ge 2013a).

Yet it is worth noting that a bi-cephalous executive under the premier-presidential form of government still left some, albeit limited, room for presidential activism. In this respect, the GD deliberate choice to run an uninfluential (or even “the weakest possible”) candidate lacking his own support base could be viewed as an additional guarantee of its “own dominance over the already constitutionally weakened presidency” (Jamestown Foundation 2013b). Furthermore, the 2013 victory of the GD-backed Margvelashvili sparked the expectations that the intra-executive cooperation would run undisturbedly. However, this was not entirely the case as it soon appeared that Margvelashvili did not intend to be a mere figurehead; instead, he explicitly stated his intention to make full use of his constitutional powers, which, in turn, generated a number of intra-executive tensions (Jamestown Foundation 2014; Mitchell 2014).

The conflict regarded a variety of issues from ceremonial matters<sup>82</sup> to more substantial competency disputes<sup>83</sup>: on a few occasions the parliament thwarted presidential nominations, for instance that of judges of the Supreme Court (confirmed only at the second attempt) as well as of members of the Central Electoral Commission (Civil.ge 2014d) while president expressed his deep concerns, including vetoes, about the government’s flagship initiatives such as the judicial reform as well as the prosecution of the allies of former-President Mikhail Saakashvili (Foreign Policy 2014) by vindicating his position as guardian of Georgian best,

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<sup>80</sup> Although, it cannot be denied that the lower profile of this particular election was also given by the fact that no powerful incumbent was taking part in the race. Nevertheless, in my understanding, the reduced presidential prerogatives constituted an important factor in this process.

<sup>81</sup> Respectively, Nino Burjanadze (DM-UG), Shalva Natelashvili (LPG) and Akaki Asatiani (UGT).

<sup>82</sup> Including, for instance, public disapproval by the GD-DG leader of Margvelashvili’s use of the presidential palace constructed under his predecessor, the symbolic non-attendance of the government during presidential inaugural speeches (Civil.ge 2014a) or the GD’s criticism towards his decision to convey parliamentary sessions on request of the opposition (Civil.ge 2015a). Furthermore, the conflict frequently assumed a more personal dimension when the president was rising his criticism towards the alleged continuous Ivanishvili’s involvement in politics after his official withdrawal. In this respect, Margvelashvili often argued that “the country should be ruled by strong institutions and not from the backstage” as these ‘parallel’ powers structures were weakening state institutions (Civil.ge 2015c). As a response, the GD leader publicly slammed the president for unexpected “change of character” after his election. (Agenda.ge 2014; DF Watch 2014).

<sup>83</sup> In this respect, the unclear wording of the constitution in the matter of the distribution of competences in the field of foreign relations led to a few high-profile confrontations, including the disagreement on who was entitled to sign the Association Agreement with the EU scheduled for June 2014 as well as on participation in official delegations. The governmental version eventually prevailed, but the issue generated a significant amount of intra-executive tensions (Jamestown Foundation 2014; Tabula.ge 2014).

supra-party interests (Civil.ge 2015g; 2016; 2017a; 2017b). Finally, the President was actively involved in protests against the GD plans on constitutional revision (see fn. 25).

What follows from this brief sketch is that, although the coexistence of the dual executive under the premier-presidential system in Georgia between 2012 and 2016 did not approximate the nature of cohabitation (Elgie 2016), the active role of the president stemming from his institutional position, certainly had an impact on the patterns of inter-party competition. This was particularly visible in the context of the ruling GD alliance. While its nature – unifying parties with only one common interest of ousting the incumbent elite from power – was certainly a product of the logic of party competition developed under the previous regimes, once in power the coalition had to adjust to the challenges posed by the new institutional structure in order to maintain control over the political process. In other words, the clashes between the cabinet and the president those over the legislative agenda, required coherence and discipline among the parties forming the parliamentary majority. The cooperation was further encouraged by the fact that immediately after the 2012 parliamentary elections, the coalition held only nine seats (85) above the clear majority threshold (76): indeed, the departure of its second major component, the Free Democrats party with ten deputies forced the GD alliance to seek external support.

In general terms, it can be argued that the GD coalition, constrained by the institutional structure of premier-presidential regime, remained compact for almost entire duration of its parliamentary mandate, despite the split of its second major component at the end of 2014 – indeed, the major tensions, which led to disintegration of the alliance, took place only towards the end of its term and the cases of voting indiscipline were relatively rare<sup>84</sup>. Furthermore, the efforts of the opposition to challenge the government, for instance through the motion of censure, unsuccessfully proposed for the first time in post-Soviet Georgia in March 2015, did not pose any threat to the alliance's unity (Civil.ge 2015b).

All these considerations point to the fact that, at least from the institutional point of view, the premier-presidential regime, in force since 2013, provided stronger structural incentives for political parties to perform their traditional functions by shifting the weight of the checks-and-balances system in favour of the legislature. Indeed, the new institutional arrangement has allowed parties to assume control over the

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<sup>84</sup> The most important example of such indiscipline that I came across during the research took place in December 2014 when the junior coalition partners, the Republican Party and the National Forum, voted together with the opposition in favour of the establishment of a parliamentary commission to investigate permission to mine gold and copper in Sakdrisi by the Ministry of Culture, which was endorsed with 58 votes to 14 votes. The issue was of salience as Sakdrisi was under special protection as an important heritage area, and gold extraction would certainly be harmful for its natural habitat. Furthermore, opposition often claimed that the permission to mining was in business interests of the GD-DG leader, Bidzina Ivansihvili (Civil.ge 2014e).

nominations to a leadership position in both components of the executive structure<sup>85</sup> as well as to dominate the legislative agenda. Furthermore, the first parliamentary term (2012-2016) under the premier-presidential system certainly represented an important phase of political learning given the coalition nature of the cabinet.

Nevertheless, at least up until the time of writing, the new regime type did not significantly alter neither the nature of political parties nor that of the inter-party interactions. In other words, no substantial progress has been made in party transformation from personal vehicles into policy-oriented formations, while the nature of political conflict persists along the pro/against-incumbent line<sup>86</sup>. Indeed, the landslide victory of the GD-DG in the 2016 parliamentary elections – resulted in the one-party government supported by the compact parliamentary majority, but this time with no other sufficiently strong veto player to effectively counterbalance its dominance – has generated the same, familiar scenario in terms of realigning all the parliamentary and extra-parliamentary opposition in a common struggle against the incumbents.

In sum, I would argue that the structure of political competition in Georgia has been shaped by the president-dominated systems in place until 2013 in a two-fold manner: on the one hand, it undermined the programmatic competition by enhancing the pro-regime/anti-regime division as well as led to increased personalization of politics, which, in turn, hindered the development of programmatic parties; on the other hand, the vast extent of presidential powers significantly increased the stake of presidential elections while their close proximity with the parliamentary contests affected electoral behaviour in a way that voters have always granted the president with a compact parliamentary majority. These trends have been largely maintained under the premier-presidential system. On a more positive note, however, it also needs to be stressed that the significant reduction of the presidential role in the political process has been slightly redirecting the voters' attention from party leadership to the party programmes (CRRC Georgia 2019). This gives certain hope that parties will follow suit.

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<sup>85</sup> Although the premier-presidential regime left a significant margin of discretion to parliamentary majority in making its own cabinet choices, constrained only by the logic of coalition agreements, it was also challenged by the presidential reservations on some of the governmental nominations. In this respect, the president, albeit significantly weakened in this area, made a full use of his prerogatives, for instance by resisting the GD's pressures to accelerate the process of cabinet nomination or expressing publicly his concerns about frequent cabinet change. Regarding this latter point, the President seemed particularly worried about frequent replacement of the ministries of defence. Indeed, on a few occasions he resorted to his formal position when claiming that "As the commander-in-chief, I want to ask a question: how frequently should we replace defence ministers?" (Civil.ge 2015d). Nevertheless, such an attitude of the president was of a rather limited concrete effect and, in sum, the legislature had almost full control over the cabinet.

<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, since 2012, the political competition in Georgia has been characterized by an increased political polarization stemming from the personalized confrontations between the members of the former ruling party, the UNM, and the current incumbents, the GD party (and their respective leaders) with the smaller formations aligning accordingly. Yet, this outcome is was independent of regime dynamics.

### 5.3.2.2. Moldova

Following the analytical framework applied to the investigation of the Georgian case, table 5.2 contains data on the ENEP and ENPC as well as on the difference in terms of votes between the two best-placed candidates in a cross-temporal perspective. As it is evident, the limited number of observations hinders the possibility to establish any pattern in terms of the correlation between these two indicators; yet it quite compellingly suggests that the presidential competition has been much more balanced in Moldova than in Georgia. In this context, a qualitative analysis will help to better grasp the nature of a possible impact of regime type on the development of Moldovan parties and party systems.

**Table 5.2 ENEP and ENPC in Moldova (1994-2016)**

Moldova	Electoral year									
	1994	1996	1998	2001	2005	2009*	2009**	2010	2014	2016
<b>ENEP</b>	3.95		5.78	3.52	3.27	3.43	3.70	3.73	6.58	
<b>ENPC</b>		3.85								2.60
<b>Difference between the first two candidates (% votes)</b>		8.0 <sup>87</sup>								4.22 <sup>88</sup>

Note: The elections held prior to the adoption of the 1994 Constitutions (i.e. the 1991 presidential) is not included in the table; \*April 2009 parliamentary elections; \*\*July 2009 parliamentary elections. Source: own calculation

The Moldovan president was directly elected in 1991, 1996 and 2016 while the indirect elections took place between 2000 and 2016. Similar to the Georgian case, the following analysis takes the first elections after the adoption of the Constitution (i.e. the 1994 contest) as the starting point<sup>89</sup>. In this context, the 1996 presidential elections had a quite pluralistic nature, considering that the ENPC was equal to 3.85. Indeed, the challengers of the incumbent President Snegur included two other highest political figures, namely, the Prime Minister Andrea Sangheli and the Parliamentary Speaker, Petru Lucinschi – all three, at a certain point, linked to the ruling PDAM – as well as the PCRM leader Vladimir Voronin, along with Valeriu Matei, leader of the Party of Democratic Forces (FDP) in addition to four minor, independent candidates. The election took place

<sup>87</sup> This is the score obtained in the run-off round; in the first the distance between the first placed, outgoing President, Mircea Snegur (PRCM) and the runner up, Petru Lucinschi (independent) equaled 11.1 percent.

<sup>88</sup> This is the score obtained in the run-off round; in the first the distance between the first placed PSRM leader, Igor Dodon, and the second place, PAS's leader Maia Sandu equaled to 9.27 percent.

<sup>89</sup> For a discussion of the earlier contest held in December 1991 see Chapter 1.

in two rounds, the first seeing the plurality of votes going in favour of the incumbent president (38.8 percent) and the runner-up Lucinschi (27.7 percent)<sup>90</sup>; while the second round saw the rather unexpected victory of Lucinschi with 54 percent of votes against 46 percent obtained by Snegur. The 2016 direct presidential elections were contested by nine candidates, among which only three ran on an independent ticket, even though none of them had substantial weight. The first round saw the dominance of two candidates, namely the leader of the PSRM party, Igor Dodon (48 percent) and the leader of PAS, Maia Sandu (39 percent) while the run-off resulted in the victory of Dodon (52.11 percent) over Sandu (48 percent).

Before delving into the proper analysis, it is useful to recall one of the main findings from the first chapter pertaining to the political context that crystallized during the first parliamentary term of independent Moldova (1990-1994). In this respect, the semi-presidential regime established in 1991 can certainly be viewed as superimposed or as a relic of the Soviet legacy (Mazo 2004) while the first direct presidential election (1991) did not stem from the idealized vision of Mircea Snegur as a national saviour as was the case of Zviad Gamsakhurdia in Georgia, but rather from the trivial fact that he was the only candidate. This, along with much more confined presidential powers, placed the Moldovan head of state in a significantly different position than the Georgian one. Furthermore, considering that the founding elections were held only three years after the presidential contest, any causal link between the two can hardly be traced. In a similar vein, the inter-party competition rather than being shaped by the semi-presidentialism was mostly dictated by the internal struggle among various factions, which carefully positioned themselves along the ethnolinguistic dividing line.

Bearing all these elements in mind, a few interesting points can be raised pertaining to the relationship between the premier-presidential system of government and the political developments following its formalization by the 1994 Constitution. Firstly, and taking the 1996 presidential election as a central point, it is possible to provide some insights into the role of the institutionally arranged distribution of powers in shaping the strategies of political actors. More specifically, as discussed in section 5.3.1, the prestige of the presidential office stemming from his *de jure* and *de facto* prerogatives generated enough incentives for all major political figures to engage in the electoral race.

Against this background, the discussion on social divides (see Chapter 2) showed that, contrary to the Georgian experience, the political formations in Moldova did position themselves along a rather clearly defined ethnolinguistic divide since the early time surrounding the demise of the Soviet rule. This dictated the terms of political competition during the 1994 parliamentary elections and constituted one of the most, if not *the* most, distinctive traits of the 1996 presidential candidates. Indeed, the incumbent Mircea Snegur

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<sup>90</sup> For detailed results see Appendix 1.

emphasized his pro-Romanian orientation, while his main rival, Petru Lucinschi advocated for closer ties with Russia and an independent Moldovan statehood (Roper 2008b)<sup>91</sup>. Furthermore, the voters and partisan realignment in view of the presidential run-off suggests that the ideological dimension did actually play a role: in this respect, the incumbent Snegur was supported by the moderate, pro-Romanian FDP whose leader came fifth in the first round as well as by the reform-oriented, Moldovan/Romanian-speaking electorate. Lucinschi, in turn, was backed by pro-Moldovan, pro-Russian and less reform-oriented voters as well as by all forces with anti-unionist<sup>92</sup> positions, namely the ruling PDAM, the Socialist Party, the Edinstvo-Unitate movement as well as the extra-parliamentary, but increasingly important PCRM (RFE/RL 1996a, 1996b; Crowther 2013).

Nevertheless, besides maintaining the aforementioned identity trait, parties had, in general, struggled to develop a coherent programmatic nature as they largely “became election vehicles for individuals in which party ideology was second to the personality of the leader” (Roper 2008b, 119). While the disengagement with clear policy-oriented stands seemed to be a common trait of all mainstream Moldovan political parties at that time, perhaps due to an almost incessant campaign for elections held “almost every year after independence” (King 2000, 160), by introducing a separate veto player equipped with concrete institutional tools to pursue his/her own political agenda, the presidential contest contributed to the increased personalization of politics. In fact, besides their general positioning along the ethnolinguistic divide, the programmatic differences between the main candidates in the 1996 presidential contest were rather blurred. Accordingly, the presidential campaign, in particular before the second round, was marked by intense personal confrontations rather than discussions on policy issues, with one exception: both candidates had, more or less explicitly, alluded to their intention to strengthen the presidential position within the institutional set up (RFE/RL 1996e; 1996f; 1996g).

In the light of what has just been discussed, while the 1991 presidential election was held too early to directly affect party development, it appears quite safe to argue that the 1996 contest had an inflationary effect on the Moldovan party system. A careful look at the first few columns of table 4.2 clearly shows that the ENEP increased importantly from 1994 to 1998 parliamentary elections. Furthermore, the presidential contest exacerbated the intra-elite struggle for leadership (King 2000) as the main contenders in the presidential race,

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<sup>91</sup> Although, in general terms, the political identity of the incumbent president, Mircea Snegur, was rather loosely defined. Indeed, he was a political opportunist changing his orientation based on expected political gains: being supported by the pro-Romanian forces, he distanced himself from them as soon as their political agenda lost the appeal among the citizens, to come back to the idea once again before the 1996 elections, even by demanding the assembly to change the name of the official language from Moldovan to Romanian (Crowther 2013).

<sup>92</sup> The term ‘unionist’ is intended in this dissertation as the pledge to united Moldova with Romania. For more details see Chapter 1.



namely the incumbent President Mircea Snegur, the Chairman of the Parliament, Petru Lucinschi and the Prime Minister, Andrei Sangheli were all, at a certain point, linked to the ruling PDAM.

In this context, the most immediate consequence of the 1996 presidential elections was the internal fracture of the Agrarians – until then a surprisingly cohesive and disciplined party (Crowther 1997) – and its disintegration into rivalling factions gathered around respective presidential candidates (see Chapter 3, section 3.1). Unsurprisingly, this proved catastrophic for the Agrarians’ survival in electoral terms as reflected by the radical decline of support from 43.2 percent of votes obtained in 1994 to only 3.6 percent gained in 1998. Along this line, the relatively good third place of the leader of the PCRM in the presidential race gave more visibility to the party, registered after the 1994 parliamentary elections following the lift of the ban imposed in 1991, to the point that it gained third place in local elections in 1995 with around 15 percent of support and a sound plurality of votes (30.1 percent) in the 1998 parliamentary contest.

All these considerations inevitably point to another crucial aspect, namely on how the premier-presidential regime type shaped the political outcomes by defining the positions of respective actors within the political structure. In this respect, as it could be understood from the discussion conducted thus far, the combination of constitutional prerogatives and popular legitimacy, generated some incentives for an active presidential role in the political process. On the other hand, however, the weight of the political parties was also considerable. Having this in mind, there are a few important aspects that warrant emphasis. Firstly, the abovementioned inflationary effect of the 1996 direct presidential election generating fragmented parliament in 1998 gave the head of state a few additional leverages exceeding his formal prerogatives to intervene more decisively in the political process considering the difficulties in forming a stable parliamentary majority. In this regard, presidential interference constituted a disruptive element in the patterns of inter-party competition.

Secondly, however the Moldovan experience runs counter the general theoretical arguments that consider the potential to generate intra-executive conflict as the major flaw of the mixed systems of government. In this respect, the presidential intervention in the government formation resulted in their largely non-partisan composition and, consequently, led the Moldovan prime ministers, also mostly non-partisan, to rarely “defend their powers” (Protsyk 2006). Thus, while the relationship between presidents and the legislature was very confrontational, in general terms, the intra-executive cooperation was rather peaceful.

There are two important exceptions to this rule, both originating from personal rather than programmatic confrontations and both clearly showing the real possibilities – and limits – to presidential activism stemming from the institutional incentives. The first case regards the uneasy coexistence of president Snegur and prime minister Sangheli, hardly surprising considering the approaching presidential contest and

the two being rivals. Besides the frequent personal attacks, the conflict pertained also to the division of competencies, especially those related to ministerial appointments<sup>93</sup>.

The second instance of the intra-executive conflict took place between President Lucinschi and the Prime Minister Sturza – after playing an important role in both the nomination and the resignation of Ion Ciubuc’s government (January 1997-February 1999), president Lucinschi was decisive in choosing his successor, Ion Sturza (February 1999 -November 1999) (EECR 1999). Nevertheless, the popularity of Sturza’s cabinet stemming from its relative efficiency in facing the consequences of the severe 1998 economic crisis seemed to be among the main factors of Lucinschi’s being “apparently instrumental in engineering the fall of the government and persuading several MPs to vote with the opposition” (Quinlan 2002, 90). This example suggests that besides formal prerogatives, the president disposed of important tools to manipulate party support in pursuing his political agenda – in this context, the fragmented assembly and lack of a disciplined supportive majority constituted both an opportunity and a constraint.

In fact, both presidents under the premier-presidential system constantly resorted to their partisan powers in seeking support for their political initiatives introducing a significant amount of uncertainty about the direction of inter-party competition. This is clearly reflected in the patterns of coalition-building between 1994 and 2000. In this regard, the semi-presidential regime – and the direct presidential elections in particular – gave impetus to “short-lived and ill-defined political alliances intended mainly to support a candidate’s presidential bid rather than to promote a particular party program” (King 2000, 162). The political realignment in view of the 1998 parliamentary elections is an obvious example of this pattern<sup>94</sup>.

The role of the president in the post-1998 parliament constitutes even more suggestive evidence of the structural opportunity deriving from the premier-presidential regime to distort the inter-party competition. In this context, the parliamentary majority united all the anti-communist forces into a common Alliance for

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<sup>93</sup> For instance, in March 1996 President Snegur dismissed the minister of defence Pavel Creanga for allegedly mismanaging the budgetary funds, but a few weeks later the Constitutional Court, on the appeal of the premier, ruled out presidential authority in this matter by establishing that “cabinet members could be dismissed only by the prime minister or through a vote in the parliament”. While the parliamentary majority considered launching the impeachment procedure against Snegur, he respected the Courts’ ruling, albeit not entirely: the powers of the reinstated defence minister were restricted, and the president placed himself ‘in charge of military affairs in his capacity as commander in chief’ (RFE/RL 1996a; 1996b; 1996c; 1996d). Interestingly enough, his successor, President Lucinschi did not face similar problems when he replaced the minister of national security in May 1999 (RFE/RL 1999b).

<sup>94</sup> More specifically, the Snegur-backing Civic Union transformed itself into an electoral alliance, the ideologically incoherent Democratic Convention of Moldova (DCM) “reuniting Snegur in an uneasy partnership with (*his*) former Popular Front allies, the Christian Democratic People’s Party (PPCD)” (Crowther 2007, 106). Likewise, the Lucinschi’s supporters organized in a similarly loose electoral bloc, For a Democratic and Prosperous Moldova (PMDP).

Democracy and Reforms (ADR) in order to outnumber the PCRM party, which won the plurality of votes (RFE/RL 1998a)<sup>95</sup>. The fragility of the ADR, composed of formations competing in the presidential contest, generated continuous internal frictions, which were unhesitatingly exploited by President Lucinschi to pursue his own political agenda. In this vein, for instance, following the crucial PCRM's role<sup>96</sup> in ousting Sturza's cabinet on presidential design, Lucinschi picked up the Communist leader, Voronin as his second choice for premier<sup>97</sup>. He was also instrumental in building up ad-hoc alliances composed of rival parties (as the left-wing PCRM and right-wing PPCD one) in seeking support for his initiatives.

The final remark regards the position of the assembly under the premier-presidential regime. As it could be grasped from the discussion conducted thus far, the mainstream political parties struggled not only to establish a functional working majority but also to maintain discipline among its deputies. In this vein, even though disciplinary measures were sometimes applied to MPs breaking the voting discipline (RFE/RL 1999h; 1999i), parliamentary formations were generally unsuccessful in ensuring partisan loyalties – in the wake of 1998 parliamentary elections around 25 percent of MPs abandoned their original party (Roper 2008b). Nevertheless, throughout the entire period under the mixed regime (1994-2000), the assembly “has consistently constrained presidential authority to a degree not seen in Moldova's post-Soviet neighbours” (Way 2002, 130). Paradoxically, the strength of the parliament originated from its fragmentation “since decisions were actually made inside that body through a process of inter-party bargaining rather than outside the institution by the leadership of a single clearly dominant legislative majority party” (Crowther 1997, 309).

In other words, on the one hand, the impossibility of forming a disciplined parliamentary majority gave significant leverage to the president in his attempts to manipulate party support and intervene in inter-party competition, strengthened further by his constitutional prerogatives, including the dissolution of the assembly<sup>98</sup>. On the other, however, the same fragmented assembly managed to find surprising cohesiveness in opposing its “common enemy” (Mazo 2004). In fact, presidents frequently struggled to have their prime

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<sup>95</sup> By unifying under the common umbrella, the ADR disposed of 61 mandates against 40 obtained by the Communists. Tying up coalitions against the PCRM would become a standard pattern in Moldovan political competition since this moment forward.

<sup>96</sup> The 40 PCRM votes were decisive in gathering the necessary majority of 52 deputies in bringing down the Sturza's cabinet with the no confidence vote considering that in total 58 votes in favour were casted (RFE/RL 1999g).

<sup>97</sup> Although the move eventually proved unsuccessful as it fell short of the necessary votes (48 out of 52 necessary) to gain parliamentary confidence (RFE/RL 1999j; Jamestown Foundation 1999).

<sup>98</sup> As discussed in section 5.3.1, the president could dissolve the assembly after its failure to confirm appointing the prime minister for two consecutive attempts. In this vein, president Lucinschi managed to have elected his third candidate, Dumitru Braghis, in December 1999: even though he was publicly assured of no will to call snap elections, it was reported that he threatened deputies to do so in case they rejected his nominee for the third time.

ministers' candidates elected<sup>99</sup> and all the attempts to pursue the crucial point of their political agenda, i.e. the strengthening of the executive were successfully opposed by the legislature to the point of depriving the president of his most important source of legitimacy, namely the popular election.

In essence, during the first decade of its independence from Soviet rule, Moldovan politics under the premier-presidential regime worked in a peculiar context of intense inter-elite power struggles, which erupted independently of the regime type, but which were enhanced by the structural features of the premier-presidential system. Indeed, the instruments of parliamentary control such as the censure motion were also exploited in personalized inter-elite struggles: for instance, as mentioned in the previous sections, the non-confidence vote against the cabinet of Ion Sturza was moved by ideologically irreconcilable far-left PCRM and far-right PPCD, with an open support of President Lucinschi (RFE/RL 1999g).

To conclude, although the premier-presidential constitutional design envisaged for a relatively active presidential role, neither of the two presidents, Snegur and Lucinschi effectively managed to establish their dominance over the political process. Consequently, none of the two “could possibly ignore the legislature in the formation of the government or in policy making in general” (Fish 2001a, 78–79). Secondly, the 1996 presidential contest had a detrimental effect on party competition – on the one hand, it enhanced the intra-elite struggle based on personal rather than programmatic divisions as evidenced by the political realignments around presidential candidates; on the other, it had an inflationary effect on party system by incentivizing political actors to run for the presidential office independently. Finally, all this thwarted the capacity of political parties to establish programmatic linkages, which would go beyond the ethnolinguistic identity crystallized at the outset of transition (King 2000).

Besides changing the method of the presidential election, the 2000 constitutional revision slightly rearranged the institutional positions of the major political actors. In this respect, it strengthened the positions of the prime minister and that of the parliamentary speaker, at the same time, however, not relegating the president to the mere figurehead by upholding some of his/her important political and legislative prerogatives (Hale 2014). In this context, however, the parliamentary form of government introduced in Moldova comprised one, crucial anomaly in comparison to the ideal type, namely the three-fifths majority (61 out of 101 votes) required for the election of the head of state, constant for all the allowed attempts. This single element, basically distorting the spirit of parliamentarism by making of the presidential election the essence

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<sup>99</sup> In 1999, President Lucinschi had to nominate four different candidates to the post of PM before one of them managed to gain the parliament's confidence. At the same time, Lucinschi's attempts to install technocrat governments were fiercely resisted by the Assembly (RFE/RL 1999k).

of the political process, constituted the most powerful institutional factor shaping political competition in the country between 2000 and 2016.

The 2001 realigning elections granted PCRM with a constitutional majority while its leader, Vladimir Voronin, was easily elected as president in April 2001<sup>100</sup>. The Communists' dominance provided the president with extensive informal powers that by far exceeded those normally assigned to the parliamentary presidents. In fact, he enjoyed wide discretion in appointing the remaining two, most authoritative positions in the country: unsurprisingly he picked relatively uninfluential figures by inviting Vasile Tarlev, elected from PCRM's list, but not a formal party member to form a politically weak government as well as by nominating Eugenia Ostapciuk, seventh on the party list for 2001 parliamentary elections, as parliamentary chairman (Cașu 2006).

The logic of the Moldovan parliamentary regime influenced the PCRM strategies with respect to patterns of cooperation once it lost its predominance in the following parliamentary term (2005-2009): strong of 56 mandates, the PCRM or, more specifically, its leader, was unconstrained in choosing the candidates for premiership and parliamentary chairmanship, and he replicated his choices of relatively weak figures<sup>101</sup>. Yet the party fell short of five votes to re-elect its leader as president: the missing ballots were eventually cast by part of the opposition in exchange for some institutional and policy-related and personal concessions<sup>102</sup>. The establishment of the ad-hoc coalition with an only, instrumental aim to elect president clearly evidenced the institutional effect of parliamentarism: firstly, and foremostly, it unveiled the structural opportunity for opposition parties, which, without necessarily winning the elections could use the bargaining weight to pursue their own political agendas<sup>103</sup>.

This experience of political learning proved crucial when the 2009 presidential elections held in exceptional circumstances following the mass protest against the allegedly rigged April 2009 parliamentary

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<sup>100</sup> Voronin received 71 votes, while the other PCRM's candidate, Valerian Cristea was supported by three deputies. The only opposition candidate, Dumitriu Braghiș, proposed by the Braghiș Alliance, obtained fifteen votes, most probably from his own party (RFE/RL 2001b; 2001c).

<sup>101</sup> The first was re-assigned to Tarlev, the second offered to Marian Lupu, a technocrat placed 23<sup>rd</sup> on PCRM's electoral list (Hale, 2014).

<sup>102</sup> Eleven votes came from the PCRM's surprising ally from times of parliamentary struggle against the president under the previous system, namely the pro-Romanian PPCD; another eleven from members of the Democratic Moldova Bloc (BMD) - eight from the Democratic Party, PDM, faction and three from the Social-Liberals, PSL (RFE/RL, 2005b). The remaining part of the BMD Alliance boycotted the elections as 18 deputies did not vote and 5 others were absent. Voronin eventually won the elections with seventy-five votes against one casted for his opponent, the president of Moldovan Academy of Science, Gheorghe Duca (ADEPT 2005a).

<sup>103</sup> For instance, its commitment to embark Moldova on the pro-EU path as well as a constitutional amendment that would, at least formally, de-politicized the presidential position by prohibiting him to maintain party membership. None of the PCRM partners received any important institutional position, with an exception of the PPCD leader, Iurie Rosca who became the vice-Chairman of Parliament.

contest, in which PCRM gained 60 mandates – one short from the three-fifths majority. This time, however, the bargaining process was unsuccessful for the Communists despite the formal and informal measures it employed in seeking the one, missing vote (Hale 2014). In fact, the anti-communist coalition of all remaining parliamentary parties (PLDM, PL, and AMN) consequently refused to participate in the voting process on both rounds held on the 20<sup>th</sup> of May and the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June (ADEPT 2005b). As no agreement was eventually reached and both attempts failed<sup>104</sup>, the assembly was dissolved, and snap parliamentary elections were organized just three months later, in July 2009.

Finally, the last two indirect presidential elections, held at the end of 2009 and between 2011 and 2012 confirm the structuring effect of the institutional factor of the three-fifths majority on framing inter-party competition in terms of influencing the parties' political strategies. The first electoral round held after the snap July 2009 parliamentary elections in which, again, neither of the two camps gained a sufficient amount of mandates to elect the head of state on its own – PCRM having 48 deputies while the AEI opposition disposing of 53 votes. This time, however, it was the turn of the Communists to obstruct the presidential elections: although the intense bargaining did bring some fruits as four PCRM deputies became increasingly critical towards the Voronin's decision to boycott the elections<sup>105</sup>, that was insufficient to have the head of state elected (Moldova Liberă 2009f; 2009d).

Furthermore, the negotiations were hindered by an underlying personal conflict: on the one hand, the PCRM claimed that the party would never back the AEI candidate, Marian Lupu, as he “betrayed the Communists' interests” when he defected from their party; on the other, the AEI coalition categorically refused to replace Lupu with another candidate – who may have enjoyed the PCRM's support – in order not to engage in what they considered the Communists' political blackmailing (Moldova Liberă 2009c). As each of the opponents firmly stood behind its position, the failure to elect the head of state after two attempts led to snap parliamentary elections, which, once again, produced political impasse by granting the PCRM with 42 mandates and the AEI alliance with 59.

Against this background, being well aware of the risks of the bargaining process, the AEI coalition partners managed to postpone the voting for over a year in the hope to find the two missing votes, necessary

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<sup>104</sup> Interestingly enough, there seemed to be a bit of confusion among the coalition leaders on the nature of their agreement: for instance, leader of the AMN party, Serafim Urcheanu claimed that the alliance would be willing to negotiate with the Communists over the solution of the political deadlock if the latter accepted the bloc's presidential candidate, while other two opposition leaders categorically denied such a possibility (Moldova Liberă 2009a).

<sup>105</sup> The deputies were, nevertheless, disciplined by the PCRM leader and did not cast votes in favour of the opposition candidate. After the elections, they ultimately left PCRM and joined a small, extra-parliamentary faction, the United Moldova.

for the elections of their candidate as the head of state. The process turned out to be a very tortuous endeavour<sup>106</sup> and the president was finally elected after over 900 days of political deadlock. A neutral Nicolae Timofti was eventually endorsed with votes of 62 deputies – 58 from the AEI coalition, three from the Dodon's socialist splinters and one cast by the PLDM defector Godea (Moldova Liberă 2012b).

Given his relative detachment from any clear political links, the period of Timofti's presidency (2012-2016) offers an excellent opportunity to understand how the Moldovan parliamentarism worked with regard to the division of competencies among various branches of power. In this respect, even though the president lost part of his legitimacy stemming from direct elections, the 2000 amendment still upheld part of his/her competencies in executive and legislative fields. Indeed, although Timofti's mandate had a rather conciliatory nature, he certainly was not a mere figurehead as he exploited this structural opportunity on a number of occasions (Moldova Liberă 2016c) – perhaps, the most important one represented by his intervention in the political deadlock over the nomination of prime minister between 2015 and 2016.

More specifically, considering the failure of the parliament to propose a new candidate within 45 days following the motion of censure successfully adopted against the Strelet cabinet on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2015, the president made his own choice to name the former prime minister Ion Sturza (1999)<sup>107</sup> who, nevertheless, resigned once it became clear he would fail to gain the parliamentary confidence (Moldova Liberă 2016a). The second decisive step was taken by the president a few weeks later when he refused to nominate the candidate indicated by the parliamentary majority, i.e. leader of the PDM party, Vlad Plahotniuc, motivating his decision by reasonable doubts about the candidate's integrity<sup>108</sup>. Instead, he appointed Ion Păduraru (presedinte.md 2016b), a lawyer and former Minister of Justice (1998-1999), who, however, also did not

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<sup>106</sup> The first attempt enacted on the 16<sup>th</sup> December 2011 failed as the alliance did not respect the agreement reached a few weeks earlier with a group of PCRM splinters led by the former Minister of Economy and Trade, Igor Dodon. Indeed, since the Alliance did not present a technocrat candidate, as negotiated with the Socialists, the three deputies along with non-affiliated, former PLDM Godea voted against, the AEI candidate, Marian Lupu (Moldova Liberă 2011d). The second attempt to elect the president was set for the 15<sup>th</sup> of January 2012; yet, unexpectedly the Constitutional Court ruling of 12<sup>th</sup> January declared the first round of elections invalid based on the ground of procedural violations. This decision, firmly criticized by the PCRM, gave the ruling alliance more time to find not only a new common candidate following the resignation of Lupu<sup>106</sup>, but also to build a larger coalition which would guarantee the necessary support of 61 deputies. Such agreement was reached over the name of the chair of the Supreme Magistrate Council, Nicolae Timofti proposed by the Liberal Party, presented few days before the scheduled elections (Moldova Liberă 2012a).

<sup>107</sup> Despite being a former Moldovan prime minister, at the moment of his nomination Ion Sturza was not affiliated to any political force in Moldova as he was living in Romania where he ran his business (Journal.md 2015b).

<sup>108</sup> The head of state evoked the previous decision of the parliament (Decision № 5, 2013) to reject Plahotniuc's candidature as Parliamentary speaker stemming from his alleged involvement in illegal activities, which were considered by the assembly as harmful for the image of the parliament as well as for the country's reputation (presedinte.md 2016a).

manage to find the parliamentary support and was, eventually, replaced by the nominee of the parliamentary majority, Pavel Filip (Moldova Liberă 2016b) in January 2016. In sum, even though the presidential role in cabinet formation was rather limited, his intervention certainly represented an important factor in mobilizing the parliament to solve the almost three-month deadlock.

The discussion conducted thus far has provided empirical evidence of a few structural effects that the constitutional arrangement of Moldovan parliamentarism had on party and party system development. By setting up a quite high requirement (three-fifths majority) for the presidential election, the 2010 constitutional amendment played an important role in framing the inter-party competition. There are two main expectations that follow from this finding. Firstly, it can be assumed that by strengthening the role of the assembly as a negotiation arena, the parliamentary regime provided an incentive for Moldovan parties to become more disciplined, and relatively ideologically coherent, in order to increase their bargaining weight. Furthermore, the dynamic of Moldovan politics, which, since 2001 parliamentary elections have pitted, in general terms, the Communists (PCRM) against all the other anti-communist, pro-EU formations, may suggest that under the parliamentary regime, the inter-party competition stabilized and assumed a programmatic, rather than personal structure. The following sections will attempt to determine whether these expectations hold true in the Moldovan case.

The first of the abovementioned assumptions can be tested through a careful look at the voting patterns in the presidential election. In this context, in seeking the necessary support for their presidential candidates, parties were constrained by the relatively strong internal discipline of their counterparts. Consequently, as discussed in Chapter 3, the most common strategy of the incumbents in gathering the missing votes consisted of encouraging deputies, through formal and informal means<sup>109</sup>, to defect from the opposition parties in the exchange for some institutional and policy-oriented benefits<sup>110</sup>. Interestingly enough, the ideological dimension of the competition prevented defectors from simply “turning coats” between the mainstream parties; instead, they either establish new (as PLDM) or adhered to the existing, but relatively weak, formations (as it was the case of the PCRM splinters who defected to PDM and PSRM).

The first instance of such political realignment took place in 2005 in the wake of presidential elections: as mentioned few sections earlier, in order to assure the missing five votes, the PCRM managed to convince two, out of three components of the Democratic Moldova Bloc (MDB), namely the PDM and the

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<sup>109</sup> In this respect, the PCRM leader Vladimir Voronin has claimed that Igor Dodon who defected in November 2011 with two other PCRM deputies was paid 3 million euros by the PDM leader Vlad Plahotniuc in exchange for voting for the AEI presidential candidate Timofti in 2012 (Jurnal.md 2016c).

<sup>110</sup> At this point it is important to keep in mind that many of the crucial decisions were taken through informal channels and, consequently, many of those benefits could also have had an informal nature.



PSL, to distance themselves from the Bloc: the first party left the alliance already two weeks after the parliamentary elections, while the latter formally remained its constituent part at the moment of voting. Although the leaders of all formations supporting Voronin's candidature motivated their decision by the sense of responsibility towards the country's future that would have been put in jeopardy by the lack of consensus on presidential elections (RFE/RL 2005b), all of them extracted some concessions from the PCRM<sup>111</sup>.

Another important realignment of the Moldovan political scene took place in 2009<sup>112</sup> with a wave of defections from the Communist Party. In this respect, some scholars have argued that the splits resulted mostly from the party's declining support evidenced by the 2007 local elections which, in turn, significantly increased the probability of the intense vote-seeking, in the wake of presidential elections by the end of 2009 (Hale 2014). Such an assumption was further strengthened by the pre-electoral pledges of all parties, except with the PPCD, to not engage, under any circumstance, in cooperation with the Communists in the new parliament elected in April 2009 (Moldova Liberă 2011a; 2009b).

Finally, in the light of what has been said thus far, it would appear that the institutional features of the Moldovan parliamentarism, in particular, the three-fifths majority required for the presidential election, played an important role in stabilizing the ideological dimension of inter-party competition emerged at the outset of transition from Soviet rule. Indeed, almost all electoral rounds pitted the, generally defined, pro-Russian parties (PCRM and, since 2011, PSRM) against a broader group of pro-European formations, while the informal partnership between PCRM and the pro-EU factions in 2005, was possible mainly due to the PCRM's change of identity from strictly pro-Russian towards more Westward orientation. Nevertheless, by over-emphasizing this ideological orientation exploited for political reasons, the parliamentary system proved detrimental for the development of programmatic competition; on the contrary, it strengthened its personalized nature. This was particularly visible in the pro-European camp, which tied up formations with little common ground besides the anti-Russian predisposition and with clearly rivalling leaders.

More specifically, the anti-PCRM coalition established after the April 2009 elections was united and disciplined when it came to blocking the Communist candidate for president, but it was significantly much less so in governmental politics. Furthermore, the logic of competition dictated by the institutional structure of the parliamentary regime provided significant incentives for its members to pursue their own, separate

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<sup>111</sup> See fn. 102.

<sup>112</sup> Despite a general declaration of the will to establish an anti-Communist party, the defection of Vlad Filat from the PDM and the launched of his new formation, the PLDM in October 2007, cannot be directly linked to the logic of regime type but rather to the Filat's personal political ambitions (ADEPT 2007).

political agendas<sup>113</sup>. But the intense bargaining frequently took place within the coalition itself – for instance in 2011 in exchange of the endorsement of the PDM’s leader, Marian Lupu, as presidential candidate, the PLDM party of premier Filat advanced a few conditions, the fulfilment of which should have been guaranteed in writing; on their part, the PDM requested that the PLDM respects the agreement of unitary vote for the Parliamentary Speaker, the leader of the third AEI member, the PL<sup>114</sup>. While it could be argued that the internal bargaining is a standard process in coalition building, the circumstances surrounding the use of parliamentary instruments of control constitute further evidence confirming the personalized nature of political competition in Moldova under the parliamentary system. In this respect, both censure motions moved against the AEI cabinets proposed by the PCRM were eventually endorsed with the support of some of the alliances’ members<sup>115</sup>.

That said, and as a brief summary, the parliamentary system had a few important consequences for political developments in Moldova. Firstly, it stabilized the ideological dimension of party competition, crystallized at the outset of transition from the Soviet rule, at the expense of a more programmatic orientation. Furthermore, the logic of coalition-building determined by the three-fifths majority requirement to elect the head of state further reinforced the leader-oriented nature of parties by encouraging self-interest extraction during the bargaining process. Thirdly, the parliamentary system provided a new institutional structure for the old intra-elite struggle and, in this respect, did not substantially alter its logic. It did, however, contributed to party system stabilization around a few well-distinguished political parties by enhancing their internal discipline and limiting the proliferation of new formations.

Against this background, the newly re-established direct presidential elections held in 2016 upheld the pattern of inter-party competition materialized during the previous two forms of government. More

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<sup>113</sup> Suffices to recall the already mentioned confusion pertaining to the first AEI coalition established in 2009, which allowed Urechean, leader of the AMN party, to engage in separate negotiations with PCRM should the Communists accept his candidature for presidency, which went clearly against the informal agreement with the remaining two pro-EU formations.

<sup>114</sup> Besides obtaining the vote on the Law on Budgetary and Fiscal Policy specifically requested by the PLDM, the party submitted additional conditions, including the written agreement on not dismissing the government, led by the PLDM leader Vlad Filat, during the three remaining years of its mandate as well as on not engaging in negotiations with the PCRM, granting support to the de-politicization of the Prosecutor's Office as well as asking the Alliance candidate to resign as the head of state once the parliamentary mandate would expire, that is, after only three years of office (Moldova Liberă 2011c).

<sup>115</sup> Curiously enough, right after the no confidence vote for Filat’s second government in March 2013, supported by 15 deputies of the AEI constituent party, the PDM, the very same members of the dismissed cabinet entered into the successive one endorsed in May 2013 and supported by the same PDM deputies who voted to dismiss them. Likewise, and perhaps even more oddly, part of the same ministries censured by PDM, PCRM and PSRM votes in October 2015 for alleged corruption, made part of the cabinet established in January 2016 with the confirmation vote of PDM, among others.

specifically, already in the first round of the contest, the major players from the pro-Western camp coalesced around a common candidate<sup>116</sup>, Maia Sandu, leader of the newly established Party of Action and Solidarity (PAS) pitted against the PSRM leader, pro-Russian Igor Dodon. The established pro-EU/pro-Russia alignment was also visible in the run-off when the minor pro-EU candidate who ran on a separate ticket in the first round expressed his support for Sandu (ADEPT 2016).

Given the time limitation of this dissertation, but also the relatively short amount of time since the most recent regime change, it is certainly hazardous to formulate any conclusions pertaining to its impact on party and party system development. One important observation, however, can be made: considering that the re-introduction of direct elections was not accompanied by the revision of presidential powers, the role of the head of state in the political process has been significantly limited. In this respect, all the political activities of the president have been, so far, systematically impeded by the Constitutional Court: in particular, his initiatives are considered to be in contradiction with the content of presidential constitutional prerogatives leading to the frequent suspending of President Dodon from office (RFE/RL 2017, 2018). This suggests that the president would not constitute a significant veto player in the future in institutional terms; however, it can be expected that his/her position will also depend on the informal powers stemming from the respective strength of his/her supportive party.

#### **5.4. Conclusions**

The chief task of this chapter was to determine whether any causal linkage can be traced between the regime type and the development/stabilisation of parties and party systems in Georgia and Moldova in a cross-temporal perspective. The main assumption underpinning the empirical analysis was that the greater the extent of presidential autonomy in interfering in the political outcomes, the weaker the individual parties will be. In turn, stronger position of the president within the system was expected to be associated with the higher power concentration, which, in turn, could lead to respective systemic predominance. Contrarily, weaker institutional leverages granted to the president would emphasize the role of the disciplined parties in providing support for the cabinet. This, in turn, would constitute an institutional incentive for the development of organizationally and ideologically coherent formations leading to more predictable patterns of inter-party competition. The analysis has clearly shown that both countries differed in terms of their formal constitutional preferences with Georgia opting for president-dominated systems and Moldova choosing the parliament-dominated ones. Bearing this in mind, there are three main conclusions that can be drawn from this study.

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<sup>116</sup> Following the resignation of the PDM candidate Marian Lupu (Moldova Liberă 2016h; Jurnal.md 2016b).

Firstly, the political actors involved in regime crafting in both countries often found themselves constrained by external factors when preparing constitutional designs while their projects have not always generated the expected outcomes. This was especially the case of the 2000 constitutional amendment in Moldova, followed by a complete re-configuration of its political landscape, leaving most of the supporters of this revision outside the political arena. Likewise, even though the 2004 constitutional revision in Georgia was certainly intended to guarantee the central political role of the president, its specific content was an outcome of the informal division of powers among the three Rose Revolution leaders and, at least formally, allowed for a certain equilibrium of the checks-and-balances system. Indeed, it was only when one of them, i.e. the prime minister, passed away, that the entire power structure tilted pronouncedly towards the president.

The second crucial finding reveals that the constitutional choices in both countries have not always resembled the ‘ideal types’ rendering the relationship between the system of government and political outcomes contingent on country-specific circumstances. In the course of my analysis, I have observed that the effects of president-oriented systems of government in Georgia have been more consistent with theoretical expectations, albeit with some attenuations. On the one hand, the presidential position as the decisive centre clearly undermined the role of party politics and hindered the development of programmatic parties, instead enhancing their leader-oriented nature. Furthermore, the “winner-takes-all” nature of the presidential competition was instrumental in stabilizing party competition around the pro-incumbent/anti-incumbent divide while the proximity of presidential and parliamentary contests provided institutional incentives for voters to generate mono-coloured supporting majority. The existence of a supportive majority in Georgia between 2004 and 2012 rendered his authority more conspicuous than it would appear only from the content of the constitutional provisions as illustrated, for instance, by the brief cohabitation period between 2012 and 2013. On the other hand, the clear party affiliation of the Georgian presidents running against the experience of the “above-party” position of heads of state in the region paradoxically contributed to enhancing the political accountability of the ruling party.

It has been often argued that the “(S)emi-presidential systems in the former Soviet Union are either disguised dictatorships or (...) anocracies dominated by presidents. Parliament in no case is an effective counterweight to presidential power” (von Beyme 2001, 17). Yet the Moldovan case clearly runs counter to this pattern: indeed, for the entire duration of the premier-presidential regime the parliament always effectively counterbalanced the president. Nevertheless, the major consequence of the semi-presidential system on party development in Moldova was its inflationary effect on party system format. In fact, a combination of presidential prerogatives and direct elections provided substantially rewarding institutional incentives for the representatives of the political elite to run on a separate ticket. The mixed system of

government also introduced more uncertainty regarding the direction of competition by establishing a separate veto player pursuing his/her own political agenda and seeking support for these initiatives among parties from across the political spectrum.

The parliamentary form of government appears to have been more conducive to party system stabilization around a few, well-distinguished political formations, even though the one-party dominance during the two consecutive parliamentary terms (2001-2009) certainly did not contribute to the enhancement of party politics. Furthermore, the three-fifths majority required for presidential elections in all the three consecutive attempts caused the Moldovan parliamentarism to function according to a distorted logic making of the presidential election the core dimension of political competition. The inter-party bargaining aimed at securing enough votes for own's candidate enhanced the importance of cohesive party structures, especially considering that the failure to elect the head of state would result in assembly's dissolution. It also decreased, to certain extent, the weight of the PCRM's domination – and that of the entire predominant nature of party system – between 2005 and 2009.

To summarize, the ultimate outcomes of the systems of government adopted in both countries have been ambiguous, even though the more party-oriented regimes in Moldova have, in general, been more conducive to the development of stronger party structures than the Georgian president-oriented ones.

## **Chapter 6. The electoral system and the party system**

The shifting of parties' main function from representative to institutional (Bartolini and Mair 2001) accompanied by the strengthening of their office and policy-seeking nature (van Biezen 2008; Katz and Mair 1995), the electoral competition has become one of the essential pillars of party politics (Epstein 1980). Consequently, the regularity in holding fair, competitive elections is now considered as crucial for the development of stable and representative political systems (Moser 1995) and the electoral results are commonly employed as a proxy to determine political consolidation at the party and systemic levels (Dalton 2008; Sartori 1976).

The first, more systematic efforts to examine the political consequences of electoral systems were undertaken already by Duverger (1954), Eckstein (1963) and Rae (1971) while the most prominent stream of these studies – and also most relevant for my purposes – has revolved around uncovering how the mechanical (i.e. translation of votes into seats) and psychological (i.e. incentives shaping parties' and voters' electoral strategies) aspects of electoral laws determine party system format.

The main objective of this chapter is to determine how the electoral systems in Georgia and Moldova have contributed to shaping their parties and party systems, and to what extent they have sustained their consolidation over time. To this end, the discussion is organized as follows. Firstly, review the main theoretical arguments advanced in the literature in order to formulate some hypotheses followed by the analytical framework, which will guide the empirical analysis. This theoretical section is followed by the analytical discussion consisting of two parts: the first proposes a brief sketch of the evolution of electoral designs in both countries from a diachronic perspective; the second analyses the consequences of electoral systems for political developments in Georgia and Moldova. The conclusive part of the chapter offers a discussion of the main findings from a comparative perspective.

### **6.1. Theoretical considerations and analytical framework**

The electoral system is a “set of rules that regulates access to electoral competition, defines the conditions under which candidates compete, and provides a method for the translation of votes into governmental positions” (Morgenstern and Vázquez-D'Elía 2007, 145). The traditional way of classifying an electoral system is based on the degree of proportionality, understood as the “distortion between the number of votes a party wins and the number of seats it ends up with in parliament” (Farrell 2011, 143; Lijphart 1994; Norris 1997). In general terms, paraphrasing Sartori, by posing fewer constraints to party system fragmentation, the proportional (PR) systems aim at assuring the *representative justice* while by amplifying the victories of a

narrow number of political actors the majoritarian/plurality<sup>1</sup> ones focus on *governing capability* (Sartori 1966, 173; 1999, 23). Mixed electoral systems follow a different logic, which confuses voters and renders predictions on their possible effects more difficult. In fact, as pointed out by Sartori "perhaps the advocates of plurality-PR hybrids believe that they are bringing together the best of two worlds; but they are likely to obtain, instead, a bastard-producing hybrid which combines their defects" (Sartori 1994, 75)<sup>2</sup>.

### **6.1.1. Electoral systems and their political consequences**

Following Eckstein who wondered whether the "electoral systems only express the deeper determinants of society" (Eckstein 1963, 253), scholars for long remained unconvinced of the ability of electoral laws to truly generate party systems' types (Sartori 1968). Consequently, it was the 'reversed' causality – i.e. the mechanisms through which electoral laws preserve rather than produce party systems – that occupied more prominent place in electoral research (Grumm 1958; Farrell 2011; Rokkan 1970; Colomer 2005). Nevertheless, as convincingly pointed out by Sartori, the fact that electoral systems – as well as other formal institutions, for that matter – originate from deliberate political choices does not invalidate their ability to affect political outcomes. In other words, "once in place electoral systems become causative factors that produce, in their turn, consequence of consequence" (Sartori 1994, 27) and their effects "can be adequately predicted and determined" (Sartori 1994, 29).

The conspicuous electoral research has now proved right the Sartori's arguments by demonstrating how electoral laws affects voters, parties and party systems through two mechanisms – 'psychological' in terms of channelling their electoral strategies and 'mechanical' in terms of translating votes into seats (Nohlen 1984; Duverger 1954; Grofman 2009). To begin with the first aspect, the psychological effect on voters has proved difficult to capture and measure as this would require, *inter alia*, an analysis of complete and extensive individual-level, panel databases. However, looking at the longitudinal evolution of the number of wasted votes as a percentage of all the casted ballots may allow formulating some educated assumptions on whether, with time, the electorates have learned about the mechanisms of electoral laws and have adjusted their electoral strategies accordingly.

Broadly speaking, at the individual party level, the majoritarian/plurality systems are expected to be more favourable towards the individual candidates than the rather party-oriented PR, even though this relationship is often of a more distal nature (Sartori 1999). What certainly does affect parties and their

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<sup>1</sup> Understood in general terms as the double-ballot majority systems and the first-past-the-post plurality systems.

<sup>2</sup> Frequently, a fourth category is being employed, namely the quasi-proportional systems using the single transferable vote (STV); nevertheless, there is no general consensus among scholars about how much proportionality does the STV actually generate (Grofman and Lijphart 1986; Taagepera and Shugart 1989; Blondel 1969; Lijphart 1994).

organizational structures is the extent to which voters can change the order of electoral candidates (Farrell 2011). In this respect, closed-party lists will be beneficial to parties by emphasizing their exclusive role in candidate selection and placement on the ballot as opposed to the open-lists. Furthermore, the ballot structure can affect intra-party competition – in fact, electoral systems allowing to cast a number of preferential votes instead of a single nominative one have been found to increase the internal rivalries while enhancing the individual-based electoral campaign at the expenses of party visibility (Rae 1967; Moser 1995; Taagepera and Shugart 1989; Katz 1980)<sup>3</sup>.

The crucial consequence of electoral laws on political outcomes at the systemic level is that “in translating the votes cast in a general election into seats in the legislature, (it) effectively determines who is elected and which party gains power” (Reynolds, Reilly, and Ellis 2008, 5). The academic discussion on political consequences of electoral systems originated with the path-breaking propositions formulated in 1951 by Maurice Duverger who argued that “(1) Proportional representation tends to lead to the formation of many independent parties,(...); (2) the two-ballot majority system tends to lead to the formation of many parties that are allied with each other,(...) and (3) the plurality rule tends to produce a two-party system” (Duverger 1986, 70, and 1954). Although questioned on a number of accounts, including the direction of causality<sup>4</sup> and lack of the law-like generalization potential of these assumptions (Bogdanor and Butler 1983)<sup>5</sup>, the Duverger’s perspective suggested that the degree of proportionality of the electoral design is correlated with party system’s format.

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<sup>3</sup> In his analysis of the effects of 1993 parliamentary elections on party development in Russia, Moser discusses one additional type – the nonpartisan ballots, which provide a list of candidates without indicating their partisan affiliation. Yet the lack of systematic comparative research renders it difficult to discuss the effects of this type of ballot, which would go beyond specific national contexts (Moser 1995).

<sup>4</sup> While preparing the ground for the institutional approach in explaining political developments, Duverger was challenged by the disciples of the sociological school who claimed that party systems were mostly structured by social cleavages rather than by institutional variables. In this vein, the electoral systems were perceived as having even less importance (Rokkan and Lipset 1967; Cox 1997; Grumm 1958; Blondel 1969) considering that the nature of their relationship with political outcomes is not “directly causal” as the electoral laws simply “constrain and channel a country’s pre-existing configuration of political parties” (Moser 1995, 381, see also Rokkan 1970; Sartori 1999; Boix 1999; Colomer 2005).

<sup>5</sup> In this respect, Sartori argued that the “proportional representation has been consistently discussed under a misleading optic” for that instead of generating fragmentation, it simply “does nothing to prevent the fragmentation of party systems” (Sartori 1966, 173). Indeed, it is in the case of majoritarian/plurality system that the causality is more visible. Furthermore, an important criticism pertained to the fact that Duverger ascribed the inflationary/deflationary impact to electoral laws, but without specifying how this effect should be measured (Sartori 1986). Most importantly, the empirical testing of the Duvergerian propositions have evidenced that his assumptions work mostly at the district rather than at the national level (Grofman and Lijphart 1986; Taagepera and Shugart 1989; 1993; Lijphart 1994; Riker 1982; Sartori 1999).



Relying on the assumption that “(...) the number of parties is subject to electoral control and engineering” (Sartori 1966, 174), it can be assumed that a higher degree of electoral disproportionality is associated with lower systemic fragmentation (Bartolini and Mair 1990; Farrell 2011; Lijphart 1994; Taagepera and Shugart 1989). In this way, the variation of fragmentation becomes an indicator of the amplifying/reductive effect of electoral design (Sartori 1986). Having said that, the degree of proportionality depends mainly on three elements – the district magnitude, the electoral formula and the ballot structure (Lijphart 1994).

In his seminal study, Rae (1967) suggested that the systems’ disproportionality mostly depends on district magnitude, i.e. the number of mandates distributed within each electoral district. Rae’s initial hunch has been confirmed by a long line of scholars who argued that “if one had to give a single major factor (affecting party system format), it would have to be the *district magnitude* (M)” (Taagepera and Shugart 1993, 455; see also Cox 1997; Lijphart 1994; Taagepera and Shugart 1989; Benoit 2007). Following this logic “the effective number of electoral parties is usually within plus or minus 1 unit from  $N = 1.25 (2 + \log M)$ ” (Taagepera and Shugart 1989, 142–55).

More concretely, it can be expected that the majoritarian/plurality systems coupled with low district magnitudes will have a deflationary impact on party systems. The mechanism leading to this outcome is mostly based on the psychological aspect of electoral laws, namely – with time – parties unable to win seats in single-member districts will be abandoned by voters who will transfer their support to those with higher winning potential (Duverger 1954). Furthermore, smaller parties will be incentivized to form electoral coalitions in order to maximize their chances to win representation. Likewise, the district magnitude will determine the multiplying/reductive effect of PR systems – lower values (i.e. <5) will be beneficial to bigger parties by increasing their winning prospects (Cox 1997) while those higher than 20 will favour smaller formations, also because the fear of “wasting” votes among the electorate will be lower (Moser 1995; Lijphart 1994; Rae 1967; Taagepera and Shugart 1989). Consequently, PR systems with larger district magnitudes usually lead to more fractionalized party systems (Sartori 1976), but this relationship is not deterministic as clearly demonstrated by the Austrian example of a two-party system and PR representation (Moser 1995).

The second element affecting proportionality is the electoral formula, i.e. the mathematical calculation through which votes are translated into seats. There seems to be a general consensus on the following order starting from the most proportional, i.e. the largest remainder Hare–Niemeyer method, followed by Sainte-Laguë, largest remainder-Droop, modified Sainte-Laguë, d’Hondt, the largest remainder – Imperiali, and closing the rank by the least proportional majoritarian single-member districts (Farrell 2011, 145). Thirdly, the ballot structure allowing voters to rank the candidates according to their preferences is

expected to have a multiplying potential as opposed to that required to choose just one competitor associated with a reductive effect at the systemic level (Rae 1967; Moser 1995; Taagepera and Shugart 1989)<sup>6</sup>.

Besides these mechanical properties, the level of electoral proportionality acts as a powerful filter regulating party chances in the electoral competition through concrete electoral prizes. In this regard, in the majoritarian/plurality systems functioning according to the “winner-take-it-all” principle, the potential electoral losses of individual parties are much higher while the potential victories are much more amplified than in PR system, which may have a reductive impact on the number of competitors. On the contrary, the PR system not only is more prone to multiply the number of parties but also offers more structural opportunities for smaller formations (including the extremist parties) to engage in the political process (Moser 1995). Consequently, the majoritarian/plurality systems tend to stimulate party aggregation while the PR once is inclined to incentivize fragmentation (Sartori 1999, 24).

Furthermore, while not directly linked to electoral systems in the traditional sense, in the post-communist polities the participation criteria have often constituted significant institutional constraints for the newer/smaller parties’ penetration into the system. In particular, it appears that a higher number and wider geographical distribution of signatures required for electoral registration prevent smaller and/or regional formations from electoral participation (Moser 1995). A similar function may be performed by the electoral deposit, which, depending on its amount, may constitute a potentially exclusionary criterion in polities with high financial inequalities among parties. Along the same lines, scholars of post-communist electoral systems have suggested looking into the structure of electoral designs through the lens of their “permeability toward independent candidates” (Moser 1995, 379).

Against this backdrop, students of post-communist electoral systems have pointed out that the consequences of electoral laws on political outcomes in the region have not followed the predicted patterns (Moser 1999). This is in line with the long-standing argument that the exact way in which the electoral system influences the political outcomes depends on the degree of party system structuration (Sartori 1986). Therefore, when seeking to understand the relationship between the electoral laws on the one hand, and the political outcomes – understood in terms of both, party system fragmentation and stabilization over time – it appears reasonable to extend the focus beyond the individual aspects of electoral laws (Morgenstern and Vázquez-D’Elía 2007). In fact, I strongly support the argument that, at least in the context of consolidating party system, the effects of electoral designs are “the product of particular national circumstances and actors”

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<sup>6</sup> In his analysis of the effects of 1993 parliamentary elections on party development in Russia, Moser discusses one additional type – the nonpartisan ballots, which provide a list of candidates without indicating their partisan affiliation. Yet the lack of systematic comparative research renders it difficult to discuss the effects of this type of ballot, which would go beyond specific national contexts (Moser 1995).

(Farrell 2011, 164) while their consequences “cannot be understood simply in terms of definitional and abstract properties; they must be evaluated by the analysis of an electoral-system-in-a-political system” (Rose 1984, 78).

### **6.1.2. Analytical framework**

The central puzzle that this chapter seeks to solve is the question of whether, and to what extent, the electoral designs in both countries have affected the development and consolidation of their respective party systems over time. To this end, it is divided into two parts. The first aims at shedding more light on the political context surrounding the institutional crafting, which will also allow for visibility as to how successful the parties have been in manipulating the rules to their advantages. The discussion is based on the assumptions that electoral systems are “the most specific manipulative instrument of politics” (Sartori 1968, 273) while the political calculations and strategies of dominant actors have constituted a notable “intervening factor between the electoral laws and the overall shape of the party systems” (Gunther 1989, 835).

The second part of the chapter is constituted by a more fine-grained discussion on electoral systems’ consequences on voters, parties and party systems. The main argument underpinning the study is that the endogeneity of electoral designs does not preclude their potential to affect party development. In other words, in manipulating electoral laws, political actors do make calculations based on the expected outcomes that these manoeuvres might generate, which “confirm rather than mitigate” their independent consequences (Benoit 2007, 369). That said, the analysis proceeds in a few steps.

Following the example of post-communist party researchers, the first step will consist in establishing a correlation between the electoral proportionality, understood in this chapter as the “deviation from proportionality between the vote and seat shares and the effective number of parties” (Birch 2003, 47), and the party system format. The degree of electoral proportionality is operationalized by the least-squares index (Lsq.) devised by Gallagher who considered it as a “happy medium” (1991, 41) between other similar measurements and viewed it as the “most sensitive and faithful reflection of the disproportionality of electoral results” (Lijphart 1994, 67). Party system format is operationalized through the Golosov’s ENP index (Golosov 2010), in line with the analytical choice made in the introductory part of this thesis, but will also be integrated by the standard indicator of the absolute number of parties in order to address the issue in a more exhaustive way.

To better capture the dynamics of party systems over time, the second step will consist of tracking the impact of electoral designs on party system shape through the distribution of popular support in terms of the vote and seat share of the two largest parties (Birch 2003). This will show us more clearly to what extent the

electoral systems affect competitiveness and will provide the first indication of their potential role in stabilizing party systems in Georgia and Moldova over time.

Finally, in order to reflect on the consequences of electoral systems for political consolidation, they will be discussed through the lens of their main components, in particular by the legal threshold, the electoral formula employed for vote-to-seat translation and the structure of electoral districts<sup>7</sup>. In fact, as convincingly argued by Lijphart, the variation of 20 percent of these elements is “sufficiently important to alter the rules of competition so that new mechanical effects or strategic incentives (will) affect the stability of party systems” (1994).

## **6.2. The evolution of electoral systems**

The main argument running through the majority of studies on electoral laws is that their far-reaching consequences for party systems cannot become evident until their full absorption by the political elites who “learn how to use them” (Birch 2003, 3). While this assumption is well-grounded in the traditional electoral research, students of new democracies have systematically emphasized the fundamental role of the earliest institutional arrangements for subsequent political developments (Nohlen, Thibaut, and Krennerich 1999; Moser 2001b; Juberías 2004). Hence, the distinction between various stages of electoral crafting, driven by different motivations and generating different outcomes appears to be analytically justified (Birch et al. 2002).

More concretely, the main objective of the institutional engineering at the outset of transition was to create the most favourable conditions for democracy to become ‘the only game in town’: in this vein, the electoral designs aimed at providing a right balance between the representativeness and governability (Birch et al. 2002; Bielasiak 2005). Yet, as evidenced by numerous studies, they also served another purpose: in countries where the communist *nomenklatura* maintained its political dominance, the electoral laws were crafted in a way to minimise its risks of losing power; contrarily, in polities controlled by the opposition forces, they were aimed at preventing the Communists from maintaining influence (Herron 2009; Birch et al. 2002; Moser 1995; Millard 2004). The subsequent revisions of electoral legislation have already had a clear interest-driven nature as – through the process of political learning – the incumbents have advanced their understanding of how to manipulate institutional rules to their advantage (Taagepera 2002, 259).

Having in mind these considerations, in the following section I analyse the content of the electoral laws adopted in Georgia and Moldova at different stages of their crafting. The underlying principle of this

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<sup>7</sup> Although, in line with the theoretical considerations outlined in section 6.1.1, the district magnitude has been generally considered as the single, most consequential component of the electoral system, it has rather limited explanatory value for the countries under examination as in both of them one, nation-wide electoral district has been employed (in PR tier in Georgia).

section is that the choice of the particular design was dictated by the specific national context in line with the reasoning of Kitschelt who claimed that “(P)ost-communist electoral laws are largely the product of the political context in each state at the start of the transition process (or prior to it)” (Kitschelt et al. 1999, 18). In this vein, the analysis takes as the starting point the two commonly shared legacies, namely the Soviet electoral design as well as the ‘dislocation’ of electoral engineering outside the ordinary political procedure (Bielasiak 2002), considering that in both countries the process was constrained by exogenous factors, namely the ongoing military conflicts resulted in subsequent loss of control over part of their territories.

### **6.2.1. The two generations of electoral laws**

The institutional set up of the Soviet Union sought to preserve the power monopoly of the Communist Party along with the centralized control of the Soviet authorities over the local administrations of the USSR republics. In this context, the basics of the Soviet electoral system were discussed already in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century by Lenin, yet it was the Stalin’s 1936 majoritarian design that constituted its essence preserved in an almost unchanged form until the late 1980s. According to this idea, the USSR electoral system was based on single-mandate territorial districts, the absolute majority requirement as well as the exclusive control of the national Communist Parties over the final nomination of candidates (Herron 2009; Zaslavsky and Brym 1978). After the demise of the Soviet rule, the post-Soviet polities (with the exception of Belarus and the Central Asian republics) abandoned the majoritarian system in favour of a more proportional representation of either PR or mixed type (Furtak 1990). Another peculiar feature of the electoral engineering in the region lies within the constitutional entrenchment of the electoral rules, which, at least formally, has posed important institutional constraints on the actors wishing to revise them. This is the case of Georgia which prescribes the general features of electoral design in its Constitution (art. 49).

Against this backdrop, the fundamental aspect of the first phase of electoral reforms consisted of liberalising the political competition before regulating it through electoral laws. In this vein, the gradual opening towards multi-candidate elections in the USSR was already launched in 1987 when five percent of the delegates came from multi-member districts – although the extent of this opening can appear modest at first glance it proved of crucial importance in the erosion, and eventual collapse, of the Soviet system (Birch et al. 2002). The second important feature is that the ultimate shape of the electoral system was the natural outcome of bargaining between the major political actors involved in the negotiations over the institutional design (Kaminski 2002; Birch 2003; Bielasiak 2002; Moser 2001b). From a theoretical perspective it has been argued that PR was preferred in polities where the opposition prevailed in the power struggle as well as in those countries where the regime liberalized due to exogenous circumstances rather than on its own, while the mixed systems were adopted in communist-dominated countries (Shugart 1998; Birch et al. 2002).

The electoral designs adopted in view of the founding elections remained quintessentially unchanged for more than two decades in both Georgia and Moldova, even though their specific components – in particular, the legal threshold – were the object of frequent modifications. Currently, the main rules of Georgian elections are contained in the Constitution and the Unified Electoral Code (UEC) adopted in 2001<sup>8</sup>, while the specific electoral rules in Moldova are contained in the Electoral Code (EC) adopted in 1997.

#### **6.2.1.1. Georgia**

As discussed in Chapter 1, the political chaos initiated by the 9<sup>th</sup> April 1989 massacre, culminating in three civil wars as well as the persistence of several competitive centres of power induced the leaders of the interim Military Council to devise a highly inclusive electoral system, perceived as “a legitimizing device” to install an accountable government (IFES 1992a, 10). To this end, it eventually opted for a parallel mixed system<sup>9</sup>. Hence, in October 1992 Georgian citizens were called to elect the new Assembly composed of 235 members according to the following rules: eighty-four MPs through a double-ballot majority vote<sup>10</sup> in single-member districts based on the existing, eighty-four administrative *raions*, 150 deputies through a PR system from

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<sup>8</sup> Earlier, each type of election was governed by a separate set of legislative provisions.

<sup>9</sup> Instead of the initial STV and with no legal threshold to elect deputies in multimember districts, the mixed system was chosen from among eight different proposals advanced by a special committee responsible for electoral reform. Such preference was dictated by two, intertwined reasons: on the one hand, by the necessity to maximize social inclusion in the voting process and prevent one political party or electoral bloc from gaining the dominant position; on the other it was driven by the fear of the weak authorities of “alienating even quite minor actors” (Wheatley 2005, 69). It was also aimed at satisfying the local/regional power networks whose representatives ran in the SMD races. But the choice was also motivated by more pragmatic reasons. Firstly, the newly appointed chairman of the CEC raised reasonable doubts about the capacity of the Commission to oversee the electoral process, with regards to the process of complex votes counting (IFES 1992a). Furthermore, public debates on the peculiarities of the STV led to an increased awareness among the political parties that this system would leave them little space for exercising control over the candidates (IFES 1992b; Wheatley 2005).

<sup>10</sup> With a 50 percent threshold set for the candidate to win the contest and the second run based on the plurality principle foreseen for the two best placed candidates in case none managed to gain 50 percent of votes in the first round.

closed and blocked party lists in ten electoral districts<sup>11</sup> with a 2 percent legal threshold<sup>12</sup>, and, additionally, the Chairman of the Parliament by a majority vote in one, nation-wide constituency (IFES 1992b).

The most immediate consequence of the 1992 electoral system was the excessive fragmentation of the parliament as twenty-four formations (out of 47 contestants) obtained seats. Some scholars have argued that such an outcome was intentionally induced by the lawmakers – as the newly elected Assembly was conceived as a temporary body aimed at designing the institutional set up of the Georgian democratic regime, the maximum representativeness was certainly much desired. As such the political fractionalization of the Assembly left a significant imprint on the bargaining process over the ultimate shape of the Georgian regime (see Chapter 4 as well as Jones, 2012 and Wheatley, 2005).

Table 6.1 summarizes the evolution of the Georgian electoral system from the outset of transition until 2016. There are two crucial observations that follow from it: firstly, that the basic shape of the electoral design remained unchanged for the entire period under examination; secondly, that the major amendments regarded three aspects: the legal threshold, the share of mandates between the PR and majoritarian tiers as well as the formula employed in the redistribution of mandates. In fact, considering that the incumbent party had, almost always, disposed of constitutional majority, it did not shy away from tinkering with the rules. Furthermore, the fact that most of the amendments were carried out just a few months prior to the electoral date signals a rather clear intention of the incumbents to manipulate the electoral laws to their advantage.

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<sup>11</sup> The administrative division of the country was based on eighty-four *raions*, yet for electoral purposes, i.e. to allow for a sufficient number of votes in all of them, seventy-five electoral districts were established (IFES 1992a) since the elections were boycotted in nine districts located in the separatist regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as well as in Samegrelo – a region in Western Georgia torn by political unrest (Wheatley 2005). Indeed, 1992 elections were held in particularly difficult conditions considering the ongoing military conflict between Georgia and separatist Abkhazia which caused a massive deportation of ethnic Georgians from the Abkhazian territory and respective difficulties for the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) to assure the possibility for the refugees to vote (IFES 1992a; 1992b). In essence, there were eleven districts with two mandates, seven with three mandates, eleven with four mandates, eight with five mandates, four with six mandates and two (both located in the capital city, Tbilisi) with seven seats (IFES 1992a; 1992b).

<sup>12</sup> Each voter could indicate up to three parties on the party list ballot (IFES 1992b). Furthermore, the votes were translated into seats according to the Hare formula with the national-level compensatory lists foreseen for the redistribution of the remaining seats. The electoral design also included a very complex vote counting procedure (Kuchinka-Lančava and Grotz 2001).

**Table 6.1 The evolution of the electoral system in Georgia (1992-2016)**

Electoral system components	Election year						
	1992	1995	1999	2004	2008	2012	2016
<b>Type</b>	mixed	mixed	mixed	mixed	mixed	mixed	mixed
<b>Assembly size</b>	225	235	235	235	150	150	150
<b>Number of mandates in tiers</b>	150 (PR) 75 (SMD)*	150 (PR) 75 (SMD)*	150 (PR) 75 (SMD)*	150 (PR) 75 (SMD)*	75 (PR) 75 (SMD)	77 (PR) 73 (SMD)	77 (PR) 73 (SMD)
<b>Number of districts</b>	10 (PR) 84 (SMD)	10 (PR) 84 (SMD)	1 (PR) 85 (SMD)	1 (PR) 84 (SMD)	1 (PR) 86 (SMD)	1 (PR) 84 (SMD)	1 (PR) 73 (SMD)
<b>Allocation formula (redistribution of mandates)</b>	Hare quota (national compensatory lists)	Hare quota (d'Hondt)	Hare quota (largest remainder)	Hare quota (at least 6 mandates)	Hare quota (at least 6 mandates)	Hare quota (at least 6 mandates)	Hare quota (at least 6 mandates)
<b>Threshold for SMD tier</b>	50percent	30percent	30percent	30percent	30percent	30percent	50percent
<b>Threshold for PR tier</b>	2%	5%	7%	7%	5%	5%	5%

\* In addition, 10 seats of the 235 reserved for Abkhazian representatives. Source: own compilation

Nevertheless, the ruling parties were not entirely unrestrained in the process of revising the electoral laws, which remained a highly salient political issue triggering intense debates involving the opposition, civil society, and international organizations. Therefore, in view of the 1999 parliamentary elections domestic and international experts noted a number of important shortcomings that should have been addressed in order to avoid confusion and possible electoral manipulations – the main recommendation pertained to the drafting of a uniform electoral code instead of the three separate laws for each contest (respectively, the presidential, parliamentary and local ones). The incumbent CUG did not take up this suggestion; instead, it modified the redistribution formula and increased the legal threshold a few months before the elections justifying it as a preventive measure for excessive fragmentation of the parliament, which could affect governability. The decision encountered firm resistance from the opposition, which, in a sign of protest, did not participate in the adoption of the Unified Electoral Code in August 2001 (NDI 1999).



The issue of electoral system amendment continued to occupy a significant place on the political agenda of the opposition during the third parliamentary term (1999-2003) as well, even though the main point of contention regarded the composition of the CEC<sup>13</sup>, widely perceived as a politically biased “symbol of unfair elections” (Civil.ge 2003a). Lack of political consensus among the pro-presidential and the opposition factions over the issue increased the control of the first over the electoral commissions at the district and precinct levels, which eventually facilitated the systematic and widespread electoral frauds in the November 2003 parliamentary elections (Civil.ge 2003i).

In view of the 2004 snap parliamentary elections, to be held following the regime changeover, several national and international experts urged the outgoing parliament to introduce a number of amendments to the electoral code – most importantly, to reduce the legal threshold from seven to five percent as considered particularly harmful for the fragile democratic order in Georgia (Civil.ge 2004e; 2004d; Venice Commission 2004a). Yet, again, the recommendation was coldly received by the newly established authorities, in particular by the president-elect Saakashvili who instead suggested to the opposition parties to form electoral blocs to increase their chances to win representation (Civil.ge 2004i).

Two important amendments to the electoral laws were introduced just two months before the May 2008 parliamentary elections. Firstly, and amidst many controversies<sup>14</sup>, the assembly size was reduced from 235 to 150 members along with the equal distribution of seats between the two electoral tiers (Civil.ge 2008e).

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<sup>13</sup> Until then the CEC was composed of eighteen members – five nominated by the president and five by the parliament, six by the parties obtaining mandates in the previous elections and two from the autonomous republics of Adjara and Abkhazia (Civil.ge 2003a). The discussion saw active participation by the head of state who proposed the new rules for determining the composition of the CEC – seven members (increased to nine at a later stage) to be proposed by the president and accepted by the parliament and two nominated by the autonomous regions of Abkhazia and Adjara. Nevertheless, and expectedly, Shevardandze’s design was firmly rejected by the parliament in which, as discussed in chapter four, the presidential party was already in a minority. The opposition prepared its own project according to which the CEC was to be composed of the representatives of those political forces, which obtained at least 4 percent of votes in the 1999 parliamentary and 2002 local elections (Civil.ge 2003b; 2003c). After a long and intense period of negotiations all the political actors seemed to have reached a consensus over the final shape of the CEC following the proposal of the former US Secretary of State, James Baker according to which the pro-presidential party would have a right to nominate five members, nine would have come from the opposition while the Commission’s President would have been appointed by the OSCE on the CEC’s approval. (Civil.ge 2003d; 2003e). Yet, at the moment of voting, the pro-presidential factions (notably, the presidential CUG, the Union of Democratic Revival and the Industrialists) opted against the proposal (Civil.ge 2003f), and instead adopted one, which allowed for a substantial increase of their representatives within the CEC at national and district levels (Civil.ge 2003g; 2003h).

<sup>14</sup> The amendments were voted by the ruling party – disposing of the constitutional majority – despite the anti-regime street protests and hunger strikes organised by the opposition forces. The long list of opposition demands included increased participation of the opposition forces in the process of nomination of CEC members at all levels as well as the replacement of the first-past-the-post majoritarian tier by a regional proportional system (for more details see (Civil.ge 2008c; 2008d).

Secondly, the electoral threshold was lowered from seven to five percent. At the same time the malapportionment of the SMD, especially disadvantageous for the under-represented urban districts, remained unaddressed<sup>15</sup>. In this vein, it has been argued that since the incumbent UNM was rather unpopular in urban constituencies, it was particularly interested in maintaining the status quo, while counting on obtaining mandates in the majority of the smaller SMD (NDI 2008).

But it was only with the 2015 constitutional amendments, enacted in the final reading in 2017 by the ruling GD-DG party, that the essence of the Georgian elector system was altered: after several rounds of public consultations, GD-DG opted for switching to full PR, but only since the 2024 parliamentary elections (Fuller 2015). In the meantime, a few transitory rules were to be applied to the two contests to be held in-between (respectively in 2016 and in 2020), including the increased threshold for SMD run-offs and redrafting of the SMD boundaries (Civil.ge 2015j)<sup>16</sup>. The initial draft envisaged also the prohibition of electoral blocs and lowering of the electoral threshold to four percent employed from the 2020 parliamentary contest. Nevertheless, and on a significant pressure from the opposition, both these provisions were eventually changed in view of the 2020 contest: in fact, the electoral alliances will be allowed while the legal threshold will be set at 3 percent (Civil.ge 2017g)<sup>17</sup>.

The amendments, once again, generated widespread criticism from the opposition parties, particularly unsatisfied with not being adequately involved in the process of reform drafting. Indeed, despite frequent public debates, none of their proposals were initially included in the final draft while the amendments were adopted after two readings during an extra-parliamentary session, which prevented the opposition from participating (Transparency.ge et al. 2017). Furthermore, the content of the new electoral laws raised concerns among the international experts who pointed out the risks stemming from the unclear rules guiding the delimitation of single-member electoral districts. The unlimited bonus foreseen for the winner of the elections, which would receive all of the undistributed mandates on unclear conditions as well as the initial ban on electoral blocs were also judged as “deviating from the principles of fair representation and equality of the vote” (Venice Commission 2016; 2017a).

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<sup>15</sup> For more details see section 6.3.

<sup>16</sup> Following the Constitutional Court’s ruling, see "The Constitutional Court Upheld Ucha Nanuashvili's Claim," *Public Defender of Georgia*, 28 May 2015, available at <http://ombudsman.ge/en/news/the-constitutional-court-upheld-ucha-nanuashvilis-claim.page> (last accessed in June 2019).

<sup>17</sup> The constitutional amendment, however, specifies that the prohibition of electoral blocs will be employed from the 2024 parliamentary elections, while the threshold will be increased again to five percent. Furthermore, the undistributed mandates will be transferred to all parliamentary parties according to the fully proportional allocation (Civil.ge 2017f).

The effects of this comprehensive electoral reform are yet to be seen, nevertheless it has been argued that the decision to divide its implementation into two stages was dictated by the strategic calculations of the incumbent GD-DG, which perceived the fully PR system as more challenging in terms of assuring its own electoral success (Fuller 2017).

#### **6.2.1.2. Moldova**

The initial electoral design crafted in Moldova was affected by the immediate-structural context, which emerged during the early phases of transition as discussed in Chapter 1. Two of these circumstances seemed to have played a decisive role in shaping its content: firstly, the inefficiency of the parliament posed a significant constraint for the administrative reform, indispensable for a potential delineation of the multi-member districts. Secondly, in words of the Moldovan experts<sup>18</sup>, the decision to adopt the pure proportional system with a single, nation-wide electoral district<sup>19</sup> was mostly dictated by the impossibility to establish electoral districts and polling stations in Transnistria, de facto making it impossible for Moldovan voters in the region – accounting for around twelve percent of the total population of Moldova – to participate in the elections<sup>20</sup>.

Nevertheless, the decision to adopt the PR system was also strongly influenced by a few pure political reasons as the four-year transition period allowed the Moldovan leaders to reflect on their institutional choices and understand better “the implications of those reforms for their own positions of influence” (IFES 1993). In fact, the proportional system was generally perceived as having a consolidating effect, which, at least potentially, could prove beneficial for the mainstream parties. Indeed, in order to avoid excessive fragmentation, the legal threshold was set at four percent while the votes were translated into seats through the d’Hondt method, including the redistribution of remaining seats (IFES 1993). Finally, the electoral provisions were not included in the Constitution in order to avoid excessive complications in the revision process in case of restoration of control over Transnistria. The core provisions of the pure PR remained in place until the most recent revision carried out in 2017.

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<sup>18</sup> Personal interview, Chişinău, October 2017.

<sup>19</sup> The drafting of the electoral design began in the summer 1993, few months before the dissolution of the Assembly in October 1993. Two concurrent proposals were advanced: the first envisaged the introduction of a limited proportional system (deputies elected from multi-member constituencies from closed party lists) while the second advocated for the mixed system (51 seats out of 101 to be filled through proportional representation and 50 through single-member districts). Eventually, the first proposal was included in the Law on Elections adopted in October 1993, further amended after few days in order to shift from limited to the full proportionality (IFES 1993).

<sup>20</sup> Besides, given the clear pro-Russian sympathies of the majority of Transnistria’s ethnically-Slavic population, there was a well-grounded fear that the voting results from the region could, in the worst case, lead to the complete secession of the region from Moldova (I. Munteanu 2010).

As it appears clearly from table 6.2 summarizing the evolution of the Moldovan electoral system, the Moldovan lawmakers seem to have been equally as prone as the Georgian ones to manipulate the individual components of the electoral design. In fact, the main modifications concerned the electoral threshold as well as the formula governing the transfer of the undistributed mandates. Furthermore, a careful look at table 6.2 reveals that since 2001 each parliamentary electoral contest was held with a different set of electoral thresholds. In this vein, the first modification increasing the entry barrier from 4 to 6 percent took place with an amendment of the art. 86 of EC carried out in March 2000 (Law № 894, 2000).

**Table 6.2 The evolution of the electoral system in Moldova (1994-2014)**

Electoral system components	Election year							
	1994	1998	2001	2005	2009 <sup>a</sup>	2009 <sup>b</sup>	2010	2014
Type	PR	PR	PR	PR	PR	PR	PR	PR
Assembly size	104	101	101	101	101	101	101	101
Number of districts	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Allocation formula (redistribution of mandates)	d'Hondt	d'Hondt	d'Hondt	d'Hondt	d'Hondt	d'Hondt	d'Hondt ('Robin Hood')	d'Hondt ('Robin Hood')
<b>Threshold for PR tier</b>								
<i>political parties</i>	4%	4%	6%	6%	6%	5%	4%	6%
<i>electoral blocks of 2 parties</i>	4%	4%	6%	9%	not allowed	not allowed	7%	9%
<i>electoral blocks of 3 or more parties</i>	4%	4%	6%	12%	not allowed	not allowed	9%	11%
<i>individuals</i>	4%	4%	3%	3%	3%	3%	2%	2%

<sup>a</sup>April 2009, <sup>b</sup>July 2009; Source: own compilation

The propensity to modify the electoral threshold was upheld by the newly elected incumbents (2001-2005) who further increased the entry barriers for electoral coalitions in January 2002 (Law № 796, 2002) by a common vote of the right-wing PPCD (which drafted the proposal) and the left-wing ruling PCRM (RFE/RL 2002a). The 6 percent threshold proved to be considerate corrective of political competition and, indeed, was promptly criticised by national and international experts for causing “non-representation in Parliament of a large part of the electorate” (Venice Commission 2005; Venice Commission and OSCE/ODIHR 2008). Yet these concerns remained largely unaddressed by the Moldovan ruling elite; on the contrary, with an amendment adopted in April 2008 (Decision № 96, 2010) by PCRM, again with the support of the PPCD, upheld the six percent threshold for individual parties and, additionally, prohibited the electoral alliances.

All the political forces involved in the tinkering with these rules justified it by the necessity of increasing the governability through reducing the presence of the “unrepresentative parties” (I. Munteanu 2010); nevertheless, their moves were widely perceived as attempting not only to limit the electoral chances of their main competitors but also to profit from the friendly rules guiding the redistribution of a high number of unassigned seats generated by an excessively high threshold<sup>21</sup>. However, while this strategy proved quite successful until April 2009, it backfired during the snap July 2009 contest as an increased number of parties that cleared five percent threshold greatly the size of this bonus (see section 6.3.). The newly formed coalition government lifted the ban on electoral blocs and lowered the legal thresholds for all categories of electoral subjects in June 2010 (Law № 119, 2010) amid few procedural difficulties and intense debates, in particular pertaining to the proposal of lowering the binding turnout threshold for referenda<sup>22</sup>. But most importantly, it revised the formula for transferring the unassigned seats, which reversed the nature of this procedure from favouring the big to benefit the smaller formations.

The electoral system change had started to gain in salience since 2012 – as a result of the increasing political mobilization around this issue, five different projects aimed at revising the electoral system at its core were presented between 2012 and 2017 (Tăbârță 2017)<sup>23</sup>. All of the initiatives aimed at shifting away from the full PR were justified by their proponents on the ground of increasing the representativeness and accountability of the deputies; yet, in the words of the national experts, the rush and recklessness in drafting

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<sup>21</sup> Expert Interview, Chişinău, October 2017.

<sup>22</sup> The proposed amendment advanced by the ruling coalition lowered the turnout from sixty to one-third of participating voters in view of the planned referendum on regime change (for details see chapter 4). This proposal was not well received by the, then in-opposition PCRM deputies, who claimed that if successful, the amendment would allow “sixteen percent of the population to decide on constitutional amendments”. Similar concerns were raised by some deputies from the ruling coalition, but they eventually managed to gather the necessary 52 votes to endorse the reform package (Moldova Liberă 2010a).

<sup>23</sup> For more details on the process and possible implications of the envisaged changes to the electoral system in Moldova (see, *inter alia*, Bakken & Sorescu, 2017; Promo-LEX, 2017; Tăbârță, 2017).

the electoral provisions should be viewed as an indicator of a clear interest-driven and seat-maximizing strategy of the incumbents<sup>24</sup>.

Furthermore, most of the abovementioned projects were contingent on idiosyncratic political circumstances, namely the intense political struggle between the ruling coalition (AEI) and the opposition PCRM and, in particular, the internal crisis with the incumbent alliance generated by the increased personal rivalry between the leaders of PLDM and PDM. In this vein, following the successful no-confidence vote to the AEI government in March 2013, the inter-party bargaining to revive the AEI coalition<sup>25</sup> included the deal on shifting to the mixed electoral system, adopted by the parliamentary majority with unprecedented rapidity in April 2013 (Law № 94, 2013). More concretely, in exchange of support for the re-confirmation of the just dismissed PLDM leader, Vlad Filat, as premier, the party accepted the PDM's proposal of electoral system change – as it was widely believed, the increasingly unpopular Democrats could face significant difficulties in clearing the threshold and perceived the mixed system as its best chance to win parliamentary representation (Moldova Liberă 2013a; 2013b). The decision of the Constitutional Court declaring that the prime minister should be censured on corruption grounds and could not be re-appointed<sup>26</sup> posed the end to the cooperation between the former allies. Instead, it gave rise to an ad-hoc coalition composed of PLDM and its political opponent, PCRM, whose first decision, adopted in May 2013, was to abrogate the law on electoral system change (Law № 108, 2013) as well as to increase the legal thresholds before the 2014 parliamentary elections (Moldova Liberă 2013c).

The issue of electoral reform was not, however, abandoned by its main propagator, the PDM: by the end of 2013, the party requested the opinion of the Venice Commission on its original proposal but received rather negative feedback (Venice Commission 2014; Venice Commission and OSCE/ODIHR 2014). At that time the PDM did not dispose of sufficient political weight in order to successfully complete its project; a condition that changed considerably during the following parliamentary term (2014-2018), partially due to the curiously intensified party-switching flows towards the Democrats<sup>27</sup> who increased their parliamentary

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<sup>24</sup> Expert Interview, Chişinău, October 2017.

<sup>25</sup> For more detailed discussion see Chapter 5.

<sup>26</sup> The appeal to the Court was presented by a group of deputies from the Liberal Party, the third member of the former ruling coalition (together with PLDM and PDM). For a more detailed explanation of the Court's ruling see *Sesizarea nr. 10a/2013*, Constitutional Court of the Republic of Moldova, Chişinău, 22 April 2013, available at [http://www.constcourt.md/public/files/file/Actelepercent20Curtii/acte\\_2013/h\\_04.2013.ro.pdf](http://www.constcourt.md/public/files/file/Actelepercent20Curtii/acte_2013/h_04.2013.ro.pdf) (last accessed in June 2019).

<sup>27</sup> See Chapter 3.

representation more than two-fold. In this context, the party advanced a bill proposing to shift to the FPTP electoral system in March 2017<sup>28</sup> (Tăbârță 2017).

As in the case of previous attempts, the electoral reform was formally motivated by the necessity to introduce more representativeness to the system: besides emphasizing that the majority of the Moldovan citizens were in favour of the plurality FPTP<sup>29</sup>, the ruling party pledged to strengthen the ties between the deputies and their constituencies as well as to increase individual accountability of the deputies<sup>30</sup>. Finally, in the words of the PDM deputies, the majoritarian system would lead to an increased representation of minorities, thus far considerably penalized by the logic of the PR rules (APE and FES 2017).

Unsurprisingly, the idea was not well received by the remaining political parties who firmly opposed the PDM's project, the only exception being the presidential PSRM, which, instead, drafted a counterproposal envisaging a mixed system<sup>31</sup>. Eventually, both projects were merged into one legislative bill voted on by seventy-four deputies from PDM, PSRM and the PPEM parliamentary factions in July 2017 (Law № 154, 2017). The entire process was carried out in violation of the legislative procedures<sup>32</sup> as well as with disregard for the recommendations prepared by the national and international experts (Ruthrauff 2017). Furthermore, the rush in amending the electoral system left almost no room for inclusive debates over the ultimate shape of the legislative provisions, but also did not allow for the adequate preparation of the reform from a substantial point of view – in this respect, the most controversial elements included, *inter alia*, the maintenance of a relatively high threshold (6 percent) for the PR tier, the FPTP character of the plurality tier, and the gerrymandering of the SMD, which were delineated in a way to favour PDM and PSRM as well as the unclear rules guiding the diaspora voting<sup>33</sup> (Tăbârță 2017; Lipcean 2018).

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<sup>28</sup> Draft law nr.60 of 14.03.2017. The proposal was partially based on the PDM's first, unsuccessful project nr. 408 proposed on 27 February 2012.

<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, the opinion polls evidenced a slightly different trend notably that most of the Moldovan voters were not aware of what the majority electoral system actually entailed: 50.5 percent in November 2017 and 57.5 percent of respondents in November 2018 (a few month before the elections) declared not to know what the uninominal vote meant in practice. See Barometer of Public Opinion – November 2018 and November 2018 (last accessed in June 2019).

<sup>30</sup> To this end, the draft bill envisaged a special provision on the revocation of the parliamentary mandate of a member of the parliament not fulfilling obligations towards his/her constituency (EC, art.941).

<sup>31</sup> Draft law № 123 of 23 April 2017.

<sup>32</sup> None of the draft laws were accompanied by the Government's opinions or by the anticorruption conclusion of the National Anticorruption Centre, which are mandatory requirements imposed by law. See artt. 57, 58 paras. 1-2 and art. 61 of the Regulation № 797-XIII (1996).

<sup>33</sup> Considering that currently the number of Moldovan citizens living abroad is estimated to be around 800 thousand, which accounts to around 37 percent of the entire population of the country (excluding Transnistria) and the low popularity of the ruling party among the diaspora, the confused rules may distort the results in order to minimize the PDM's electoral loses (Lipcean 2018).

The reform provoked intense criticism from inside and outside the country and caused mass street protests (Moldova Liberă 2017c; 2017b; 2017a). Besides strictly technical aspects, experts have emphasized that the revision was carried out by a tacit agreement between the formal political opponents, the PDM and the PSRM – or more specifically between their leaders, respectively the oligarch Plahotniuc and President Dodon – which posed significant risk for the Moldovan political development (Moldova Liberă 2017e; 2017d). The electoral reform already had the aforementioned clear interest-driven motivation as PDM had not significantly improved in its support ratings, enjoying between two and four percent in 2017, while its leader was commonly considered to be the most corrupt and least trustworthy political leader (Moldova.org 2017). Hence, it is rather safe to assume that the party would have experienced difficulties in clearing the electoral threshold had the PR system been maintained. Finally, several experts have pointed out that SMD would offer more opportunities to the incumbent party to take advantage of its financial dominance in influencing the electoral results<sup>34</sup>.

To conclude, while enacting the core revisions of the electoral laws the incumbents in both countries seemed to consider the majoritarian/plurality systems as particularly beneficial to them. In Georgia the incumbents tried to delay the enforcement of electoral reform by introducing the PR<sup>35</sup> for as long as possible; in the second case, the shift to the mixed system was carried out by an unpopular party seeking to maximize its chances to win representation. By assessing the impact of electoral systems on political outcomes in both countries, the following section will try to explain what caused the ruling parties to believe so.

### **6.3. Consequences of electoral laws**

The previous section has offered some insights into the dynamics surrounding the electoral reforms by showing that, in line with the theoretical arguments, the political actors in both countries have learned over time how to manipulate the rules to their advantage. But how exactly have the electoral laws affected the political outcomes in Georgia and Moldova?

In seeking the compelling answers to this question, the following section builds on the major theoretical arguments advanced by the traditional scholarship; yet, it also draws from the empirical findings of the post-communist electoral research. Based on these two sources, there are a few initial hypotheses that will be tested in the course of the analysis. Firstly, the double-ballot majority system is expected to have an inflationary rather than deflationary impact on party system format, at least at the initial stage of

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<sup>34</sup> This aspect is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

<sup>35</sup> Even though the reform was among its core electoral pledges. See the Electoral programme of the coalition “Bidzina Ivanishvili-Georgian Dream”, 2012, available at <http://www.ivote.ge/images/doc/pdfs/ocnebispercent20saarchevnopercent20programa.pdf> (last accessed in February 2019).

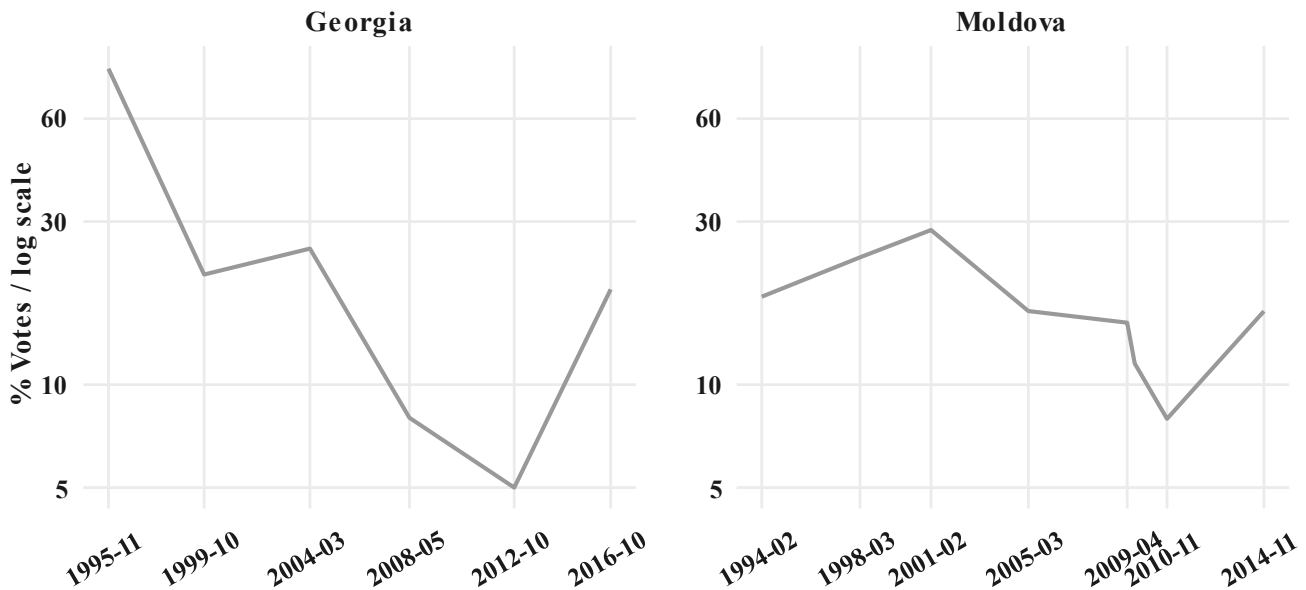


transformation (Moser 1999; 1995). Secondly, the PR system is expected to enhance the nationalization of political parties while the relatively high legal threshold (3-8 percent) should manifest a “powerful freezing effect on party systems” (Birch 2003, 104). Finally, no *a priori* expectation can be formulated with regard to the mixed electoral system as they may assume either party-or candidate-enabling nature depending on national circumstances (Moser 1995; Birch 2000).

### 6.3.1. Voters

As anticipated in section 6.1 the psychological effect of electoral systems on voters is difficult to gauge with precision, yet the number of wasted votes<sup>36</sup> as a percentage of all casted ballots may serve as a useful proxy in assessing this phenomenon. Figure 6.1 depicts the evolution of wasted votes over time in, respectively, Georgia and Moldova.

**Figure 6.1 Wasted votes in Georgia (1995-2016)<sup>37</sup> and Moldova (1994-2014)**



Source: own elaboration based on electoral results retrieved from respective CECs

What emerges from this figure is that, over time, voters seem to have understood, in general terms, how to anticipate the outcomes of electoral systems in their respective countries and adjusted their voting strategies to the electoral incentives. Nevertheless, a more careful examination of the pictures only partially corroborates this claim as – apart from the 2008 and 2012 contests in Georgia – the aggregate number of

<sup>36</sup> Understood here as the ballots casted in favour of parties, which did not gain parliamentary representation in respective electoral contest (Cox 1997).

<sup>37</sup> For PR tier, and 1992 excluded as there was not threshold so the wasted votes are minimal.

wasted votes remained relatively high. While looking at wasted votes can help with making some educated assumptions on the psychological effects of electoral laws on voters, one must be careful with overemphasizing this relationship. In fact, the frequent changes of the electoral rules those concerning the legal threshold, may have additionally confused voters affecting their ability to anticipate the electoral outcomes.

### **6.3.2. Parties**

The first indicator of the party-enabling/constraining nature of the electoral system is the extent to which it facilitates the entrance of individual, no-party affiliated candidates. In this regard, in principle, the Georgian electoral system facilitates the entrance of independent candidates as between one-third to half of the total number of deputies have been elected in single-mandate constituencies while the rules for their registration are quite friendly<sup>38</sup>. In fact, at the outset of transition, the trend in Georgia was similar to other post-Soviet states which adopted the majoritarian electoral system (such as Russia, see Moser, 1995): during the 1992 elections 60 out of 75 seats reserved for plurality voting were obtained by independent candidates. Interestingly enough, an examination of the number of successful independent candidates running in the elections from 1992 until now, clearly shows the decreasing trend: in 1999 their number decreased to 17 and since 2008 all the majoritarian races but one in 2016 were won by partisan candidates. Nevertheless, such an outcome is not related to the electoral rules, which have remained favourable for the permeability of independent candidates during the entire period under examination.

By contrast, the PR system in Moldova contains a rather curious provision admitting the electoral participation of independent candidates<sup>39</sup>. Nevertheless, the prohibitive electoral rules including high legal

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<sup>38</sup> At this point, it seems useful to report that independent candidates are allowed to participate in the elections if proposed by a citizens' initiative composed of at least five members, but can only run in one specific electoral district as opposed to the parties or electoral blocs that are not subjects of such a restriction (EC, art.116.2). Unlike the Moldovan one, the Georgian EC also differentiates between the individual candidates and party lists in terms of supportive signatures – political parties are required to present a list of supporting signatures not exceeding one percent of the total number of registered voters (50 thousand signatures until 2013) unless they have at least one valid parliamentary mandate by the date when the elections are scheduled (2013 Constitution, art.50.1). This requirement was modified by the most recent constitutional amendment so that starting from 2024, parties would need to present a supporting list containing at least 25 thousand signatures (if they do not yet benefit from seats). At the same time, between 2004-2013 an individual majoritarian candidate was constitutionally required to present at least one thousand supporting signatures (art.50.1) while since 2013 at least “1 percent of the supporting voters registered on the territory of the relevant electoral district” (art.116.9), unless the candidate was elected in the previous contest.

<sup>39</sup> According to the Moldovan Electoral Code, in this case, the individual candidates are treated as a one-candidate party list in a sense that the distribution of mandates among parties takes place only after they are distributed among individual candidates that clear the respective legal threshold (see table 5.2.), while the total number of their votes is subtracted from the total number of votes cast in elections – the remaining votes are divided by the

threshold, registration requirements<sup>40</sup> as well as one, nation-wide electoral constituency have acted as sufficient barriers preventing individual candidates from winning seats<sup>41</sup>.

The second indicator is given by the degree of partisan control over the selection and nomination of candidates. In this respect, the PR systems in both countries have a clear party-enabling nature as both envisage for closed party-lists and centralized control over their ultimate shape.

### 6.3.3. Party systems

#### 6.3.3.1. Party system format and shape

Inspired by the traditional “Duvergerian agenda” of electoral research, the first step in assessing the political consequences of electoral laws is their relationship with party system format. In this respect, the first and most straightforward indicator of the mechanical impact of electoral design is its association with the number of parties capable of presenting the candidates and obtaining parliamentary seats. Tables 6.3 and 6.4 display aggregate data on party system format in, respectively Georgia and Moldova, in a cross-temporal perspective.

The most visible effect of the Georgian case that can be observed from the two first rows of table 6.3 is the strongly reductive effect of the electoral system since the 1995 contest when a substantial corrective, i.e. the legal threshold was first introduced. This rather pronounced mechanical effect is reflected by the absolute number of winners in comparison with the absolute number of contestants, but also by the ENPP; in particular, the latter indicator hints to the propensity of the electoral system to sustain one-party dominance.

However, table 6.3 also shows that the reductive mechanical effect of the electoral system seems not to discourage the electoral subjects from participating in the contest. Indeed, only between 2004 and 2008 was the absolute number of electoral participants relatively contained – if the considerably high number of parties between 1992 and 1995 can be explained by the uncertainty typical for the initial stage of transformation as well as chaos generated by the political crisis discussed in Chapter 1, the increased party proliferation since 2012 seems to hint at rather weak progress in terms of political learning and adaptation.

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number of remaining seats to obtain the electoral coefficient which is then applied to the distribution of mandates among the parties (2016, EC, art.87).

<sup>40</sup> Namely, the requirement of at least two thousand supporting signatures (2016 EC, art.78) from which political parties are unconditionally exempted.

<sup>41</sup> However, despite none of them ever winning any parliamentary seat, the number of non-affiliated candidates running in the elections seems not be associated with these institutional constraints as reflected by the following table:

Electoral year	1994	1998	2001	2005	2009a	2009b	2010	2014
No. of independent candidates	20	60	10	12	5	0	19	4

This conclusion is, however, not entirely correct from the empirical point of view as it will be discussed later in this section.

**Table 6.3 The impact of the electoral system on party system in Georgia (1992-2016)<sup>42</sup>**

Variable	Election year						
	1992	1995	1999	2004	2008	2012	2016
<b>Absolute number of party lists</b>	36	53	33	10	12	16	25
<b>Absolute number of parliamentary parties</b>	24	11	4	2	5	2	4
<b>ENEP</b>	9.10	9.11	2.82	1.52	1.89	1.90	2.52
<b>ENPP</b>	10.44	1.80	1.85	1.11	1.68	1.75	1.83

Source: own calculations

The Moldovan case is equally interesting as evidenced by data included in table 6.4. Firstly, the electoral system appears to act as quite a significant filter in terms of determining parliamentary representation, even though the ratio of the absolute number of winners to the absolute number of contestants is slightly higher in Moldova than in Georgia. That said, table 5.4 also unveils a rather inconsistent mechanical impact of the electoral system on the number of parties as depicted by the fluctuating values of the ENPP, which goes from 1.48 to 4.50. All in all, however, the increase of the ENPP since 2001 may, as a matter of fact, indicate a certain propensity of the PR system to have an inflationary effect, even though, until 2014, the Moldovan party system remained significantly less fractionalized than those of other post-communist countries (Bielasiak 2002).

On a side note, the experience of Moldova is indicative of a crucial limit of the quantitative indicators of party system format in explaining party systems' dynamics. In fact, if we look at the last two columns of table 6.4, a puzzling picture emerges: the difference in terms of ENEP and ENPP between the 2010 and the 2014 electoral contests is quite conspicuous, yet the absolute number of contesting party lists as well as that of the electoral winners is almost equal. Hence, simply by looking at these first two indicators one can hardly understand what mechanism hides behind such a change – are we in front of the increased number of contestants or, perhaps, the equalization of electoral support between a stable number of parties? In fact, in

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<sup>42</sup> Calculations of ENEP and ENPP are based on votes obtained in PR tier. The absolute numbers of contestants and winners are counted as they appeared on the ballot, thus the electoral blocks and coalitions are counted as unitary actors. Independent candidates are treated as one category.

this case, only a deeper within-case knowledge accompanied by a careful cross-check with the raw numbers of contestants and winners allows supporting the latter alternative. What this example suggests is that a certain caution is required when discussing party system change through the lens of its format.

**Table 6.4 The impact of the electoral system on party system in Moldova (1994-2014)**

Variable	Election year							
	1994	1998	2001	2005	2009 <sup>a</sup>	2009 <sup>b</sup>	2010	2014
<b>Absolute number of party lists</b>	13	14	17	11	12	8	20	20
<b>Absolute number of parliamentary parties</b>	4	4	3	3	4	5	4	5
<b>ENEP</b>	3.11	4.94	2.63	2.68	2.57	2.81	3.21	7.12
<b>ENPP</b>	2.06	2.87	1.48	1.90	1.86	2.52	2.74	4.50

Source: own calculations

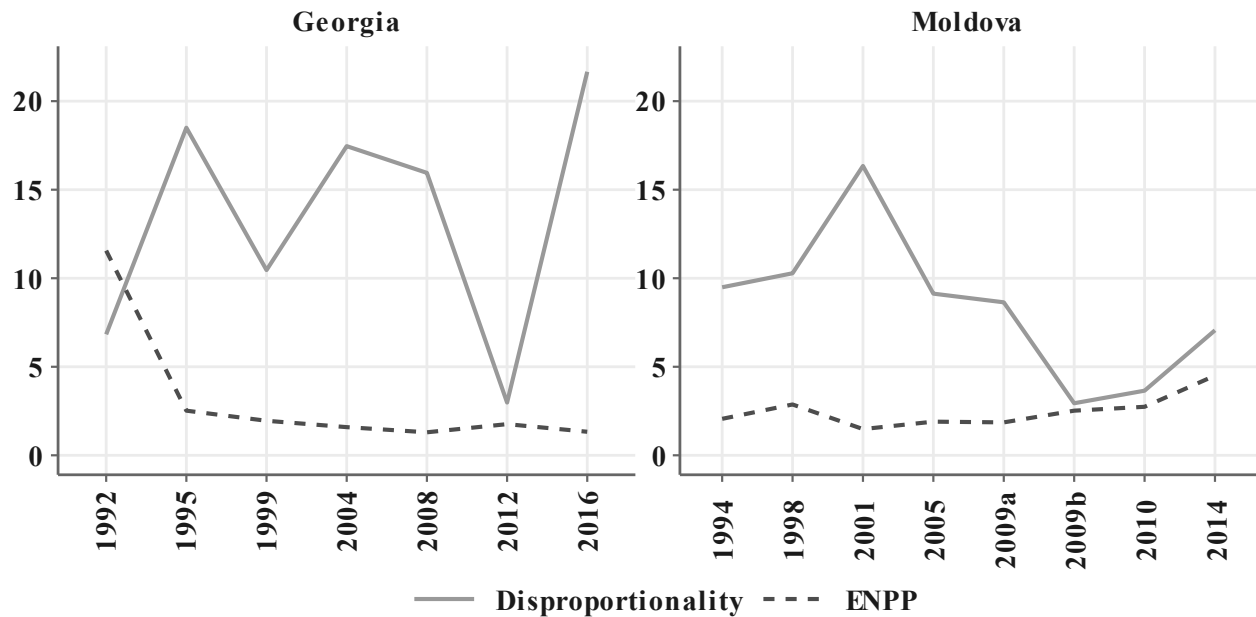
At this point, it is also important to recall that the reductive/amplifying effect of the electoral system on the number of parties is not free from the influence of the general political developments in each country, most frequently independent from electoral design. In fact, the variation in lost ballots or in the ENPP may reflect the political changes at the systemic level, such as the appearance of new parties<sup>43</sup>. This provides confirmation to the arguments advanced by Sartori according to which in consolidating party systems, the exact consequences of electoral systems are difficult to predict.

Having in mind these caveats, however, it is still useful to have a closer look at the more systematic relationship between electoral system and party system format as expressed by the correlation between electoral disproportionality (Lsq.) and the ENPP scores in both countries. This relationship is displayed in figure 6.2 depicting its cross-temporal evolution in Georgia and Moldova.

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<sup>43</sup> This case is illustrated by the Moldovan example: the reduced ENPP in 2001 is a clear reflection of the mechanism of the electoral system, in particular the increase in electoral threshold a few days before the contest, but its increase in 1998 and in 2014 also reflects the political developments exogenous to electoral system; respectively, the increased fragmentation of electoral parties stemming from the logic of political competition under premier-presidential regime as well as the emergence of a new powerful actor, the PSRM.

**Figure 6.2 Disproportionality and ENPP over time in Georgia and Moldova (1992-2016)**

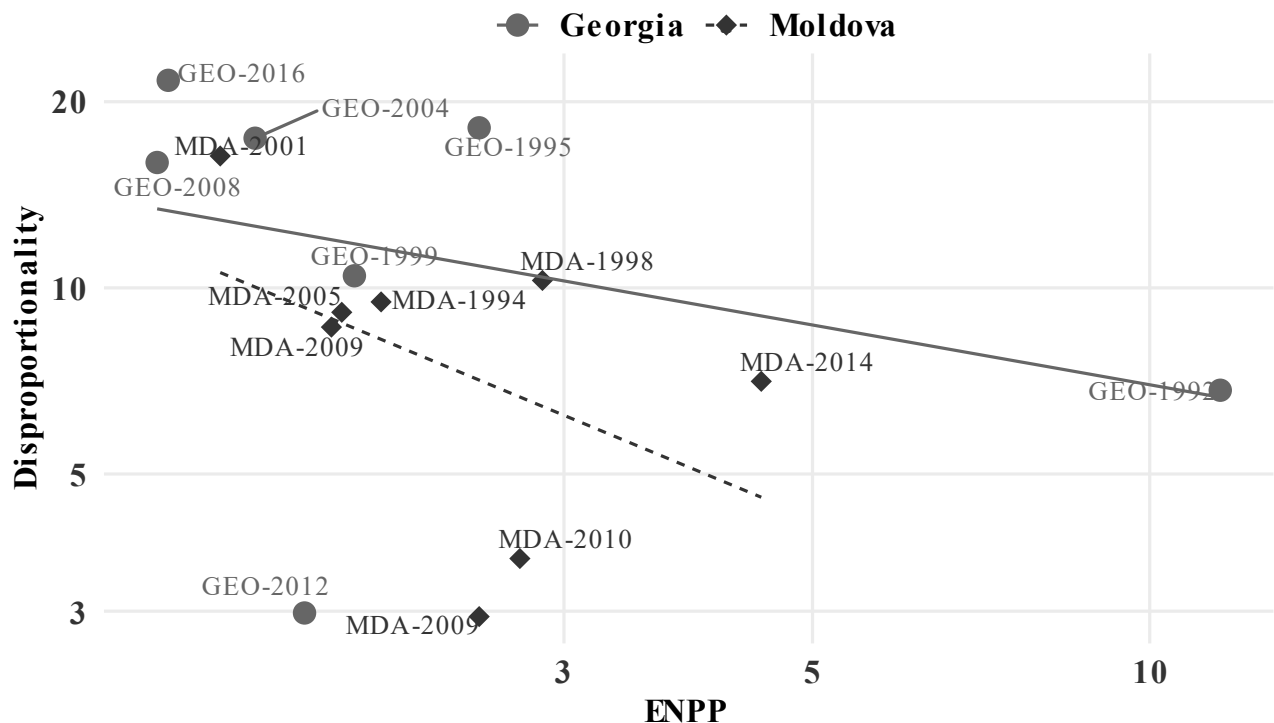


Source: own elaboration

There are a few interesting findings that can be drawn from figure 6.2. Firstly, in the Georgian case there seems to be a link between the two indicators, in the sense that when “disproportionality increases, the effective number of parties decreases” and vice-versa (Lijphart 2012, 79). Likewise, in Moldova, the evolution of both indicators seems to be, generally, moving in the same direction – in 2001 high LSq. level is associated with lower ENPP scores, but this link can also be observed on other occasions<sup>44</sup>. Finally, apart from a few exceptions, what appears from the scrutiny of figure 6.2 is that the level of disproportionality produced by the electoral results is rather high in both countries, which suggests a considerable discrepancy between the vote share and the seat share. To capture the relationship between the two indicators in a more suggestive way, figure 6.3 plots the LSq. scores against the ENPP in both countries over time – as expected, the inverse relationship between electoral disproportionality and the ENPP is visible.

<sup>44</sup> For instance, in 1998 the ENPP=2.87 and LSq. =10.28, in 2009<sup>b</sup> ENPP=1.86 and Lsq. = 2.94 and in 2010 ENPP=2.52 and LSq.=3.65.

**Figure 6.3 Disproportionality and fragmentation in Georgia and Moldova (1994-2016)**



Source: own elaboration

In line with the argument that party system format does not provide sufficient information on party systems' dynamics; the next step consists in analysing the degree of the overall systemic competitiveness expressed by the difference in the vote and seat shares between the two largest parties. The theoretical argument behind this exercise is that the structure of inter-party interactions will be substantially affected by the role of the structural properties of electoral systems in producing a coalition or single-party government (Birch 2003).

In this vein, tables 6.5 and 6.6 summarize data on the percentage of vote share and seat share of the two largest parties in Georgia and Moldova. What follows from the tables is that the electoral systems in both countries have been frequently conducive to earned majorities – indeed, in Georgia the manufactured ones occurred only twice (in 1999 and in 2016) out of seven electoral cycles, while in Moldova this outcome was more balanced producing four manufactured majorities (in 1998, April 2009, 2010 and 2014) in eight electoral contests. Hence, the first conclusion is that the aggregate degree of systemic competitiveness is significantly lower in Georgia than in Moldova. This, perhaps, is not entirely surprising given its mixed nature.

**Table 6.5 Distribution of vote share and seat share in Georgia (1990-2016)**

electoral year	Vote share percent (PR)		Seat share percent (PR+SMD)		
	Largest party	Second largest party		Largest party	Second largest party
<b>1992</b>	20.4	10.7	<i>PR</i>	19.3	12
			<i>SMD</i>	8	1.3
			<b>total</b>	<b>15.5</b>	<b>8.4</b>
<b>1995</b>	25.2	8.4	<i>PR</i>	60	20.6
			<i>SMD</i>	21.1	3.5
			<b>total</b>	<b>48.4</b>	<b>15.2</b>
<b>1999</b>	44.5	26.8	<i>PR</i>	56.6	34
			<i>SMD</i>	54.1	8.2
			<b>total</b>	<b>58.7</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>2004</b>	66.2	7.6	<i>PR</i>	57.4	10
			<i>SMD</i>	24	10.6
			<b>total</b>	<b>65.1</b>	<b>9.8</b>
<b>2008</b>	59.2	17.7	<i>PR</i>	64	20
			<i>SMD</i>	94.6	2.6
			<b>total</b>	<b>79.3</b>	<b>11.3</b>
<b>2012</b>	55	40.3	<i>PR</i>	57.1	42.8
			<i>SMD</i>	56.1	43.8
			<b>total</b>	<b>55.3</b>	<b>43.3</b>
<b>2016</b>	48.8	27.1	<i>PR</i>	57.1	35
			<i>SMD</i>	97.2	0.8
			<b>total</b>	<b>76.6</b>	<b>18</b>

Source: own compilation based on data retrieved from the Georgian CEC

Data contained in table 6.5 clearly shows the striking dominance of the electoral winner over the second runner in all cases, but one (2012) in Georgia, and confirms the “winner-take-all” character of its electoral system. In this regard, it is also quite easy to see the impact of the ‘majoritarian advantage’, in particular during the latest contests, expressed by the overall conspicuous disproportion between the vote share generated by the PR component of the ballot and the total seat share. Such disproportion is triggered by the intrinsic feature of the parallel mixed system according to which the votes cast in both components of the ballot, i.e. the PR and the double-ballot majority, are independent of each other.

The disproportion between vote share and seat share is also evident in the case of Moldova as it follows from data displayed in table 6.6. The significant reduction of the discrepancy between the first and



the second party since 2010 parliamentary elections suggests that the amendment of the electoral formula employed in the redistribution of unassigned mandates (see table 6.2) has, indeed, helped to improve the systemic competitiveness.

**Table 6.6 Distribution of vote share and seat share in Moldova (1994-2014)**

Electoral year	Vote share percent		Seat share percent	
	Largest party	Second largest party	Largest party	Second largest party
<b>1994</b>	43.2	22	53.9	26.9
<b>1998</b>	30	19.4	39.6	26.7
<b>2001</b>	50.1	13.4	70.3	18.8
<b>2005</b>	46	28.5	55.4	33.6
<b>2009 Apr</b>	49.5	13.1	59.4	14.8
<b>2009 Jul</b>	44.7	16.6	47.5	17.8
<b>2010</b>	39.3	29.4	41.5	31.7
<b>2014</b>	20.5	20.1	24.7	22.7

Source: own compilation based on electoral results retrieved from the Moldovan CEC

The discussion conducted thus far has provided some indications on the direction of electoral systems' influence on party systems in both countries – i.e. that despite their different nature (mixed vs. PR) in both cases they have systematically offered a significant advantage to the ruling party. But how exactly does this occur? And has this impact helped party systems to stabilize? In order to answer these questions, I will now turn to a qualitative assessment of the impact of specific electoral components from a comparative perspective. Having in mind the underlying assumption that the more manipulative the electoral system is, the higher the stability it generates, we will see how manipulative the various electoral components have been over time.

### **6.3.3.2. Electoral threshold**

As noted in the previous discussion, the electoral threshold<sup>45</sup> in both countries appears to be the most frequently revised component of electoral systems (see tables 6.2 and 6.3 for reference). The relatively high

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<sup>45</sup> Since in both countries one, nationwide constituency is employed I will consider here only the legal electoral threshold understood as the minimal percentage of votes necessary to obtain legislative mandates as it coincides with the effective threshold, namely the minimal number of votes that a party needs to gain in order to be rewarded

electoral threshold in the PR tier has affected the political competition in Georgia in a few ways. Firstly, the introduction of an entry barrier set at 5 percent before the 1995 elections drastically reduced parliamentary fragmentation, thus enhancing governability at the expense of representativeness. In fact, the 1995 election marked the increasing marginalization of several political forces unable to mobilize voters and the progressive party system concentration around the presidential party (Wheatley 2005). The increase of the threshold to 7 percent before the 1999 parliamentary elections further reinforced this trend. Likewise, the 7 percent barrier maintained for the 2004 snap elections held in the aftermath of the Rose Revolution undermined – to an even greater extent – the representativeness of the newly elected assembly as only two electoral subjects were able to clear it. In other words, by maintaining the elevated entry barriers, the PR component hindered the development of a more inclusive, multiparty system, working instead, along with the majoritarian tier, in support of the one-party dominance<sup>46</sup>.

Secondly, however, as the entry barrier did not differentiate between various electoral subjects, it created a structural incentive for the smaller formations in opposition to the ruling party to unite in electoral alliances in order to maximize their chances to obtain seats. In fact, this strategy usually represented the only tangible opportunity for those formations to gain parliamentary representation as reflected by the fact that between 1995 and 2012 the ruling party was systematically challenged by united opposition blocs.

An additional point that warrants emphasis here is the threshold envisaged for double-ballot majoritarian races set at 30 percent between 1995 and 2012 and only increased to 50 percent since 2016 (as well as in 1992). This peculiar choice has been systematically reported by national and international experts as violating the majoritarian principle through the distortion of political competition in favour of the incumbent party (Civil.ge 2015k; Venice Commission 2016). In fact, not only the number of independent candidates has been systematically decreasing over time, but also run-off rounds were very rare. In this context, the re-introduction of the 50 percent threshold right before the latest parliamentary elections held in 2016 as a partial concession to the opposition, resulted in an overall increase of political competitiveness in majoritarian districts as the second rounds were organized in fifty out of 74 constituencies in comparison to none during the 2012 contest<sup>47</sup>.

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with parliamentary representation depending on the district magnitude (Taagepera 2007, 246–47; Lijphart 2012, 140).

<sup>46</sup> In this respect the experience of the Georgian Labour Party is worth mentioning as in both 1999 and 2004 it fell very short from clearing the threshold obtaining respectively 6.69 and 6.14 percent of votes. Likewise, several smaller formations whose electoral support oscillated between four and six percent, have systematically been punished by the elevated threshold.

<sup>47</sup> For more detailed data on the structure of electoral competition in Georgia see Electoral Database available at [https://data.electionportal.ge/en/data\\_archives](https://data.electionportal.ge/en/data_archives) (last accessed in February 2019).

The most interesting aspect pertaining to the legal threshold in Moldova is its diversification, since 2005, between various types of electoral subjects as well as the prohibition of electoral blocs in both 2009 parliamentary contests. A comparison between the threshold levels set for parties and individual candidates (see Table 5.3.) reveals its clearly party-enabling character. In fact, except for the latest two contests, the entry barriers for the latter category had been rather prohibitive and none of the individual participants has ever managed to clear it. However, the corrective function of the electoral threshold appears to be inconsistent – if until the 2005 parliamentary contest a certain correlation between the higher threshold and lower number of parties winning seats could be observed, since 2009 this association seems to be missing. Finally, it is important to keep in mind that different sets of thresholds were applied to almost all electoral contests during the period under examination in my thesis.

The consequences of these entry barriers are best understood when looking at the results of individual elections. In this context, the increase to 6 percent before the 2001 elections proved crucial not only for the immediate parliamentary composition but also for the subsequent political developments by significantly contributing to the reconfiguration of the Moldovan party landscape. The extent of these repercussions has been discussed in Chapter 4; however, it is worth recalling here that the 2001 elections, besides marking the beginning of the two-term one-party dominance (PRCM), they also swept away the core of the then-ruling elite, which, in turn, led to its complete marginalization. Certainly, the electoral system is not the only factor accountable for such an outcome – yet had the entry barrier been maintained at its previous level of four percent, at least two other formations would have cleared it and the subsequent political development could have unfolded in a substantially different way<sup>48</sup>. Furthermore, as Boțan (2010) has convincingly argued the fact, in July 2009 just eight parties contested the elections due to, *inter alia*, high threshold<sup>49</sup>, the number of wasted votes decreased significantly, generating only four unassigned seats – although three of them went to the winning PRCM, this time the bonus was insufficient for the establishment of a mono-coloured government; the coalition cabinet composed of opposition parties formed instead posed the end to the Communist undivided rule and marked the beginning of another phase of party development in the country.

Lastly, the diversified level of electoral threshold appears to have affected the strategic behaviour of parties: in fact, the increase of the entry barrier for electoral alliances since 2005 has been followed by the decrease of their electoral participation<sup>50</sup>. Furthermore, the 2009 prohibition of electoral blocs altogether may

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<sup>48</sup> Namely, PRCM, which obtained 5.79 percent and PDM with 5.02 percent.

<sup>49</sup> Although the legal threshold was reduced from 6 to 5 percent following the April 2009 parliamentary contest, the participation rate decreased in the snap elections held three month later as it still appeared high for most of the smaller formations struggling financially to cover the campaign costs.

<sup>50</sup> 4 electoral blocs participated in 1994 contest, 6 in 1998, 5 in 2001 and only 2 in 2005. After the ban on their participation was lifted in 2010, no electoral alliances took part in 2010 elections and only 1 in 2014.

have contributed to the increased visibility of individual parties along with providing incentives to enhance their capacity to mobilize voters – indeed, since then, all the mainstream parties have run on an individual ticket and the progressive stabilization of the Moldovan party system could be observed.

The final aspect that warrants to be re-emphasized is that the high threshold has – with few exceptions – regularly produced a relatively large number of wasted votes in both countries as depicted by figure 6.1. The consequent distortion of seat distribution has not only affected the representativeness of the entire system, but also the pattern of inter-party competition.

### 6.3.3.3. Electoral formula

The second analysed component of the electoral system is constituted by the seat-to-vote conversion formula, including the method applied to redistribution of unassigned mandates. Interestingly enough, both countries have consistently adhered to their initial choice and the changes affected only its second component – in this respect, Georgia has opted for Hare quota, considered more favourable to smaller formations while Moldova has applied the d’Hondt method, beneficial to bigger parties (Lijphart 1994; Rae 1967).

To begin with the Georgian experience, the electoral formula has not, in general, produced significant disproportionality bias in favour of the largest party as displayed by table 6.7, the only considerable exception being the 2004 repeated parliamentary election<sup>51</sup>. It is the already discussed majoritarian component of the parallel mixed electoral system that, in practice, has systematically produced representation gaps by more or less generously rewarding the parties in government (ISFED 2016; Kvashilava 2017). Hence, it should not be surprising that none of the ruling parties has been particularly keen on shifting towards full proportionality.

**Table 6.7 The impact of the double-ballot majoritarian component in Georgia (1995-2016)**

Election year	Largest party	% of votes (PR)	% of seats (PR+SMD)	% difference
1995	CUG	25.2	46	+20.8
1999	CUG	44.5	55.7	+11.2
2004 <sup>a</sup>	NM-D	66.2	65.1	-1.1
2008	UNM	59.1	79.3	+20.2
2012	GD <sup>b</sup>	55	56.6	+1.6
2016	GD-DG	48.7	76.6	+27.9

<sup>a</sup>repeat parliamentary elections for PR tier; <sup>b</sup>electoral coalition; Source: own elaboration based on CEC’s data

<sup>51</sup> Such a high disproportionality is caused by the fact that only two electoral subjects managed to clear the 7 percent threshold. Consult Appendix I for specific electoral results.

The d'Hondt method used for redistribution of the unassigned seats applied to six electoral rounds (between 1994 and July 2009) in Moldova had played a similar function by constantly providing a significant reward for the winning party as demonstrated by data included in table 6.8. What clearly follows from it is that, with an exception of the 1998 contest, the largest party had systematically been granted most surplus mandates. In other words, since 1998 PCRM had benefitted for at least 20 percent of additional seats respect to those based on the voting results while in 2001 this bonus was equal to 40 percent which, ultimately, granted the Communist with the constitutional majority.

**Table 6.8 The distribution of seats in Moldova (1994-2009)**

<b>Electoral year</b>	<b>Largest party</b>	<b>%of votes</b>	<b>Number of seats before redistribution</b>	<b>Number of seats redistributed (total available)</b>	<b>Total number of seats obtained (total available)</b>
<b>1994</b>	PDAM	43.2	45	11 (18)	56 (104)
<b>1998</b>	PCRM	30	30	10 (24)	40 (101)
<b>2001</b>	PCRM	50.1	50	21 (28)	71 (101)
<b>2005</b>	PCRM	46	46	10 (17)	56 (101)
<b>2009 Apr</b>	PCRM	49.5	49	11 (15)	60 (101)
<b>2009 July</b>	PCRM	44.7	45	3 (4)	48 (101)

Source: own compilation based on data provided by Boțan (2010)

In other words, the mechanism behind the redistribution of unassigned seats had been highly manipulative – much more than that of the legal threshold – and went against the logic of redistribution, which, in principle, should be rewarding for smaller formations. One of the major consequences of such configurations is that the electoral formula contributed to the predominant nature of the Moldovan party system by manufacturing the PCRM's absolute majority between 2005 and 2009.

Being constantly denounced as distorting factor, the formula was changed in 2010 (Law № 119, 2010)<sup>52</sup> so that the unassigned seats are now redistributed in equal numbers among all the formations clearing

<sup>52</sup> It can be argued that this change was also politically motivated as the newly established pro-European alliance used it as an institutional tool to further weaken the PCRM's dominance.

the electoral threshold. This new method has been labelled by national experts as ‘Robin Hood’ – in fact, although significantly lowering the probability of mono-coloured government, it is still prone to produce disproportional outcomes, this time benefitting parliamentary formations enjoying lower electoral support (Boţan 2010; Ruthrauff 2017).

#### **6.3.3.4. Electoral districts**

As both countries employ one, nation-wide constituency (in Georgia for PR component), the impact of district magnitude cannot, certainly, be analysed here. Nevertheless, a few words need to be spelled out about the structures of electoral districts in Georgia and Moldova. In this respect, the design of the SMD constituencies in Georgia delineated by the 1992 Electoral Code based on the 84 administrative *raions*, including nine on the separatist territories, remained unchanged until 2014. The major problem with this structure lied in the systematic representation bias stemming from the uneven distribution of voters within these electoral districts. In fact, the variation in the number of voters in each of them ranged between 6 thousand in the smallest constituency (Kazbegi) to over 164 thousand in the largest one (Kutaisi) – in practice this meant that the number of votes required to win one mandate in the latter would allow obtaining 28 seats from the first (Dahl 2011). It goes without saying that such a disproportion, in sharp contradiction with the international recommendations on good electoral practice allowing for a maximum of fifteen percent of discrepancy (Venice Commission and OSCE/ODIHR 2010), strongly affected the equality of the vote. The amendments to Electoral Code adopted in December 2015 redrew the electoral districts’ boundaries so that they have become more comparable in terms of size (comprising from 41.5 thousand to 54 thousand voters), nonetheless the gap is still there.

The coexistence of the parallel voting in two, distinctive types of electoral constituencies – the SMD and the one, nation-wide district for PR – had two additional important consequences. On the one hand, the unequal size of plurality districts was particularly harmful to the urban constituencies, which were largely unrepresented in comparison to smaller administrative entities<sup>53</sup>. On the other, however, this relationship was inverted by the PR component where the single, nation-wide constituency in combination with blocked party-lists favoured the candidates from municipalities at the expense of local leaders (Dahl 2011).

The drawing of one, nation-wide constituency in 1993 in Moldova, along with the adoption of the PR system, was mostly dictated by the lack of effective control of the central authorities over the territory of the separatist region of Transnistria. This, in combination with the blocked party-lists, has been widely considered

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<sup>53</sup> As mentioned previously, this proved particularly beneficial for the incumbent UNM party winning seventy-one (out of 75 available seats) and lied at the basis of its decision to subsequently increase the number of SMD mandates to seventy-seven.

as the main factor violating the principle of representativeness, besides clearly working in favour of bigger parties. In fact, national and international experts have frequently pointed out that the Moldovan assembly has been systematically composed of over 70 percent of deputies regularly residing in the country's capital, Chişinău. Consequently, and perhaps most importantly for the scope of this dissertation, such a configuration not only proved rewarding for big parties but also enhanced the nationalization of the political process by providing no structural incentives to enhance party local structures<sup>54</sup>.

#### **6.4. Conclusions**

This chapter had two, intertwined objectives: on the one hand, it aimed at shedding more light on the origins of electoral designs in Georgia and Moldova; on the other, it tried to better understand their consequences for the development and stabilization of parties and party systems in both countries. To accomplish these tasks, the analysis has been guided by a comprehensive framework inspired by the traditional electoral research but encompassing also some theoretical and empirical considerations on the peculiar consequences of electoral laws in post-communist polities. There are a few crucial findings that can be drawn from this inquiry.

Both countries adopted different electoral designs based on their historical and contextual circumstances at the outset of transition from the Soviet rule. Interestingly enough, the basic features of these initial choices remained unchanged for the entire period under examination in my dissertation – in fact, the mixed electoral systems was envisaged only for 2019 elections in Moldova while the switch to full parliamentarism in Georgia is not foreseen until the 2024 contest. That said, however, the far-reaching political repercussions of these electoral designs have not been entirely congruent with my expectations – not only because their party systems have not fully consolidated, which posed a significant limit to the predictability of electoral systems' political consequences, but also because they contained some peculiar features distorting the expected outcomes.

Beginning with the Georgian case, the parallel mixed electoral system had a few distinctive effects on party and party system development in the country. Firstly, its PR component based on closed-party lists and the one, nation-wide electoral district had a reductive impact on the party system as only a few electoral subjects besides the ruling parties managed to gain representation. However, such an effect was mostly

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<sup>54</sup> Similar concerns have been raised with respect to underrepresentation of ethnic minorities, which account for at least twenty percent of the total Moldovan population (Bochsler 2011). Nevertheless, it is worth recalling that this problem is mostly generated by reasons exogenous to electoral rules. In fact, the establishment of parties based on ethnicity is explicitly prohibited by art.3(6) of the LPP, while those of regional character are implicitly impossible due to the registration requirement of a minimum of four thousand signatures among which at “least half has to come from members residing in at least half of the second-level administrative-territorial units with no less than 120 members in each of the mentioned administrative-territorial units” (LPP, art.8.1d).

determined by the elevated electoral threshold – between 5 and 7 percent for the entire period under examination – which acted as a significant and effective hurdle for smaller and/or new formations. The high – yet equal to all categories of competing electoral subjects – entry barrier had another effect, namely stimulating the establishment of electoral alliances composed of several smaller, opposition formations. On the one hand, this strategy often represented the only tangible possibility for their electoral success but also contributed to the fragmentation of the opposition camp. On the other hand, by uniting ideologically incongruent parties, it upheld the pro/anti-incumbent dimension of political competition at the expense of a more programmatic one.

The role of the majoritarian component in shaping political outcomes was more contingent on the political circumstances specific to distinguished phases of party development in Georgia. In this respect, its initial stages lasted until the Rose Revolution in late 2003, with the double-majority system generating favourable conditions for independent candidates and regional interests' representation. This outcome was in line with the general expectations of the mixed electoral system supporters, in particular, the representatives of the various local power networks, particularly interested in maximizing their chances to win representation. Nevertheless, once these local centres of power were brought under the centralized control of the revolutionary leaders after 2003, the number of independent candidates elected through SMD sharply declined to be completely replaced by the partisan ones. In fact, since 2004 the majoritarian component of the Georgian mixed electoral system systematically amplified the victories of the winning party. This 'majoritarian bonus' was facilitated also by a peculiar first-round winning threshold set at 30 percent, which in practice distorted the logic of the double-majority system. In this way, it not only had a reductive impact on the overall party system format but has been also particularly supportive for its concentration around the president and his supportive political formation in legislative and governmental arenas. Finally, however, it should also be mentioned that, with an exception of the 2012 elections, the majoritarian component allowed smaller formations to win a limited number of seats.

The full PR electoral design in Moldova was expected to provide robust institutional incentives for multipartyism, yet its inflationary effect on the party system was contained through a number of highly manipulative correctives. These measures included the relatively high electoral threshold (between 4 and 6 percent for individual parties), which, coupled with the one, nation-wide electoral district, constituted effective entry barriers for smaller and/or new formations. Furthermore, the positive effect of the PR system on party consolidation was diluted by some of its components like the closed party lists, which enhanced the control of party leadership over the candidates' nominations and strengthened the central structures at the expense of the local branches. A similar effect was played by the above-mentioned nation-wide electoral



district, which while advantaged political parties over individual candidates and enhanced the nationalization of the political process, provided less structural incentives to enhance the local structures.

The Moldovan PR system was also conducive to a systematic electoral disproportionality through its peculiar feature, i.e. the system of distribution of unassigned seats. In this context, the d'Hondt method used until 2010, in fact, runs counter the entire logic of redistribution. Instead of compensating smaller formations, it systematically rewarded the largest party with a bonus accounting for 20 to even 40 percent of additional seats. This undoubtedly has affected the inter-party competition in the governmental arena by significantly increasing the probability of a mono-party government. Indeed, the interval of predominance in the Moldovan party system was due to the manufactured PCRM's majority between 2005 and 2009. All in all, however, the political consequences of the electoral design in Moldova appear to have been in line with the theoretical expectation according to which in post-communist context, the PR systems with relatively high threshold tend to be favourable to the progressive stabilization of a few national parties by having a "constraining effect on parties' number and freezing effect on party competition" (Birch 2003).

## **Chapter 7. The party funding regime and the party system**

The intricacies of the relationship between money and politics are not new to political science and there seem to be no opponents among scholars to the claim that “money is the fuel of party politics” (Haughton 2012, 16), not only in symbolic but also in practical terms (Casas Zamora 2005). Furthermore, the increasing need of political actors to resort to private sources of financing in order to tackle the constantly rising costs of doing politics “has moved the funding of political activity to the centre of public debates all over the world” (Casas Zamora 2005, 1).

The money-politics nexus has been of great sensitivity across all types of political regimes, but studies of the post-authoritarian polities – such as the former Soviet republics – suggest that in this context it has often assumed a crucial role in shaping political outcomes. This is hardly surprising: considering the structural features of most of the transitional regimes such as resource-scarcity, volatile electoral markets and weak links between parties and citizens, the access to financial resources constitutes a potentially enormous competitive advantage. Indeed, the organizational continuity and electoral success of the post-communist successor parties have often been explained through the lens of their superiority over other political actors in terms of resources (Ishiyama 1999).

Bearing in mind these considerations, the main goal of this chapter is to shed light on the relationship between the party funding regime (PFR), on the one hand, and political development and consolidation in Georgia and Moldova, on the other. In doing so, I first discuss briefly the main theoretical underpinnings from the literature devoted to party finances in post-communist space. Secondly, I outline the analytical framework guiding the empirical part of the analysis. The third part of the chapter is devoted to the investigation of the cross-temporal evolution of PFRs in both countries. Its analytical core is constituted by a fine-grained analysis of the potential effects of PFRs on political outcomes in both countries by disentangling them into four main dimensions, namely the private and public funding, campaign spending as well as the overall transparency and enforcement. Finally, the conclusive part provides a summary of the main findings from a comparative perspective.

### **7.1. Theoretical considerations and analytical framework**

Since the earliest phase of their development, the post-communist parties were “born within the state” (Rybář 2006) and hardly disposed of large support bases from which to obtain financial resources (Lewis 1998). Consequently, the introduction of state contributions in this resource-scarce context was frequently seen as crucial for stimulating fair party competition (Bakke and Sitter 2005; Bielasiak 2005; Grzymała-Busse 2007; Protsyk and Osoian 2010). In fact, in almost all post-communist states, public funding became the main

source of party financing in direct (i.e. reimbursement of campaign costs and funding for statutory activities) and indirect forms (i.e. free broadcasting time) (Ikstens et al. 2002; Roper 2002a).

Against this backdrop, the academic research on party funding has yet to gain ground within the field of comparative politics. To this date, in an attempt to understand the relationship between money and politics, scholars have looked into it from a number of different perspectives such as the regulative frameworks governing public (van Biezen and Kopecký 2001; Nassmacher 2009; van Biezen 2008) and private party funding (Roper 2002a; Pinto-Duschinsky 2002) as well as the consequences of the increasing reliance on public contributions for the development of parties and party systems (Birnie 2005; Spirova 2007; Scarrow 2006; Szczerbiak 2001; van Biezen 2003; P. Lewis 1998; Ikstens et al. 2002) – including, *inter alia*, the survival of minor parties (Casal Bértoa and Spirova 2019). A number of studies have also been devoted to uncovering the link between public funding and political corruption in post-communist polities (Smilov and Toplak 2007; Smilov 2002; Toplak 2002; Roper 2002a).

The major shortcoming of the party funding research is its conceptual and theoretical limitations. In fact, despite great availability of quantitative data, it has been mostly focused on individual country analyses (Sikk 2003; Roper 2002a; Szczerbiak 2001; Casal Bértoa and Walecki 2012; Protsyk 2002; Hutcheson 2013), while systematic cross-national studies have been rare (Ikstens, Walecki, and Smilov 2001; Roper and Ikstens 2008; Scarrow 2007). Consequently, “the field of party finance is undertheorized” (Casal Bértoa and Walecki 2012) and lacks solid theoretical foundations (Scarrow 2007). The second important aspect that warrants emphasis is that the multi-dimensionality of the PFR seems to pose important limits for determining its clear, one-directional potential in determining political outcomes. In other words, studies have evidenced that besides the most straightforward mechanical consequence for party system size, the impact of PFR on individual parties – depending on their weight and position within the system – is contingent on specific combinations of PFR components and the levels of their restrictiveness.

The main conclusion one can draw from this brief introductory remark is that scholars have had difficulties in clearly determining the universal consequences of PFR on political outcomes. This, however, does not mean that its explanatory power should be disregarded; on the contrary, a number of individual case studies have convincingly shown that party funding in post-communist polities has constituted one of the most crucial intervening factors in party and party systems developments.

#### **7.1.1. PFR multi-dimensionality and its political consequences**

If determining the political consequences of the PFR is a tricky endeavour, scholars have provided a few theoretical arguments pertaining to the effects of its specific elements, i.e. public and private funding as well

as the control mechanism. Although the empirical findings<sup>1</sup> have been mixed and often contingent on country-specific circumstances, there are a few general theoretical assumptions that can be drawn from the party funding research.

Beginning with state contributions, it can be expected that the availability of public funding will contribute to progressively stabilizing political competition and increasing its fairness by reducing financial inequalities among political actors. To this end, public funding should act as a counterbalance to “the potentially excessive influence of private contributors at the expense of the public interest” (van Biezen 2008, 347) and help reduce political corruption through greater control of money flows (Roper 2002a). On a less positive note, the reliance on state subsidies may hinder party rootedness by discouraging parties from engaging with citizens in seeking alternative funding sources. Likewise, too strict eligibility and allocation criteria may affect party organizational structures by subjecting the local branches to party headquarters in the distribution chain (Roper 2002a). All in all, the overall public funding scheme may ultimately result advantageous to the established parties and incentivize them to pursue the maximization of gains through the exploitation of state resources by preventing the access of other actors (Grzymała-Busse 2007).

Nevertheless, it can also be assumed that in a resource-scarce environment such as the post-Soviet context, state funding will hardly be enough to cope with the increasing costs of doing politics. Supposing that the membership contributions represent only a small fraction of party budgets, most of the resources will be extracted from private and corporate sources. In this context, excessive dependence on private donations may lead to a “relationship of reciprocity” (Gherghina and Volintiru 2017), which, in turn, may transform parties into vessels of corporate interests, almost entirely detached from the electorate (Williams 2000; Kopecký 2006). This will not only affect their autonomy (Hale 2006) but may also be conducive to plutocracy – a system in which political competition based on the principle of equality is substituted by “a system dominated by the riches of an affluent minority” (Nassmacher 2009, 239).

Yet even if parties maintain their autonomy as organizational entities, the reliance on private money may still distort their nature by providing structural incentives for their engagement in political corruption, clientelism and patronage (Nassmacher 2009). Such practices are generally perceived as detrimental for party competition by offering competitive advantages to bigger formations as they will attract significantly larger shares of corporate donations than their smaller challengers given their ability to influence the decision and policy-making processes (Kopecký 2006). In this context, however, clientelism does not have to be

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<sup>1</sup> For a more detailed analyses of the relationship between money and political outcomes in post-authoritarian contexts see, *inter alia*, Birnir (2005), Casal Bértoa & van Biezen (2014), Fisher (2002), Grzymała-Busse (2007), Roper & Ikstens (2008), Scarrow (2006), Smilov & Toplak (2007), Szczerbiak (2001), Tavits (2006), van Biezen & Rashkova (2014).

necessarily harmful to party individual and systemic stability – leaving aside the moral judgment of this phenomenon, if associated with a party as an organization rather than individuals, clientelism may contribute to its consolidation over time.

Finally, I expect the control mechanism, understood in this chapter as an *ensemble* of transparency in disclosing the financial information as well as the impartiality of oversight bodies and effective sanctioning for law violations, to constitute a concrete tool through which the inter-party competition can be manipulated (Rybář 2006). More concretely, low levels of transparency will allow parties to keep their financial information hidden from public knowledge while the politically controlled oversight body and the selective applicability of sanctions will often serve as instruments employed in political struggle.

To conclude, drawing from the party funding literature, I expect the consequences of the PFR on political outcomes to be contingent on the degree of restrictiveness of its components. In this vein, easier access to resources will have an inflationary effect by encouraging new actors to enter the political competition and will be advantageous to their stabilization over time (Casal Bértoa and Spirova 2019; Casas Zamora 2005; Nassmacher 2009; Roper 2002a; Spirova 2007)<sup>2</sup>. In other words, “when parties cannot receive state fund, and concomitantly face restrictions on fundraising in the private realm, the costs for parties are high and result in a reduction in the ENP in elections – and not just the stability of these parties” (Booth and Robbins 2010, 644).

### **7.1.2. Analytical framework**

The core puzzle that the analytical part of this chapter seeks to solve pertains to the way in which PFRs have influenced party and party systems development and consolidation in Georgia and Moldova over time. Building on theoretical considerations outlined in the previous section, the main assumption underpinning the analysis is that the type, amount and method of distribution of financial resources affect the development of individual parties, while the extent to which the regulatory frameworks are prone to generate competitive advantages to the mainstream parties – through financial dominance and/or manipulation of rules – may significantly alter the incentive structure of political competition.

Before outlining the main components of the analytical framework, some conceptual clarifications are due. Firstly, and in line with the existing literature, in this chapter I define party funding regime as the “set of rules that deals with the indispensable flow of money into political system and from it” along with

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<sup>2</sup> With regard to this argument it is necessary to keep in mind that there are other regulatory restrictions that constitute entry barriers in post-communist polities are registration deposits which, if too high, “significantly discourage the emergence of new parties and help to keep existing party system stable” (Tavits 2006, 109). Van Biezen and Rashkova have argued that “as regulation increases in range and magnitude, it indeed acts to prevent new parties from successfully crossing the threshold of parliamentary representation” (2014, 8).

“the legal instruments that oversee and enforce the operation of that framework” (Casas Zamora 2005, 17; van Biezen 2003, 14). Secondly, the PFR is here disentangled into three main dimensions: a) direct public funding (i.e. flows of money distributed among the political subjects)<sup>3</sup>; b) private funding, including donations (individual and corporate) as well as membership fees; c) control mechanism, intended as rules governing reporting, monitoring and sanctioning the financial activities of political subjects.

Having this in mind, the discussion will be primarily conducted through the lens of the country-specific context in order to allow a more thorough analytical rigour in tracing the possible relationship between the PFR and political outcomes. To this end, it proceeds in two steps. Firstly, I qualitatively discuss the evolution of PFR in terms of their cross-temporal stability with an aim to establish the frequency and scope of regulatory interventions as well as the extent of actors’ involvement. This will not only offer a broader political context surrounding the crafting of the rules but will also give a taste of what could have been the actors’ strategies in terms of exploiting the PRF to their advantage. The second step is represented by an investigation of possible effects that PFR may have exerted on party and party systems’ development and consolidation in both countries. Following into the footprints of scholars working on similar topics who argued that different aspects of party finances may exert different impacts, I disentangle the PRF into the three above-mentioned components in order to offer a more fine-grained analysis.

The study is based on the text analysis of the PFR regulatory frameworks as well as on the quantitative data obtained from the publicly available party financial declarations published annually on the websites of the respective oversight bodies in each country. Furthermore, several secondary sources, including the reports of watchdog national and international organizations have been consulted in cross-checking the robustness of these financial indicators. At this point, one important caveat needs to be signalled, namely the limited reliability of financial data provided by the political actors. Indeed, party reports in post-communist polities – and, in post-Soviet space – are often incomplete as they do not disclose income and expenditures in their entirety. Nevertheless, and in the absence of more precise indicators, I believe that such data still provides interesting insights into the dynamics of PFR. To better reflect the PFR structure in the analysis all the parties receiving state funding have been included, unless otherwise specified. Finally, for comparative purposes, the aggregate amounts of various indicators are converted in USD based on historical convergence rates, in addition to the values reported in local currencies.

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<sup>3</sup> Considering that the rules governing the indirect public contributions (i.e. the allocation of broadcasting time) have been, in general terms, of a relatively fair nature as well as the difficulties in obtaining data, I do not discuss this dimension in this chapter.

## 7.2. Party funding origins

The following section discusses the origins and reforms of PFR in Georgia and Moldova from a cross-temporal perspective. At this point it can be anticipated that in both states the mainstream parties capitalized on the financial rules, yet their strategies in doing so have been substantially different.

### 7.2.1. Georgia

The essence of the Georgian PFR has been exposed to frequent regulatory interventions since the 1997 Law on Political Unions of Citizens (LPUC, Law № 1028, 1997) provided a more systematic regulation of party funding – before that date, the rules governing party financing had a transitory character and regarded exclusively the contributions to electoral campaigning<sup>4</sup>. The LPUC regulated private contributions by capping the legal and individual donations and providing a comprehensive list of forbidden sources including, *inter alia*, foreign donations<sup>5</sup>. It also disciplined the disbursement of public funds by setting the eligibility threshold at 5%, thus slightly lower than the 7% parliamentary one (LPUC, art.30).

The substantial revision of the PFR took place only eight years later as part of a larger political reform following the 2003 Rose Revolution and the subsequent change of the political order. In general terms, the post-revolutionary political context offered more opportunities for the opposition to push for a more inclusive party funding scheme. In this regard, the 2005 amendment revised the eligibility criteria and introduced a stricter control mechanism through increased reporting transparency and harsher sanctions, including the revocation of state funding for the subsequent year (LPUC, art.32). Nevertheless, in overall terms, the modification of the LPUC did not bring substantial improvement in either of these two aspects (TI Georgia 2007). Furthermore, the first parliamentary term under the ruling of the UNM – the unquestionable winner of 2004 parliamentary elections – already yielded some noteworthy instances of the incumbent’s tendency to take advantage of the regulatory gaps in the PFF, which would persist during its incumbency (see section 7.3.1 for more details).

In 2006, the UNM advanced a few revisionary proposals aimed at introducing more transparency of private contributions, which included, *inter alia*, the prohibition of cash donations as well as of financial transfers exceeding the annual income of the donors. While they seemed reasonable at first glance, they were decisively criticised by the opposition parties for whom this type of private donations constitute a matter of survival given

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<sup>4</sup> In this vein, the first systematic effort of regulating the campaign finances was included in the Electoral Code and Presidential Electoral Code approved by the parliament in September 1995: one of their provisions stipulated the distribution of a lump sum of GEL 2000 ( $\pm$  \$1500) for each electoral contestant, at the same time, setting the limit for electoral fund at the same amount, even though no state contribution was eventually provided. Furthermore, they granted equal access for all parties and candidates, even though several electoral contestants denounced the unfair media access (OSCE PA 1996).

<sup>5</sup> With an exception of targeted funding for educational purposes.

the rather modest amount of available state subsidies and the incumbents' monopoly in extracting larger sums of private money (TI Georgia 2007).

The ultimate compromise over the more equitable PFR was reached only in February 2007 when, under the pressure of international organisations, the Georgian ruling party and the opposition forces<sup>6</sup> signed a memorandum of understanding. In this vein, the revised funding scheme envisaged for an increase of the state subsidies to be disbursed according to eligibility threshold diversified for local and national elections and a more inclusive allocation formula, based on vote and seat shares. The draft was voted in parliament on first reading in May 2007 (Law № 4918, 2007)<sup>7</sup>, yet the entry into force of new rules was postponed until the beginning of the electoral campaign preceding the 2008 presidential elections (Civil.ge 2007a).

Another important reform of party funding framework carried out in 2011 (Law № 5661, 2011) followed a long line of recommendations of the international experts in terms of increasing the efficiency of the control mechanism<sup>8</sup>, but it also introduced some controversial provisions such as the prohibition of corporate donations (LPUC, art.26.A<sup>1</sup>) along with several secondary measures significantly constraining the flow of money from business environments (LPUC, art. 26<sup>1</sup>). Although this decision was assessed internationally as “a legitimate choice for a country to make” (OSCE/ODIHR 2012), several national experts pointed out its political and tailored-made character aimed at restricting the financial capacities of the main UNM political opponent, Bidzina Ivanishvili (Civil.ge 2011e)<sup>9</sup>.

The changeover in government following the victory of the GD coalition in October 2012 brought revision of PFR carried out in the summer of 2013 (Law № 923, 2013; Law № 900, 2013). Its first objective was to lift the ban on corporate donations, but also to substantially increase the state subsidies and render them more easily accessible to smaller political actors (Civil.ge 2013c). In general, the reform was successful in rendering the party funding scheme more friendly towards smaller formations, nonetheless, it did little to increase the

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<sup>6</sup> The memorandum was signed on February 27, 2007 by the representatives of the National Movement, Industry Will Save Georgia, the New Rights, the Republican Party and the Conservative Party (with an exception of Labour Party representative who claimed to have had procedural problems pertaining to visa application), for more details, see TI Georgia (2007).

<sup>7</sup> The 2007 amendment introduced also an additional source of state funding for parties, namely the Fund for Parties and NGOs.

<sup>8</sup> As the oversight capacity was granted to the Chamber of Control instead of the Central Electoral Commission, the amendment was judged as a step forward towards de-politicization of the controlling body considering that the president of the Chamber was elected by the parliamentary majority for a fixed term of five years. Another positive step was constituted by the allocation of additional funds for parties respecting gender quota (LPUC, art.30.7<sup>1</sup>) which was assessed as a positive step towards increasing women participation in political process, especially considering that Georgia was among the countries with the lowest proportion of women in parliament in legislative chamber. Nevertheless, such an incentive, further increased in 2013, proved relatively ineffective as no party has qualified for this state funding (Civil.ge 2011b).

<sup>9</sup> See section 7.4.1 for a more comprehensive discussion of this aspect.



accessibility to private resources, still overwhelmingly flowing into the coffers of the ruling party and contributing to its financial predominance. It also did not address sufficiently the overall deficiency of the control mechanism (Greco, 2015).

### 7.2.2. Moldova

The Moldovan case constitutes an intriguing deviation from the general pattern in the context of post-communist party finance for two reasons. Firstly, the relative, cross-temporal stability of its PFR – the essence of which was revised only after more than fifteen years – runs counter to the regional trend of frequent regulatory interventions in this area. Secondly, and contrary to almost all polities from the region, the Moldovan parties did not benefit from state subsidies until 2016<sup>10</sup>.

The lack of state subsidies induced the Moldovan parties to rely entirely on private contributions, while the rules regulating party revenues (art.12 (10)) and their control (art. 27 (21))<sup>11</sup> contained in the LPOSPO were vague enough to allow parties to keep their financial affairs largely hidden from public knowledge. Against this background, the first systematic regulatory framework of party finances was outlined in the 1991 Law on Parties and Other Socio-Political Organizations (LPOSPO, Law № 718, 1991) and remained in force until the adoption – sixteen years later – of the new Law on Political Parties (LPP, Law № 294, 2007) entered into force in 2008.

This does not mean that no attempt had ever been undertaken before this date. A more precise regulatory framework for campaign financing was introduced by the 1997 Electoral Code and followed by several attempts of a more comprehensive revision of the party funding scheme. Following some unsuccessful attempts of reform (Venice Commission, 2002; Grosu, 2007)<sup>12</sup>, a new comprehensive package of PFR amendments was presented in December 2005 as part of the bargaining between the ruling PCRM and the opposition in exchange for support for its political agenda discussed in Chapter 5. The draft reform upheld the introduction of state subsidies (based

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<sup>10</sup> The reform carried out in 2008 envisaged the introduction of public funding, yet its effective application took place only from 2016. See section 8.3.1 for more details.

<sup>11</sup> Granted to tax office for financial control and to Ministry of Justice for monitoring a more general compliance with party laws.

<sup>12</sup> The first draft amendment of the LPOSPO was prepared conjointly by the Ministry of Justice of Moldova and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) in August 2000 with an aim to reinforce the control mechanism; yet the initiative, after being adopted at the first reading, was abandoned at the later stage (Grosu 2007). The works on the bill were resumed after the 2001 parliamentary elections won by the PCRM, but after the opinion of the Venice Commission critical in particular towards the choice of the Ministry of Justice as a supervisory body (2002), they were not brought to the conclusion. The third tentative took place only three years later, in 2005, when a comprehensive revision of all the aspects of the PFR was debated in the framework of the launched National Strategy for Preventing and Combating Corruption – the proposal included, *inter alia*, the introduction of state subsidies for all political parties, caps on private contributions, criminal liability for vote-buying and a more efficient control mechanism. Nevertheless, despite the ambitious scope of changes, the bill was once again pushed into obscurity as the parliament did not discuss it within the prescribed time limit.

on electoral performance in national and local elections) while aiming at providing more transparent and impartial financial regulations<sup>13</sup>.

After heated debates on the eligibility and allocation criteria and the total amount of subsidies to be distributed<sup>14</sup>, the final version of the PFR reform was presented in 2006 and submitted to the Venice Commission expertise which, however, pointed out some inconsistent provisions related to economic activities of parties as well as the imprecise wording of the article 28.8 prohibiting the financing of political parties from abroad. In words of the CoE's expert, such a provision would exclude Moldovan citizens living abroad which was incompatible with art.11 of the ECHR (Venice Commission 2007). The legislative adoption of the revised LPP proved to be uneasy and completed only in December 2007 to enter into force in 2008.

The 2008 reform envisaged the introduction of public funding to be disbursed after the 2009 parliamentary and 2011 local elections. Nevertheless, the changeover of power following the snap 2010 parliamentary elections caused the suspension of the entire process. According to the official explanation, this was caused by insufficient budgetary resources. Yet political experts in Moldova have argued that the real motivation was political: even if the formerly incumbent PCRM slightly lost its political advantage over the other mainstream parties, the lion's share of state funds would still be allocated to the Communist<sup>15</sup>. Consequently, the effective distribution of state subsidies took place only in 2016 based on the revised criteria outlined in the 2015 amendment (Law № 36, 2015), but again, it has been argued that the rationale behind this decision had a political nature. In this vein, as the aggregate revenues of the ruling PDM almost reached the legally prescribed limit of 0.1 percent of state revenues in 2015, it has been speculated that it decided to unlock the allocation of state contributions to redirect attention from the simultaneous increase of private donations' cap – its main financial source – to 0.3 percent of state revenues (Lipcean 2017).

To conclude, the PFR regime in Moldova has been relatively permissive and granted the mainstream parties a “broad leeway regarding the accumulation and management of their financial and material resources” (Lipcean 2017, 5). In this vein, despite the ambitious scope of its 2015 revision aimed at providing “the system

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<sup>13</sup> The draft included limits on private donations, prohibition of donations from anonymous sources as well as stricter transparency and enforcement mechanisms, including sanctions for violators of provisions pertaining party funding. Furthermore, in 2005 the total sum of state funding was set at no more than 0.02% of the annual state budget, while the final version presented in 2006 increased the limit to 0.05% (Venice Commission 2007)

<sup>14</sup> In general terms, the provisions included in the LPP aimed, at least formally, at reducing the financial inequalities among parties as well as at enhancing the transparency of political funding. Nevertheless, two important elements hindered the achievement of these goals: firstly, the rather exclusive formula chosen for redistribution of the first half of state subsidies based on seat-share, thus leaving out the extra-parliamentary parties; secondly, the redistribution formula envisaged for the second half of funds according to which only those parties who gain more than 50 mandates of counsellors in the second level of local elections, the eligibility threshold was even higher than that at parliamentary elections (Lipcean 2009).

<sup>15</sup> Expert interview, Chisinau, October 2017.

of checks and balances which are to protect the Moldovan political landscape from illegal funding, dependency of parties on few donors or over-spending (...)” (Promo-LEX 2016), it still contained too many gaps to ensure “transparency, integrity and accountability” of party finances (OSCE/ODIHR 2016). The consequences of the 2015 amendment of the PFR are yet to be seen, but the further revision of PFR pertaining to the campaign finances carried out in 2017 in view of the change of the electoral systems<sup>16</sup> suggests the lack of political will to ensure higher transparency and to reduce financial inequalities between parties. In other words, as the Joint Opinion of OSCE/ODIHR and Venice Commission has evidenced, “that continued fine-tuning of regulations must not serve as a substitute for properly enforcing the already existing legislation” (Venice Commission and OSCE/ODIHR 2017b). It, nevertheless, served as a catalyst for relaunching public discussion on political money in Moldova, which brought again into the spotlight the issues of political corruption and linkages between politics and vested interests<sup>17</sup>.

### **7.3. An overview of party funding regimes**

Currently, political actors in both countries can extract funds from a variety of sources, including membership fees, private and corporate donations, state subsidies and revenues obtained through activities prescribed by respective legislations<sup>18</sup>. In both states the provisions on party funding are scattered across few legal documents: the core body of regulations in Moldova are contained in the LPP (since 2008) and its predecessor,

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<sup>16</sup> The legislative alignment was aimed at integrating the SMD candidates into the party funding regime scheme. More precisely, the introduction of single member districts required more complex provisions regulating money flows and tighter enforcement mechanism. However, as pointed out by experts, the reform have introduced further complexity to the existing party funding scheme, additionally confused by electoral provisions allowing candidates to run in both electoral tiers contemporarily, which, in turn, has rendered the oversight of party finances even more difficult. Finally, it has been argued that in the context of the mixed electoral system, the importance of money will further increase, which, in turn, will affect the fairness of political competition by offering advantages to wealthy contestants. For a comprehensive discussion on possible problems entailed by the electoral reform with relations to party funding see (Lipcean 2017) as well as Priority Reform Action Roadmap prepared by the Moldovan government in 2016, available at: <http://www.mfa.gov.md/img/docs/Moldovas-Priority-Reform-Action-Roadmap-Key-measures-until-31-July-2016.pdf> (last accessed in March 2019).

<sup>17</sup> See, for instance, the proposal advanced by Party of Action and Solidarity (PAS) available at: <http://unpaspentru.md/2017-politicienii-corupti-trebuie-sa-plece/> (last accessed in March 2019).

<sup>18</sup> In addition, parties in both countries can benefit from donations received through public events (not exceeding 30.000 GEL annually in Georgia, LPUC art. 26.4; with no limits in Moldova, LPP art. 25(b), while the Moldovan parties can also receive donations from their members which constitute a distinctive category of income with respect to membership fees (LPP, art.26.1(a)). See, Law № 963 (2008).

the LPOSPO of 1991 as well as the Electoral Code (EC)<sup>19</sup> while in Georgia they are included in the LPUC and the EC<sup>20</sup>.

In general terms, after frequent regulatory interventions, the Georgian party funding scheme has been classified as one of the most comprehensive regimes in the post-communist space (GRECO 2013). By contrast, the Moldovan PFR was not subjected to major revisions for more than fifteen years since its inception. Furthermore, in overall terms, the Georgian PFR has been mildly restrictive while the Moldovan has been rather lax. What unites these two party funding regimes, in line with a more general regional trend, is the ineffective oversight mechanism which would allow to exercise full control of party finances and assure their transparency, even though in the Georgian case the enforcement of party compliance with party funding regulations has been more efficient than in Moldova.

The following sections will discuss the longitudinal evolution of the three main dimensions of PFR – the state subsidies, the private funding, and the control mechanism – in both countries from a comparative perspective.

### **7.3.1. Public funding**

Public subsidies are typically divided into two components – the direct (DPF) and indirect funding (IPF). While both dimensions may affect party and party system development, the difficulty to analyse the aggregate effects of various forms of IPF on political competition significantly hinders its usefulness in the context of this chapter. Hence, the emphasis falls exclusively on DPF, which is here disentangled into three intertwined but analytically distinctive elements: the level of DPF, the eligibility rules, and the allocation formula.

The main difference between Georgia and Moldova lies within the availability of DPF: while in the first country direct public funding was introduced in 1997<sup>21</sup>, the second did so significantly later – in 2008, and with the effective implementation only since 2016. In this context, the most puzzling aspect of the Moldovan party funding scheme is why, despite its parliamentary regime and proportional electoral system, the introduction of state contributions had been delayed for so long. There seems to be no straightforward answer. One of the possible interpretations is that the uncertainty stemming from the intense political conflicts through the 1990s prevented the lawmakers from regulatory revisions that could, eventually, act in their

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<sup>19</sup> The financing of political parties in the Republic of Moldova is regulated by the Constitution of the Republic of Moldova, Electoral Code, Law on Political Parties (2007), the Annual Budget Law, the Regulation on the Financing of Political Party Activities, the Regulation on the use of Cash and Control Machines (MCC), the Code of Contravention, the Criminal Code, the Tax Code and a series of regulations and instructions developed by mandated institutions (Promo-LEX 2018).

<sup>20</sup> In addition, the provisions on party funding are included in the Law on the State Audit, General Administrative Code and Code of Administrative Offences.

<sup>21</sup> Even though the effective disbursement started at the beginning of the 2000s (Gobronidze 2008).

disfavour. In fact, while the stabilization of the political landscape was unfolding, the lax PFR turned out to be beneficial for all the mainstream political actors who managed to find their funding sources – either through corporate sponsors or through private businesses of party activists – hence their low willingness to alter its nature (Protsyk, Bucătaru, and Volentir 2008; Protsyk and Osoian 2008).

Likewise, both countries differ in terms of sources from which parties can receive state contributions: in Georgia the public subsidies for regular activities are distributed through two channels: the Central Election Commission (CEC) and, from 2009, the Centre of Electoral Systems Development, Reforms and Trainings (CESDRT)<sup>22</sup>, while in Moldova only the CEC is charged with disbursement of direct state funding. Finally, the electoral contestants in Moldova do not receive DPF for election campaigning while their Georgian counterparts have benefited from a rather considerable financial support since 2013<sup>23</sup>.

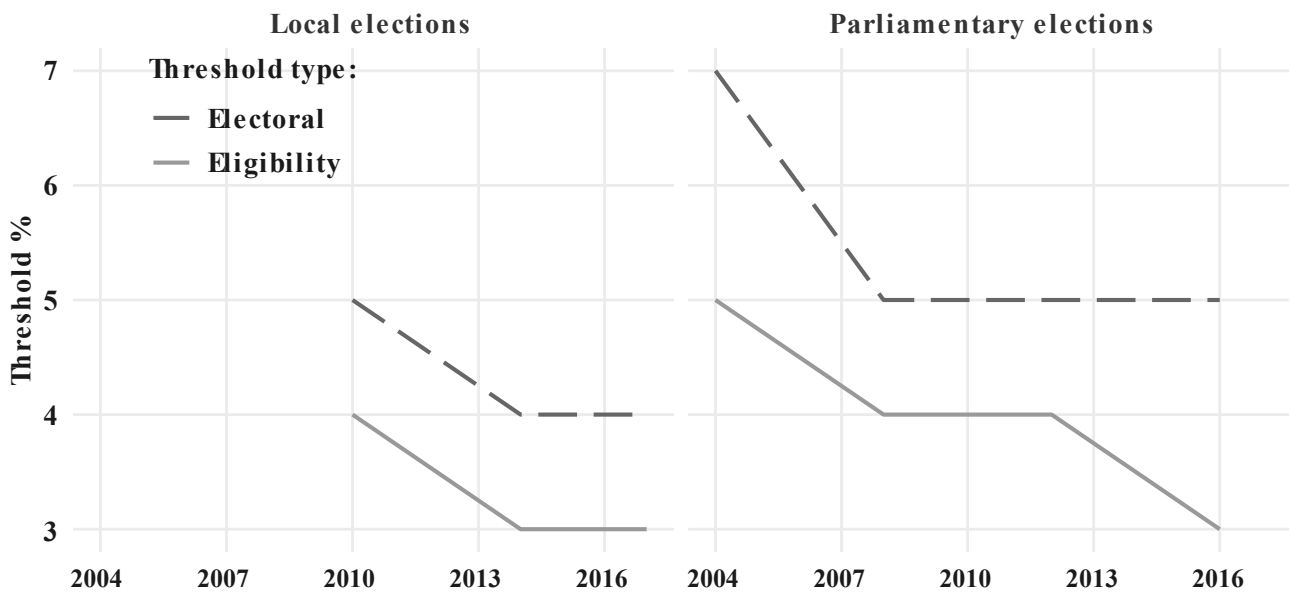
Taking the eligibility criteria as the starting point, in Georgia, they have had a clear party-enabling nature as only political parties are entitled to receive subsidies for regular party activities. Furthermore, the funds are transferred directly to the party accounts and they are further managed by the parties' headquarters. The same rules apply also to Moldova as introduced by the 2008 party funding reform, even though the effective disbursement began only in 2016., while in Moldova any political party presenting candidates for elections is now entitled to receive state support, in Georgia the payment threshold has varied over time. Figure 7.1 depicts the evolution of the eligibility and the electoral thresholds for local and national contests in Georgia. What immediately captures the attention is that in both cases the eligibility thresholds have been lower than the electoral ones indicating, at least formally, higher inclusiveness of the funding system.

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<sup>22</sup> Funds from the Centre are designed for covering expenses of conducting research, trainings and similar educational projects.

<sup>23</sup> Prior to that date, with exception of the 1995 elections when a contribution to electoral expenses was foreseen for the candidates (even if only in law and, eventually, not distributed), no direct state subsidies for electoral purposes were envisaged. Currently, electoral subjects in Georgia besides private contributions and direct state funding allocated for statutory activities, eligible Georgian parties can obtain resources from: LEPL Centre of Electoral Systems Development, Reform and Training (proportionally on the base funding); funding for covering election campaign expenses for electoral subjects who cross the 5percent threshold in parliamentary tier or 10percent in first round of presidential elections (of maximum GEL 1 000 000); funding based on gender quota (30percent of baseline funding for 30percent of diversity for the first, second and in every ten candidates); funding for TV advertisement during the electoral period (only for parties eligible for direct state funding and the formula is based on the number of votes x 3 and then divided by the number of components in case of political unions for no more than GEL 600 000; at least 15percent to be used for pre-electoral advertisement in at least seven non-national broadcasters); funding for representation in district and precinct commission on election day (respectively GEL 100 and 150). For more details see (TI Georgia 2017).

**Figure 7.1 The evolution of the eligibility and electoral thresholds in Georgia (2004-2017)**



Source: own elaboration based on party legislation

Regarding the second component of the DPF, namely the allocation formula, table 7.1 summarizes the main regulatory interventions in this field in Georgia between 1997 and 2017. Two important remarks are in place. Firstly, between 1997 and 2005, the norm effectively had a candidate-oriented nature: although the law stipulated the transfer of money to parties, the fluidity of parliamentary factions resulted in a direct handover of subsidies to MPs (Gobronidze 2008). Only from March 2005 the party-enabling nature of the funds' allocation was enforced by a legislative provision clearly mentioning that the funds were to be transferred directly to party accounts.

Secondly, the allocation formula has shifted towards a more inclusive distribution only in 2005<sup>24</sup>. Accordingly, in addition to the baseline funding tied to seat-share distribution, a vote-based allocation was introduced by applying a regressive coefficient<sup>25</sup>. Considering that the electoral system has for long been favouring the large parties due to the disproportional redistribution of mandates as discussed in Chapter 5, the introduction of vote-based allocation meant a friendlier scheme for smaller parties. Such a tendency has

<sup>24</sup> Effective as of January 2006, see Law № 2260 (2005).

<sup>25</sup> In practical terms, this meant that the amount of funds was decreasing proportionally to the increase of the number of votes obtained by each electoral subject: respectively, 2 GEL for less than 200 thousand votes; 1.5 GEL for between 200 thousand-500 thousand votes, and 1 GEL for more than 500 thousand votes (LPUC, art.30.3).

been upheld by the subsequent amendments carried out in 2007<sup>26</sup> as depicted by the last two columns of table 7.1, which also increased the total amount of available funds<sup>27</sup> (Civil.ge 2007a).

**Table 7.1 Distribution formula for state funding Georgia (1997-2017)**

Year	1997	2000	2001	2005	2007	2013
distribution formula	proportional	proportional baseline: 150 GEL monthly for each MP (proportional tier)	proportional baseline: 200 GEL monthly for each MP (proportional tier)	proportional vote-share baseline: 200 GEL monthly for each MP (proportional tier)	proportional vote & seat-share $Z = B + (M * Y * 12) + (V * 1,5) + (W * 1)^a$ Baseline: 150 000 GEL Bonus <sup>28</sup> : 20 percent of base funding for gender quota	proportional vote & seat-share $Z = B + (M * Y * 12) + (V * 1,5) + (W * 1) + H$ Baseline: 300 000 GEL Bonus: 30 percent of base funding for gender quota

<sup>a</sup>The formula is outlined in the Art. 30.3 of the Law on Political Parties and is explained as follows: Z is the amount of budgetary funding the party receives; B - the amount of basic funding; M - Number of members elected by proportional system in Parliament; Y - amount of money allocated to one member elected by the proportional system in Parliament; V - 200 000 votes received by the electorate and the number of votes received above the W - 200 000 voters. For the purposes of the formula set out in this article, M is greater than 50, then Y = 200, and if M does not exceed 50, then Y = 600. If the election subject (party/election bloc) overcomes the 8percent threshold in the last parliamentary elections or in the general elections of the last local self-government – 6 percent threshold, the amount of basic funding will be 300 000 GEL per year. An amendment to the LPUC introduced H related to parliamentary faction. Source: own elaboration based on the amendments to the art.30, LPUC

<sup>26</sup> Art. 30, Law № 4918 (2007).

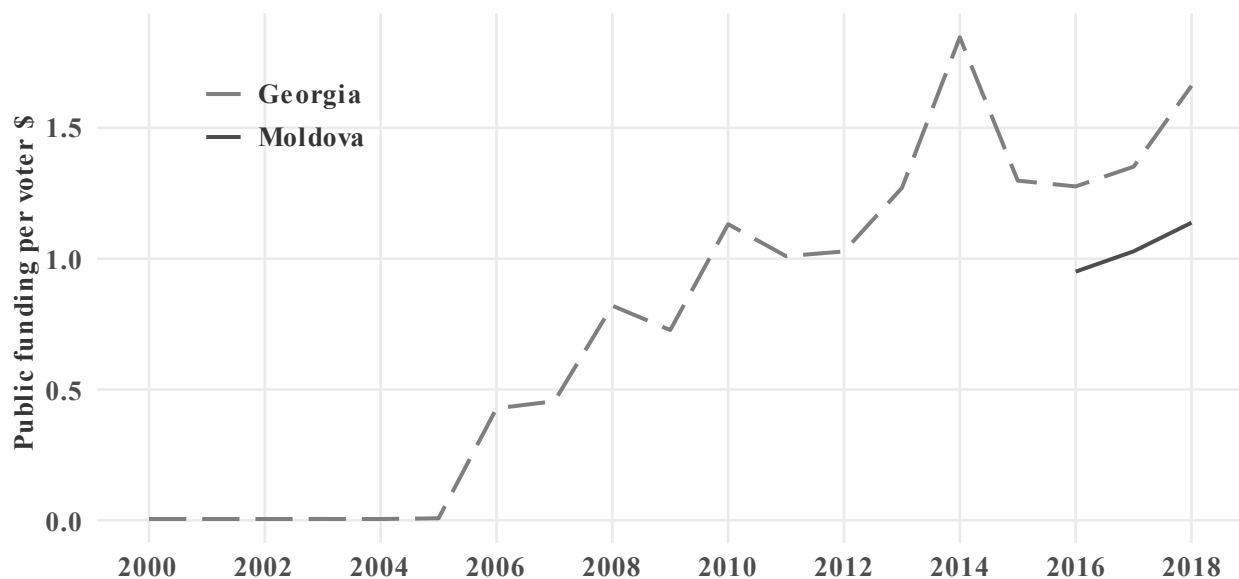
<sup>27</sup> The 2007 introduces a conspicuous increase of the baseline funding to be doubled in case of double-crossing the threshold. Art. 30.3, Law № 4918 (2007).

<sup>28</sup> The 2011 amendment introduced additional bonus equal to 30 percent of baseline funding for parties respecting gender quota. See Law № 5661 (2011) and Law № 923 (2013).

In 2013 an additional element – membership in a parliamentary faction (art.30.4) – was added (Law № 923, 2013) but, in practical terms, this requisite generated some confusion (Civil.ge 2013c). For instance, following the 2016 parliamentary elections the IWSG party, which gained one seat from the majoritarian tier (and 0.78 percent of votes in proportional tier), but managed to form a faction with few other majoritarian MPs was granted state funding for an aggregate sum higher than another small party, the Free Democrats, which gained 4.63 percent of votes in proportional tier, but did not enter the parliament (IRI 2016).

Finally, looking at the provisions regulating the total amount of DPF allocated to political parties in both countries reveals that in Georgia there is only a rather vague mention of a ‘certain amount determined annually by the Law of Georgia on State Budget’ (LPUC, art.30), while in Moldova the maximum threshold is set at 0.2 percent of the state budgetary revenues (LPP, art.27.1). Against this background, figure 7.2 depicts the variation in the total amount of DPF per voter effectively distributed to Georgian and Moldovan parties between 2000 and 2018. The first immediate conclusion that can be drawn from a careful look at it is that the Georgian parties benefit from slightly higher state subsidies than their Moldovan counterparts.

**Figure 7.2 The amount of direct public subsidies per voter in Georgia and Moldova (2000-2018)**



Source: own elaboration based on party legislation

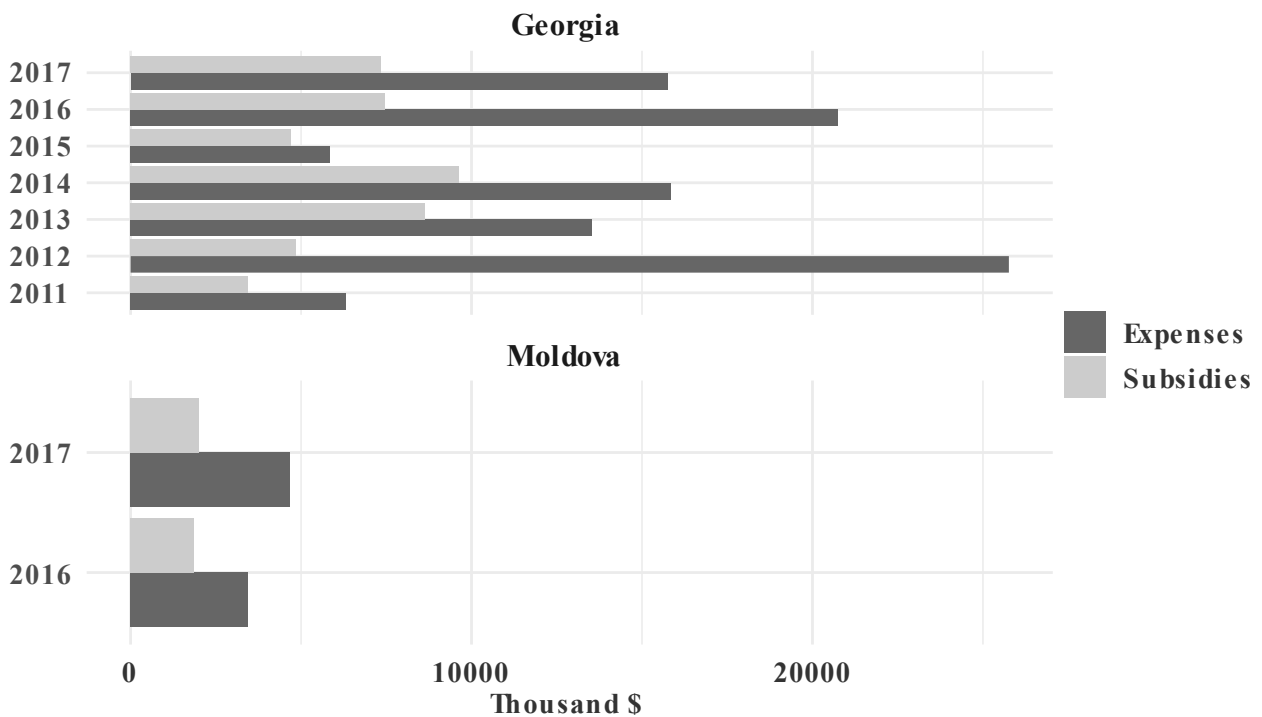
With reference to the individual experiences of each country, figure 7.2 clearly shows that throughout the first half of the 2000s the resources granted by the Georgian state were of a rather symbolic nature due to very limited budgetary resources (Nodia 2006, 48). Indeed, it is only from 2006 that the level of DPF has been increasing, but a truly conspicuous raise took place following the 2013 PFR revision. In Moldova, the



average level of DPF received by parties for a valid vote, albeit lower than in Georgia, still remains rather high, especially considering that Moldova is the poorest country in Europe<sup>29</sup>.

Despite the substantial support from the state in both countries, they can hardly cover party expenses, in particular, those pertaining to electoral campaigns, as shown by figure 7.3, which depicts also two complementary trends, namely that the aggregate levels of both state funding and spending in Georgia have been significantly higher than in Moldova. Considering that the lion’s share of party expenditures is employed for the purposes of electoral campaigning, one possible explanation for such a conspicuous divergence could lie in the different electoral system: in Georgia the mixed system requires more resources to be deployed for conducting campaign in both its tiers, while in Moldova with a PR this is not the case. Nevertheless, and regardless of the explanation one may find for the difference in expenditures, one point remains clear – state contributions have been insufficient to cover the costs of politics in both states, that is why political parties had to turn to private contributions to cover their financial needs.

**Figure 7.3 The aggregate expenses and direct state subsidies of political parties in Georgia and Moldova (2011-2017)**



Source: Own elaboration based on party financial reports

<sup>29</sup> According to the estimation of the National Bureau of Statistics in the fourth quarter of 2018, the average gross monthly salary was equal to MDL 6,446 (about USD376/€330) (Moldstat 2019). For a comparative purpose, in Georgia the average monthly salary in the same period was equal to GEL 1202 (about USD449/€395) (Geostat 2019).

### 7.3.2. Private funding

Private party financing can take several forms – membership fees, donations from physical and legal persons, in-kind donations, loans, etc. While membership dues constitute a genuine, grass-roots contribution and suggest strong bonds between parties and societies in which they operate, other forms, particularly the large contributions from corporate donors, are often associated with quite an opposite phenomenon, namely the interference of vested interests into the political process.

Regarding this first category, from a legal perspective, parties in Georgia and Moldova have been quite unconstrained in collecting money from their members. In Georgia, a cap on fees set at GEL 1200 ( $\pm$ USD 750) per member was introduced only in 2012, but no specific restriction on the total amount is foreseen. In Moldova, the limit on membership fees corresponds to that for donations, while the aggregate sum that parties can amass from this source falls into the general limit on private contributions set currently at 0.3 percent of budgetary revenues. In general terms, the experiences of both cases follow the regional pattern as membership fees do not constitute important shares of their budgets, even though in Moldova their aggregate sum has been higher than in Georgia<sup>30</sup>.

In this respect, the Moldovan case is quite curious: even though none of the mainstream parties generally consider membership fees an important source of income (Protsyk and Osoian 2008, 106–9), all of them have systematically reported relatively high figures. Furthermore, all of them have registered interesting fluctuations in terms of budgetary share of membership contributions as reflected by their rather inconsistent reports<sup>31</sup>. For instance, PSRM reported to have collected almost MDL 30 million ( $\pm$ USD 2.2 million) from membership fees in 2014, but only around MDL 1 million ( $\pm$ USD 55 thousand) in 2017. Likewise, PLDM

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<sup>30</sup> Indeed, an analysis of financial reports of Georgian parties reveals that only a few of them report membership fees as a revenue source. Interestingly enough, the two biggest parties, namely the GD-DG and the UNM, which have dominated the political competition, had almost no membership fees between 2011 and 2017 – in this vein, the reported amount was equal to GEL 280 ( $\pm$ USD 125) in 2015, GEL 240 ( $\pm$ USD 110) in 2016 and GEL 160 ( $\pm$ USD 66) in 2017 for GD-DG and certainly cannot be given any importance considering the overall party budget equal to approximately GEL 1.5 million ( $\pm$ USD 0.67 million) in 2015, GEL 27 million ( $\pm$ USD 12.6 million) in 2016 and GEL 20 million ( $\pm$ USD 8.3 million) in 2017. Among the smaller formations, in only four cases (among 198 examined reports) did membership fees represent a more substantial share of the party budget; however, as they reported them only once in seven years, they can certainly be disregarded as having a significant impact on their overall finances – these extra-parliamentary parties are: Democratic Movement United Georgia (38 percent of membership fees in entire budget in 2012), Georgian Communist Party (74.1 percent in 2015), Georgian Unified Communist Party (19.3 percent in 2016) and National Democratic Party (60.5 percent in 2011). For details see party reports available at <https://monitoring.sao.ge/declarations/Annual>.

<sup>31</sup> Respectively: PSRM (from a minimum of 33.5 percent in 2016 to a maximum of 99.96 percent of membership fees in a total budget in 2014), PLDM (from 39.5 percent in 2014 to 50.3 percent in 2013), PDM (23.6 percent in 2017) and PCRM (22.1 percent in 2013). For details see party reports available at <http://www.e-democracy.md/parties/>.

declared approximately MDL 25 million ( $\pm$ USD 1.8 million) in 2014, but only around MDL 37 thousand ( $\pm$ USD 2 thousand) in 2016, while PDM reported approximately MDL 4 million ( $\pm$ USD 200 thousand) in 2016 and MDL 14 million ( $\pm$ USD 0.8 million) in 2017. Considering that none of the parties has experienced a dramatic decrease or increase in terms of membership and party status including precise indications on the amount of fees that should be paid by each member<sup>32</sup>, such a variation is rather puzzling. One of the possible explanations lies in the fact that what parties report under the category of membership fees are, in fact, contributions from other private sources, which cannot be effectively traced due to inefficient oversight mechanisms<sup>33</sup>.

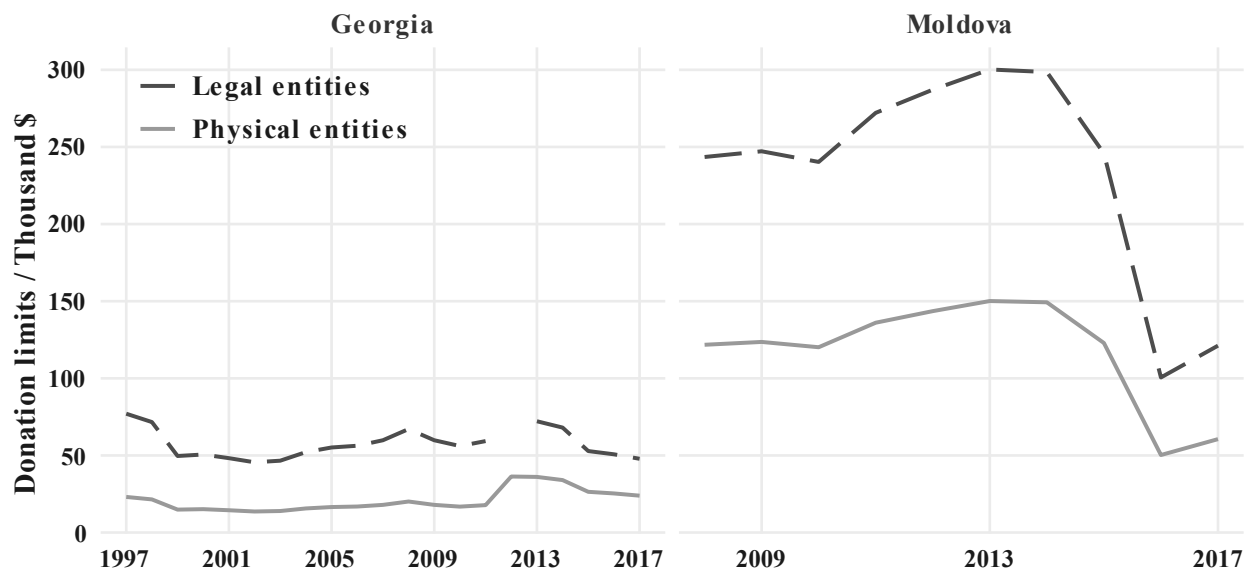
While membership fees have generally constituted a rather modest source of party revenues, exactly the opposite can be said about other types of private donations as depicted by figure 7.4 illustrating the evolution of donation limits from a cross-temporal perspective (as regulated by respective party laws). There are three important considerations that follow from this picture. Firstly, there is a significant difference in terms of contribution caps from physical and legal persons between the two countries – indeed, Moldovan parties could extract much larger amounts from potential sponsors in comparison to Georgian parties. Secondly, the quantitative restrictions have been in place in Georgia (1997) for much longer than in Moldova (2008). Finally, the gap between the caps on individual and corporate donations has been much larger in Moldova than in Georgia. The combination of these three observations suggests that the Moldovan parties have been considerably less constrained in engaging with private donors – especially with the corporate contributors – than their Georgian counterparts.

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<sup>32</sup> For instance, currently, the status of PCRM includes a provision that stipulates 0.5 to 2 percent of monthly salary (art. 45, available at <http://www.e-democracy.md/files/parties/pcrm-statute-2004-ro.pdf>), that of PLDM between MDL 5 and 50 MDL ( $\pm$ USD 0.2 to 2.7) based on membership status (art.51.3, available at <http://pldm.md/2018/10/19/statutul-pldm/>), minimum 0.5 percent of monthly salary in the case of PDM (art.80a, available at <http://www.pdm.md/ro/statut/>), and 1 percent of monthly salary in the case of PSRM (art.5.5, available at <http://socialistii.md/despre-partid/ustav-partii/>). All party statutes were lastly accessed in March 2019.

<sup>33</sup> Expert interview, Chişinău, October 2017.

**Figure 7.4 The evolution of donation caps in Georgia and Moldova overtime (1997-2017)**



Note: Reported values are as regulated by respective laws; Source: own elaboration based on party legislation

A closer look at the individual country experiences also reveals that in Georgia donation caps from both sources have been relatively stable over time since their introduction in 1997 – GEL 30 thousand (currently  $\pm$ USD 11 thousand) for physical and GEL 100 thousand (currently  $\pm$ USD 37 thousand) for legal persons (art.27)<sup>34</sup>. The most important change to the private funding component of the PFR was introduced by the 2011 amendment to LPUC, which increased twofold the cap on private contributions (to GEL 60 thousand), but most importantly prohibited the corporate donations altogether<sup>35</sup>. The ban was lifted in 2013 (Law № 900, 2013) by the newly elected parliamentary majority and the new cap was set for corporate donations at GEL 120 thousand (currently  $\pm$ USD 44 thousand) while that for private contributions was maintained at GEL 60 thousand (currently  $\pm$ USD 22 thousand) (LPUC, art.21.1).

<sup>34</sup> The minor fluctuations depicted by figure 6.4 are due to the variation of exchange rates from local currency to USD.

<sup>35</sup> The provision was accompanied by a series of further restrictions such as setting up a ceiling on aggregate revenues (and maximum spending sum) of political parties from all legally allowed sources could not exceed 0.2 percent of country's gross domestic product (art.25<sup>1</sup>). The amendment envisaged caps on loans from commercial banks equal to GEL 1 million ( $\pm$ USD 600 thousand) (art.25.3) as well as a limit of GEL 500 thousand ( $\pm$ USD 300 thousand) on donations from individuals from the same place of employment (art.27.7). Furthermore, it specified that all types of conclusions should be made through non-cash transactions and related not only to direct donations, but also services supplied to the parties.

Unlike in the Georgian case, the contribution limits in Moldova were introduced much later (December 2007, in force since January 2008)<sup>36</sup> and turned out to be very permissive as they were set at 500 average for individuals' monthly salaries (AMS) ( $\pm$ USD 120 thousand) and 1000 AMS ( $\pm$ USD 240 thousand) for legal entities<sup>37</sup>. Prior to that date, the Moldovan political parties were not subjected to any quantitative restriction on private contributions<sup>38</sup>. Furthermore, as illustrated by the figure 7.4, donation caps were only lowered in 2015 by setting the new limits at 200 AMS ( $\pm$ USD 49 thousand) for individuals, and 400 AMS (USD 98 thousand) for legal entities. Nevertheless, despite a more than twofold decrease in real value, these caps were still very permissive in Moldova's economic context. Furthermore, since they are tied to a flexible indicator – the average monthly salary – it can be assumed that their value will increase over time along with the wage growth, as it is, indeed, reflected by the figure 7.4.

Lastly, it is worth to note that, besides the differences in terms of donation caps, both countries have set diverging limits on the total income collectable from private contributions. In Georgia, this limit was implicitly present since 2011 as a result of an amendment, which capped the total annual party expenditures at 0.2 percent of the GDP (Law № 5661, 2011), further lowered to 0.1 percent in 2013 (art.25<sup>1</sup>, Law № 900 2013). Contrariwise, in Moldova, the initial limit, set at 0.1 percent of the budgetary revenue in 2007 was lifted to 0.3 percent in 2015, thus making the entire PFR considerably more permissive.

### **7.3.3. Control mechanism**

The efficiency of the control mechanism has been widely perceived as “essential in protecting political systems from being captured by money and in preserving the integrity of elected officials”<sup>39</sup>. Despite clear differences in terms of content and restrictiveness of party funding regimes in both countries, lack of effective control mechanism is what unites the two – a feature systematically denounced by the national and

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<sup>36</sup> The possibility of restricting the flows of private money into the political process was discussed also on previous attempts of reforming the entire PFR. For instance, the 2005 draft bill envisaged setting up of caps on aggregate private donations for statutory (15 thousand conventional units) and electoral (30 thousands conventional units) activities. Furthermore, the draft bill differentiated between the limits on donations from private individuals (500 conventional units) and corporate donors (1500 conventional units). One conventional unit = 20 units of national currency, the Moldovan Lei (Moldova.org 2005).

<sup>37</sup> For instance, in 2009 a physical person could donate to a party a maximum of MDL 1.57 million ( $\pm$ USD 140 thousand) while a corporate donor double as much. These figures are quite striking if one recalls the, already mentioned, fact that Moldova remains one of the poorest European countries. For more detailed figures refer to CEC (2009) and IDIS (2010).

<sup>38</sup> The only limit was related to the exclusion of certain categories of donors.

<sup>39</sup> Lasha Tordia, General Auditor at the State Audit Office of Georgia, at the OSCE/ODIHR regional conference “Money and Politics”, 18 - 19 February 2016, Tbilisi, Georgia, available at <https://www.osce.org/odihr/223421> (last accessed in March 2019).

international experts, even though in Georgia the control mechanism has proved to be more robust and efficient than in Moldova (GRECO 2015a).

Proceeding in order, transparency of financial activities is crucial for holding parties accountable for their linkages with private donors. Even when the PFR is vaguely regulated and lacks strong sanctions for trespassing the law, the obligation to disclose financial reports constitutes a powerful instrument of control over parties as it generally entails high reputational costs in case of financial wrongdoings. Thus, it should not be surprising that parties in both countries have systematically tried to avoid offering too many insights into their financial affairs.

While in Georgia the requirement of publishing the financial reports was already foreseen by the law since 1995 and updated in 2001, this information was nonetheless only available on an explicit request as neither parties nor the CEC (the then-oversight body) were compelled to its public disclosure (Gobronidze 2008, 23). Such a requirement was only introduced in late 2006 and effectively implemented during the presidential and parliamentary electoral campaigns in 2008. Yet, this positive step was partially undermined by the 2007 amendment, which allowed parties to transfer their own resources to electoral funds without the obligation to disclose the origin of those resources<sup>40</sup>. A significant improvement was registered only in 2012 by introducing more transparency in reporting by requiring parties to publish detailed financial statements by February 1<sup>st</sup> of each year parties in print media, as well as to provide a copy to the monitoring body (currently, the State Audit Office, SAO) and local tax authorities (LPUC, art.32)<sup>41</sup>. Finally, the transparency of party financial activities was further reinforced by two additional mechanisms. Firstly, all the electoral subjects were compelled to open a dedicated bank account for their financial operations (EC, art. 54.6) and, secondly, since 2011 only cashless contributions have been legally allowed (art.27, Law № 5661, 2011). This mechanism, coupled with a generous provision of public funds and tougher sanctions, including the revocation of state subsidies for the subsequent year, turned out to be quite efficient in incentivizing parties to disclose their financial operations (TI Georgia 2017).

Likewise, the Moldovan parties had for long kept their finances away from the public scrutiny. In this respect, prior to 2008, the legal framework was very vague on reporting and disclosure – while parties were

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<sup>40</sup> As International experts observed such practice was diffuse during the 2008 (parliamentary and presidential) and the 2010 (local) contests when a substantive parts of electoral funds were constituted by parties' own resources significantly based on private contributions (GRECO 2011b; TI Georgia 2011a).

<sup>41</sup> Including a comprehensive information on revenues, expenditures and public assets as well as information on donors, including name, surname and ID number. The reports are publicly accessible at the SAO's official website. Concomitantly, parties have been required to report campaign revenues and expenditures within one month after the conclusion of the votes' counting along with the specific notifications on receipt of private contributions to electoral fund within five days. LPUC, art.27<sup>1</sup> (Law № 5661, 2011).

obliged to submit annual reports and to keep a register of donors, the disclosure provisions were missing. The establishment of a new transparency mechanism in 2008 (Law № 294, 2007) has not produced a qualitative change in this respect as, despite the obligation to keep detailed registries of the received donations (LPP, art.27)<sup>42</sup>, the obligation to publicly release this information was still lacking. Only in 2010, was the disclosure of the donors' identity introduced by an amendment to the Electoral Code; yet it covered exclusively the electoral campaigns (EC, art.38.1c). Hence the origin of money for statutory party funding was kept behind a closed door. This door was only partially opened in 2015 when parties were ultimately bound to publish the identity of their contributors (LPP, art.29.3-4. b)<sup>43</sup>.

In this context, a few scandals that broke out after the 2009 and 2010 parliamentary elections following some journalistic investigations, raised the issue of fictitious donors disclosed through campaign funding reports. In particular, both PDM and PCRM indicated a relatively high number of vulnerable donors, including youth, pensioners and unemployed citizens – about ten percent of PDM donors from this category provided around twelve percent of all private contributions, while according to the information provided by the Communists the same category contributed around twenty-five percent of their aggregate campaign expenditures (IDIS 2010, 14). Considering that the average pension in that period was approximately MDL 800 (USD 65)<sup>44</sup>, the financial capacity of these donors to contribute to parties' coffers with lavish sums raised reasonable doubts (Ziarul de Gardă 2010)<sup>45</sup>.

Nevertheless, these scandals triggered negative feedback from political parties, who decided to protect themselves by restricting access to the identity of their contributors. To this end, they resorted to the Law on Protection of Personal Data to argue that workplace and address constitute sensitive information, and thus cannot be made publicly available<sup>46</sup>. Furthermore, the lack of systematic definition of campaign expenditures until 2012 allowed parties to remain relatively ambiguous about their campaign costs (Ciurea 2010; 2011; Lipcean 2009; 2010). Finally, the structure of party reports was a further element undermining

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<sup>42</sup> While this obligation was introduced in electoral legislation in 2002, it was not enforced for the 2005 elections.

<sup>43</sup> However, unlike campaign funding, for which the donors' identity could be checked to verify their authenticity through work place, address, and even ID number, this was not possible for statutory party funding as no identification data were recorded in the financial reports except the name and amount. See Law № 36 (2015).

<sup>44</sup> Banca de date statistice Moldova, available at <http://statbank.statistica.md/pxweb/> (last accessed in March 2019).

<sup>45</sup> Of all the competitors, the Party of Communists has so far announced the most revenue from donations. Two of the main sponsors are a 23-year-old and a 27-year-old, both from Anenii Noi. They would have donated together half a million lei for the electoral campaign of the Communists. The Chişinău press revealed that at least one of the young people had not declared sources of income in the last few years and the other would work in Moscow (Moldova Liberă 2010d).

<sup>46</sup> This strategy proved successful, but only in a short run: the most recent cases filed and won by the CSOs against the CEC, obliged the later to disclose party donors' identity (Colun 2018; Anticoruptie.md 2016).

the overall transparency of the PRF regime as it was vague enough to allow to obscure most categories of party expenditures<sup>47</sup>.

The second component of the control mechanism, namely the enforcement of PFR constitutes one of the most, if not *the* most, vulnerable aspects of party funding schemes in the post-communist context (Ikstens et al. 2002). Indeed, the lack of effective oversight and sanctioning for possible wrongdoings have been judged as significantly undermining the essence of the PFR. There are two crucial aspects in assessing the effectiveness of the enforcement mechanism: the first relates to the composition of the oversight body and its political independence; the second pertains to the scope of its powers, which can be of reactive or proactive nature. Furthermore, the existence of an array of effective and appropriate sanctions is the ultimate necessary condition for establishing an operational enforcement mechanism.

In both countries, the control of party finances has remained weak for a relatively long period. In Georgia, the 1997 party law envisaged that the “administrative-financial control of a party is conducted in accordance with the existing legislation” (sec. 33, Law № 1028, 1997). Yet the blurry wording of this provision resulted in its widespread disregard. Despite the requirement to publish their financial reports in the press and submit them to the Ministry of Justice and Tax Authorities very few parties actually complied with this obligation: in 2003 only six out of 172 registered parties submitted financial reports, in 2004 only four out of 174 did so, while in 2005 only twenty-two among the 178 registered parties fulfilled this requirement (Gobronidze 2008, 7–9). The compliance rate was further undermined by the relatively limited powers of the oversight body (CEC), which could neither check the veracity of the submitted reports nor could it effectively monitor the actors’ compliance with the law (OECD ACN 2010). Finally, as observed by national and international experts, the impartiality of the CEC was rather dubious considering its partisan composition.

A formal step forward towards de-politicization of the oversight mechanism was taken in 2011 when the controlling powers were transferred to a formally independent body, i.e. the Chamber of Control, replaced in 2012 by the State Audit Office (SAO). Yet, considering that the chair of SAO is elected by the parliamentary majority for a fixed period of five-years, doubts about the impartiality of SAO still persist (OSCE/ODIHR 2012), even though its overall powers have been strengthened<sup>48</sup>. Regarding the latter point, the system of sanctions in Georgia has been quite robust and includes fines, parties’ deregistration and withdrawal of public subsidies (LPUC art. 34(2)), even though it has been assessed as unproportioned and

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<sup>47</sup> Indeed, parties were disclosing only those campaign expenditures that could be relatively easily tracked back, such as e.g. TV advertisement. See (GRECO 2011a, 9–11).

<sup>48</sup> Besides collecting and requesting information on parties’ financial activities, it was endowed with investigative and sanctioning powers (LPUC, art.97). See also Article 26.6 of Law № 5661 (2011).



ineffective (GRECO 2015b), especially in terms of vague provisions on sanctions applicability, which left room for the power of the SAO to enact their selective use (Bolkvadze 2013, 24–25). Hence, despite the significant improvement over time, the control mechanism in Georgia still has some substantial flaws (GRECO 2013, 10–12).

Similar concerns can be raised regarding the control mechanism of PFR in Moldova. Firstly, the composition of the institution entrusted with oversight powers (CEC) is politically affiliated as since 2005 its members have been nominated exclusively by political actors<sup>49</sup>. Secondly, its powers are substantially weaker relative to the Georgian counterpart since it neither disposes of legal tools to investigate irregularities nor can it undertake proceedings against parties breaching financing regulations (Lipcean 2009; 2010). In this context, the subsequent reforms of the PFR further weakened the CEC's ability to effectively monitor party finances due to the increased fragmentation of powers among various state entities<sup>50</sup>, which has rendered the whole oversight process lengthy and cumbersome. Finally, considering that other supervisory bodies, such as the Ministry of Justice, are under the direct control of the executive, their capacity to resist political pressures is questionable.

Similar weaknesses undermine the sanctioning mechanism. In this vein, for almost two decades, the sanctions for the violation of financing rules were very limited and hard to apply. Furthermore, even when they were expanded, they remained either ambiguously defined or there was a mismatch between the violation and the corresponding punishment<sup>51</sup> – for instance, the exceeding of spending caps in elections could hardly be determined considering the blurry formulation of what constituted campaign expenditure. The further expanding and tightening of the sanctioning mechanism in 2015, as a result of electoral system change from PR to a mixed one, still entailed a limited disciplinary power: while the level of fines was increased, they still remained relatively low, particularly if compared to permissive donation caps. Finally, parties have been partially released from responsibility for wrongdoings by the recent revision of the Administrative and

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<sup>49</sup> Currently the CEC is composed of eight members: seven nominated by political parties (from the ruling majority and opposition) and one by the Moldovan president, for a fixed-term. For more details see the CEC's website available at <https://a.cec.md/ro/mod-de-constituire-2765.html> (last accessed in March 2009).

<sup>50</sup> In this respect, its power is shared with other state institutions, namely the Court of Accounts and the Tax Office which can perform an investigative check of legitimacy of funds. The suspicion on the figurehead donors can be investigated by the National Anticorruption Centre. In the period outside of campaigns the similar functions are carried out by Court of Accounts as well as the Ministries of Justice and Finance. See, secs. 30-31 of Law № 294 (2007).

<sup>51</sup> More concretely, between 1994 and 2008 the array of sanctions was confined to the forfeiture of irregularly acquired funds and the cancelation of the candidates' registration. The official list included also the revocation of state contributions formally introduced in 2008, yet this was inapplicable until 2016 when these contributions started to be effectively disbursed. After the 2008 it was extended to include the notification of competitors and small administrative fines, which were the only penalties effectively enforced (GRECO 2011a, 24–25).

Criminal Codes, which transferred the liability for financial misconduct from the party to the individual level<sup>52</sup>.

#### **7.4. The consequences of party funding regimes**

Having said that, however, a fundamental question arises, namely how concretely have different components of PFRs affected the political outcomes in both countries? There are two crucial aspects in this regard. The first pertains to the potential of PFR to influence the structure and fairness of inter-party competition. Although it is certainly true that funding regimes are in general favourable to mainstream parties across all political systems, I argue that in a resource-scarce environment and in the presence of volatile electoral markets, in which parties operated for at least a decade after the collapse of the Soviet rule, financial resources played a key role in affecting the nature of political competition as well as party survival and their electoral fortunes. The second aspect concerns the possible impact of PFR on party and party system autonomy as well as stabilization over time. In order to assess these potential consequences in both countries, I will look at the specific PFR components.

Taking the public funding as a starting point, regarding the Georgian PFR, it should be recalled that in Georgia the eligibility threshold linked to the parliamentary tier of national elections has been relatively high in comparison to other post-communist countries – 5 percent until 2005, 4 percent until 2016, and 3 percent afterward. In this context, the results of the Georgian parliamentary elections over time show that until the major reform introduced in 2008, very few actors could benefit from state subsidies while the seat-based allocation formula clearly favoured the ruling party at the expense of smaller contestants. As a result, almost all Georgian parties, except the incumbents, struggled financially. Nevertheless, since 2008 it appears to offer more incentives to smaller or new formations to engage in the political process as parties have been offered a choice whether to receive state funds based on their electoral performance at the local or at the national level. A more inclusive distribution formula and systematically increasing amount of disbursed public funding go in the same direction.

By contrast, the unavailability of public funding in Moldova until 2016 significantly hindered the fairness of political competition. In this context, the late introduction of DPF (2016) on a deliberate design of mainstream parties, is very telling regarding the difficulties faced by small parties in competing with the established ones. Yet, I argue that precisely this lack of levelled playing field, may have paradoxically contributed to its stabilization over time around a few, well-distinguished parties that managed to monopolize the extraction of private contributions as well as exploit the permissive funding regulations.

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<sup>52</sup> While submitting reports on time is certainly a responsibility of parties, other types of breaches are associated with individual candidates and can be sanctioned, in the extreme cases, with criminal charges and imprisonment.

Against this backdrop, the 2015 amendment introducing the effective disbursement of state contributions since 2016 certainly represents a positive step towards opening the access to competition to new and/or smaller parties in a political environment in which the dominance of mainstream parties has represented a significant obstacle for those formations in amassing financial resources from private sources (Casal Bértoa and Spirova 2019). Nevertheless, the vague formulation of regulatory provisions that do not clearly establish the eligibility threshold (LPP, art.27.1) still makes uncertain who can get access to state funding even after the 2015 amendment – as it turned out this ambiguity has led to a fully inclusive system with all parties having their share of state subsidies, yet it cannot be excluded that in the future the access to state contributions will be restricted by the oversight body<sup>53</sup>.

Regarding private funding, in each country, its effects have been different. One of the key aspects of this relationship pertains to the incentive structure of fundraising, which either induces parties to establish and maintain a large network of donors or allows them to rely on a handful of sponsors willing to provide most of their financial resources. This, in turn, affects the nature of party-donor linkages and determines whether parties remain autonomous or beholden to narrow particularistic interests. To assess the extent to which parties rely on plutocratic contributions and whether they fell prey to vested interests, I combine two elements – the type of donations (i.e. individual or corporate), including their share in the structure of private income, and the size of the contributors’ structures.

Against this backdrop, figures 7.5 and 7.6 provide useful insights into the nature of private donations collected by Georgian parties and the structure of their networks of donors<sup>54</sup>. Firstly, figure 7.5 shows that the level of private funding for most Georgian parties has been relatively low and mobilized almost exclusively in the electoral years<sup>55</sup>, except for the incumbents – UNM and GD-DG – who absorbed the lion’s share of all contributions. In this regard, during the UNM’s second term in office (2008-2012), the total amount of collected donations was ten to fourteen times higher than the total contributions amassed by all

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<sup>53</sup> The law stipulates that state subsidies are to be distributed in proportion to parties’ performance in elections at the national (50 percent) and local (another 50 percent) levels (LPP, art.27.1). Nevertheless, as no explicit reference is made to any possible eligibility threshold, it is difficult to assess whether such a rule is applicable only to parliamentary parties or if it should include the extra-parliamentary actors. Such imprecise wording leaves room for discretionary interpretation.

<sup>54</sup> As discussed in section 7.2, due to lack of full transparency of parties’ reports renders it rather complicated to track money flows between business and political actors with enough precision. This, in turn, hinders the systematic analysis of the influence of particularistic interests on political outcome. Nevertheless, even the fragmentary knowledge on financial activities of parties gives us a flavour of their revenue structure and allow to draw some conclusions about the extent to which parties depend on plutocratic donations.

<sup>55</sup> This was also the trend in the years not included in the figure 6.5: for instance, in 2009 only four parties benefitted from relatively small donations (TI Georgia 2013c). Yet due to the lack of systematic data prior to 2011 these years are generally excluded from the discussion.

other parties pooled together (TI Georgia 2011a) while, until 2011, it was the only recipient of corporate donations<sup>56</sup>. Furthermore, even if in 2011 the party reported only twenty-one donors, most of them were legal entities and the aggregate sum of their contributions amounted to GEL 1.6 million (USD 0.97 million). Once the UNM lost power, however, the flow of private money to its coffers plummeted – indeed, between 2013 and 2014 the total amount of its donations was forty-fold less than compared to 2012. The same trend holds for the GD-DG, which, after four years of incumbency, absorbed about ninety-one percent of private funding supplied to all political forces before the 2017 municipal elections<sup>57</sup>. This contribution pattern provides strong evidence of the incumbent financial domination over all other political contenders.

Additionally, at first glance, the figure 7.5 suggests that between 2012 and 2017, the share of corporate donations in Georgia has been rather low. This should not be surprising considering the ban on contributions from legal donors in force between 2012 and 2014. Nevertheless, this does not imply the absence of linkages between parties and business sponsors. On the contrary, numerous reports have underscored the frequent practice of disguising corporate donations under physical contributions – very often deriving from the same legal entity (TI Georgia 2011a; 2014b; 2013b). Here, again, the dominance of the incumbents is quite clear – in 2012 over sixty percent of donations collected by the then-incumbent UNM<sup>58</sup> came from individuals linked to corporations and this group constituted around 40 percent of all its individual sponsors (397 out of 857). The same category represented about 12 percent (64 out of 550) of all GD-DG's donors<sup>59</sup>, whose aggregate contribution accounted for seventy-six percent of all its private funding<sup>60</sup>.

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<sup>56</sup> With an exception of one time contribution from a corporate donor to Christian Democratic Movement in 2003 (TI Georgia 2011a).

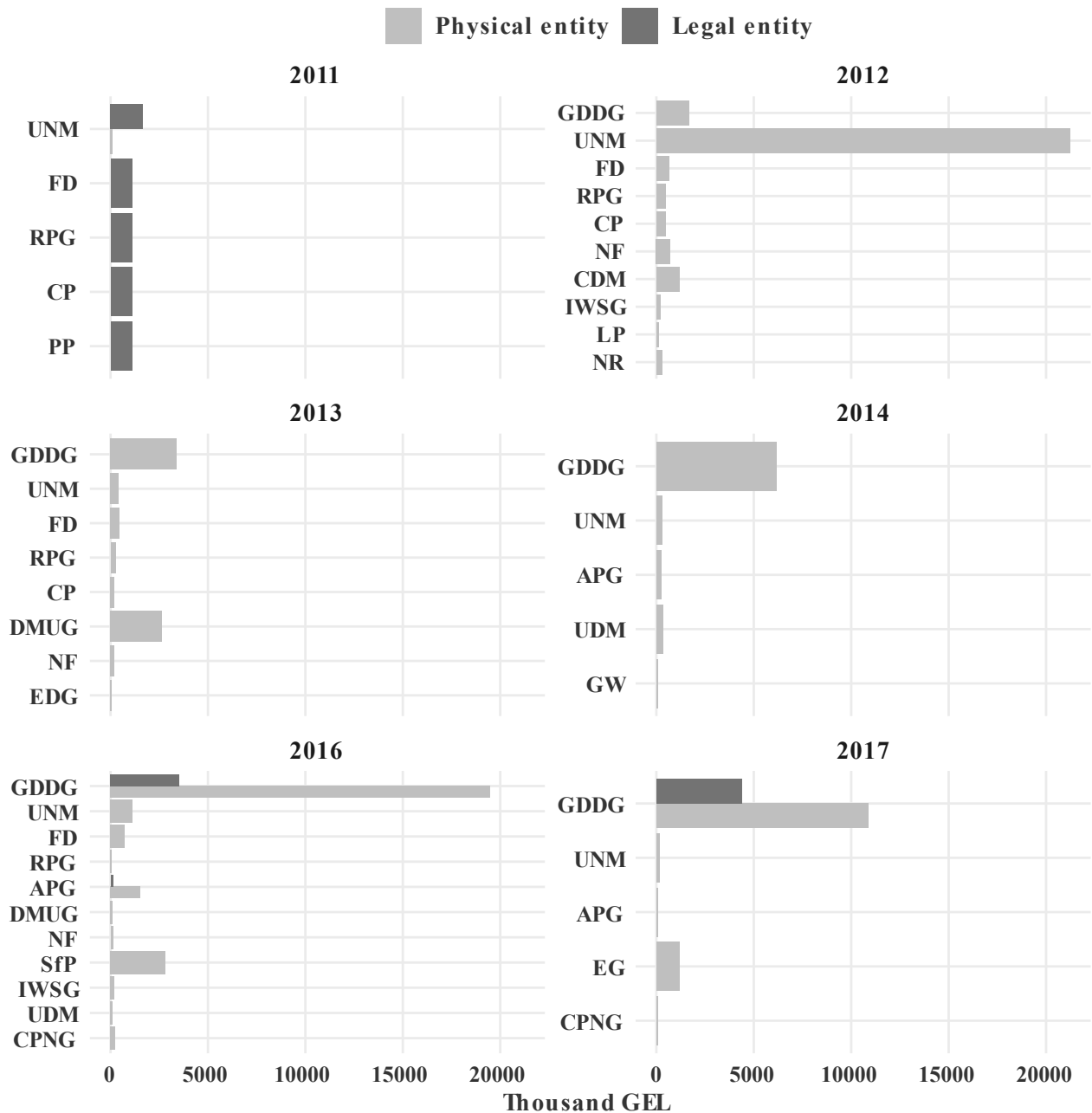
<sup>57</sup> For more illustrative purposes, the total amount of private funding to GD-DG alone was sixteen-times higher than the pool of private resources amassed by the second largest recipient (European Georgia), and twelve-times higher than those of all the other competitors pooled together. More concretely, out of a total amount of GEL 15,5 million (USD 7.2 million), GEL 13.8 million (USD 6.5 million) flew into GD-DG campaign coffers (Civil.ge 2017j; TI Georgia 2017).

<sup>58</sup> Approximately GEL 10 million (±USD 6.1 million) out of a total sum of around GEL 16.7 million (±USD 10.2 million).

<sup>59</sup> Although in 2012 elections the GD-DG founded and led by Bidzina Ivanishvili run in the GD alliance with five other formations, it attracted the highest share of private donations as evidenced by its financial report.

<sup>60</sup> More specifically, GEL 0.54 million (±USD 0.33 million) out of approximately GEL 1.046 million (±USD 0.64 million). To provide another point of comparison, the average donor to the UNM contributed approximately GEL 23 thousand (±USD 14 thousand), whereas Georgian Dream's donors contributed with an average of GEL 1.5 thousand (±USD 950) (TI Georgia 2013b).

**Figure 7.5 The structure of private donations in Georgia (2011-2017)**



Note: year 2015 is excluded as the donations were very low \*\*in order not to spur the picture, considering the number of parties in Georgia, the threshold has been set at USD 2000 to keep only the largest recipients of donations; Source: own elaboration based on party financial reports

The numbers discussed thus far provide sufficient evidence of the existence of a linkage between the ruling party and the business circles, thus hinting at the presence of a “relationship of reciprocity” (Gherghina 2014). While it is difficult to establish precisely the strength of such a relationship due to the lack of reliable data, there are two proxies that can help in this endeavour. The first is reflected by governmental favouritism,

the magnitude of which was evaluated by national experts and investigative journalists (TI Georgia 2019; 2018). In this respect, for instance, between 2010 and 2013, the UNM's donors almost exclusively won the government tenders and simplified procurement contracts (TI Georgia 2014b).

This same pattern can be observed for the first term in the office of the new incumbent – the GD-DG. Accordingly, 132 among 387 donors linked to 875 companies that contributed by almost GEL 4.5 million ( $\pm$ USD 0.81 million) in 2013, received procurement contracts for about GEL 43,5 million ( $\pm$ USD 26.2 million) in 2013 and 2014 (TI Georgia 2014b)<sup>61</sup>. During the second term under the GD-DG incumbency this relationship has begun to weaken since only 5 out of 53 corporate sponsors in 2016, and only 15 out of 31 contributors in 2017, obtained public procurements' contracts<sup>62</sup>, while some of them have also been granted to the corporate sponsors of the opposition parties (Briscoe and Goff 2016). Yet the accession to power of the GD-DG party, led by the Georgian oligarch Bidzina Ivanishvili, has been associated with increased contributions from physical and legal entities connected with the GD-DG's leader<sup>63</sup>.

The second proxy that captures the existence of the party-business linkages is reflected by the so-called phenomenon of 'migrating donors', especially visible during electoral years – in fact, several corporate donors defected from the UNM to the GD-DG after the latter had won the 2012 parliamentary elections (OC Media 2017). More generally, the pragmatism of private contributors and their leaning towards incumbents is well captured by the figure 7.6, which compellingly illustrates that not only the incumbents have generally mobilized the highest number of contributors, but also shows that the pool of the UNM's donors has significantly shrunk after its defeat in 2012, while that of the GD-DG has generally grown in size following its electoral success<sup>64</sup>. In this vein, the Georgian case fits the broader trend observed in the post-communist

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<sup>61</sup> Among these, there are clear instances of governmental favouritism: for example while the five co-owners of LTD Polimeri and Polimeri 1 enterprises contributed GEL 400 thousand ( $\pm$ USD 152 thousand) to the ruling GD-DG between 2016 and 2017, the companies were included in a special governmental programme for entrepreneurs. As a result, Polimeri 1 obtained around 3000 square metres of "state-owned land with buildings on it for a symbolic price of GEL 1 ( $\pm$ USD 0.40)". In a similar vein, a week after a businessman Vazha Tsigroshvili donated GEL 75 thousand ( $\pm$ USD 28.5 thousand) to GD-DG party, he was given back his properties confiscated by the former ruling party (Agenda.ge 2016a; OC Media 2017).

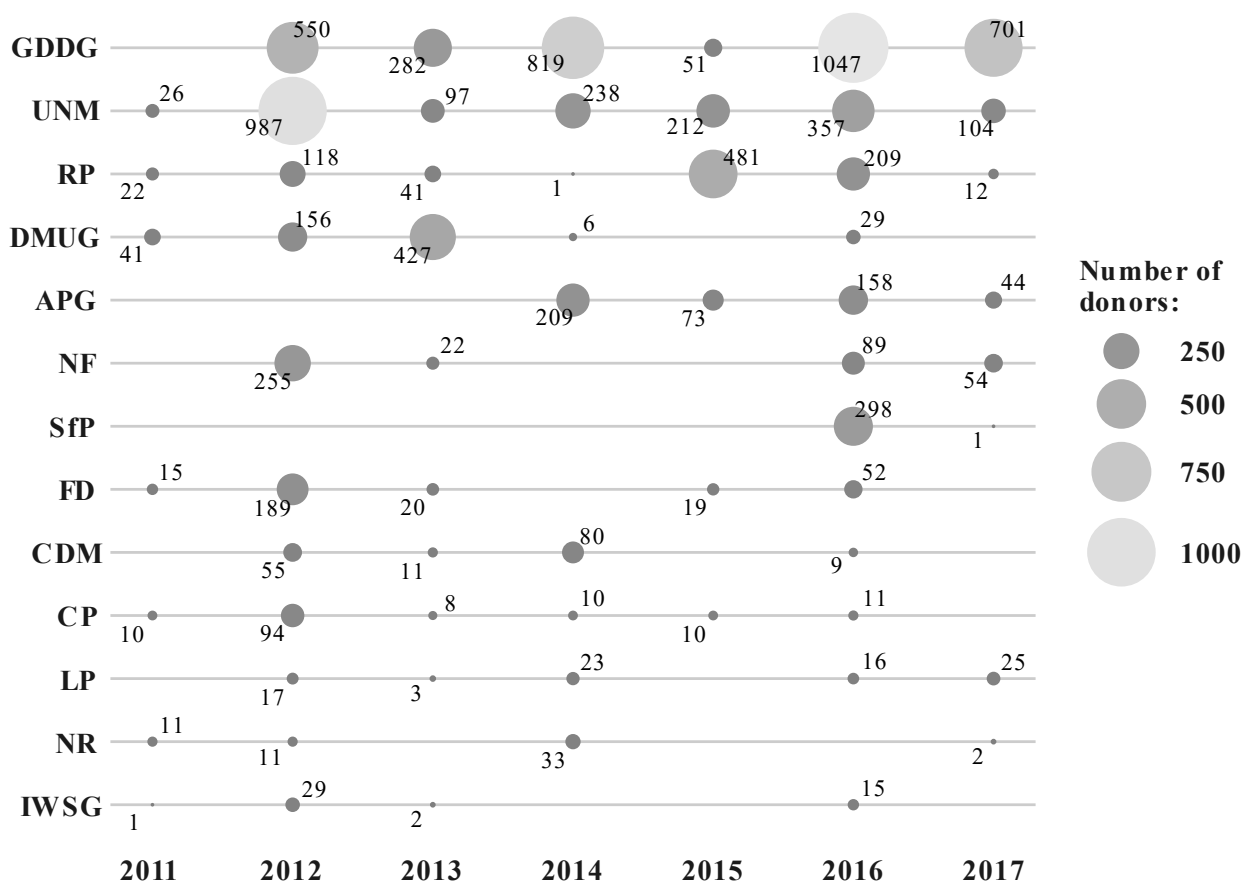
<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, the report by Transparency International Georgia points out that among 76 individual donors linked to companies that benefitted from at least one contract of state procurement, 55 were donors of the GD-DG (TI Georgia 2017).

<sup>63</sup> In this vein, natural and legal entities connected to Bidzina Ivanishvili donated GEL 565 thousand ( $\pm$  265 thousand USD) to the Georgian Dream in 2017. In 2016-2017, this amount exceeded 1 million GEL ( $\pm$  500 thousand USD).

<sup>64</sup> The figure 7.6 confirms also the previous trend of mobilizing most of the private donations in electoral years – indeed, the donations for regular activities have been generally lower (as in 2011 and 2015) that is why the number of donors is also smaller.

environment according to which incumbent parties become “intrinsically vulnerable if state resources become scarce or fall under the control of rivals” (Hopkin 2003, 5).

**Figure 7.6 The size of the donors’ networks of major Georgian parties (2011-2017)**



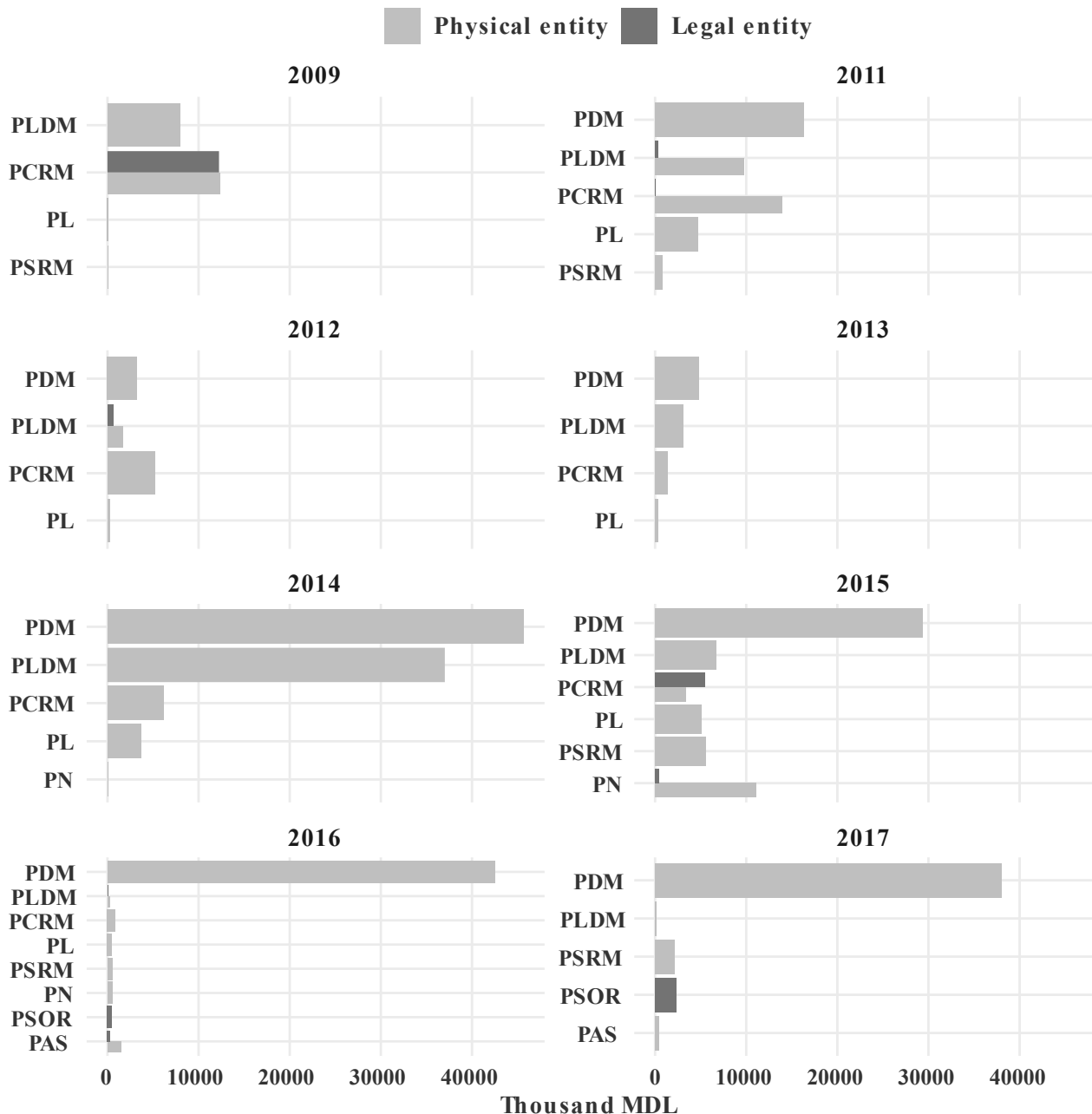
Source: own elaboration based on party financial reports

To summarize, what emerges from the discussion is that the structure of private funding in Georgia has been highly beneficial to the incumbent parties. This finding is congruent with my initial expectation based on empirical findings from electoral research according to which the position of power is associated with higher flows of private money. What, however, is crucially important in this context is the distance between the incumbent parties and all the other political actors in the system. As will be explained in the following sections, in this way, private funding generated an enormous competitive advantage to the ruling parties, even though this relationship was not unidirectional.

Unsurprisingly, private donations were the only source of funding for Moldovan parties until 2016, although only after the 2009 parliamentary contest the general public obtained the possibility to inspect party finances following the regulatory reform. A careful glance at figure 7.7 depicting the structure of their

revenues, according to the same template as in the Georgian case (figure 7.5), reveals that the corporate sponsorship accounts for a tiny share in the structure of private funding. Nonetheless, exactly as in the Georgian experience, the donations from legal entities have frequently entered party coffers by being disguised as individual contributions.

**Figure 7.7 The structure of private donations in Moldova (2009-2017)**



Note: year 2010 is not included as contributions were minor. The threshold is set at USD 2000 in order to exclude minor parties. Source: own compilation based on party financial reports



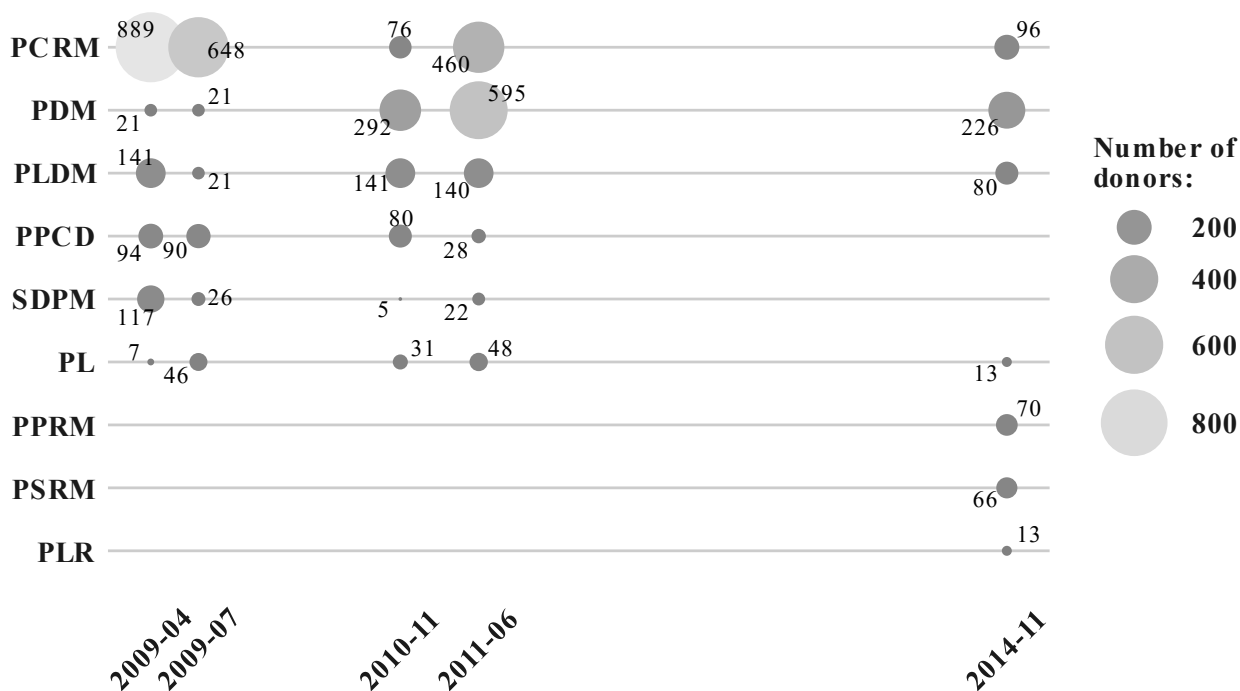
The second interesting observation drawn from figure 7.7 is that the political weight of the party seems to play an important role in its capacity to attract private funds – a fact that almost perfectly mirrors the Georgian case. More precisely, while the total amount of the private contributions amassed by the PCRM has been decreasing since it lost incumbency following the 2009 July elections that of PDM has been growing in proportion to its increasing dominance on the political scene. The case of PLDM is also illustrative in this respect – the decrease in private funding appears to be correlated with the progressive loss of party’s influence, following the arrest of its leader and former premier, Vlad Filat, on corruption charges.

Finally, what also appears worth highlighting is that the pattern of private financing seems to be correlated with the general evolution of the Moldovan political landscape. Indeed, figure 7.7 unveils that between 2009 and 2014, when the Moldovan parliament was moderately fragmented, no single party clearly dominated politically nor financially over the others. Along this line, the figure 7.7 also somewhat reflects the struggle for power between the two major formations, led by the two Moldovan oligarchs, respectively the PDM of Vlad Plahotniuc and the PLDM of Vlad Filat. In this vein, the increasing political dominance of the former, after beheading its political rival, went in hand with the increasing financial dominance of his party reflected by the quasi-monopolisation of private sponsorship. In this context, however, it was the financial domination of PDM that ultimately translated into a political one through co-optation into its ranked individual MPs from other parties during the 2014-2019 parliamentary term.

The second dimension of party-donor linkage, namely the extent to which Moldovan parties are entangled in a mutually beneficial relationship with their sponsors (through the exploitation of state resources), is more difficult to gauge. The chief problem lies with weaker transparency obligations as well as data reliability from financial records containing self-reported information on party and campaign financing. Consequently, the analysis of the Moldovan case requires the use of slightly different proxies, namely the extension of the donors’ network and the size of donations.

Accordingly, figure 7.8 illustrates the variation in the size of the donors’ network of Moldovan parties between 2009 and 2014. What clearly emerges from the figure, is that during both parliamentary campaigns held in 2009, only PCRM – the then-incumbent – benefitted from a relatively extended pool of donors, while all the other mainstream parties collected resources from a smaller number of contributors. The spread of the donors’ network alone, however, may not capture the potentially dangerous linkages between political parties and vested interests. Indeed, it could be very much the case that the PCRM’s relatively extended donors’ networks stemmed from their eight-year incumbency, perceived as a source of clientelist exchanges. That is why it is important to account for the size of the average donation as reflected by campaign funding reports.

**Figure 7.8 The evolution of the size of donors' networks in Moldova (2009-2017)**



Source: own elaboration based on party financial reports

In this respect, in the 2009 and 2010 campaigns the share of large donations in the electoral fund of all relevant competitors – except PCRM, whose campaign fund was composed in 44 percent by the grass-root donations<sup>65</sup> – constituted more than eighty percent of total private contributions. The official data from the 2010 elections revealed that the average donation to PDM amounted to MDL 40 thousand ( $\pm$ USD 3.5 thousand), to PLDM – MDL 70 thousand ( $\pm$ USD 6 thousand), to PCRM – MDL 60 thousand ( $\pm$ USD 5 thousand), and to PL – MDL 123 thousand ( $\pm$ USD 10.5 thousand) (IDIS 2010)<sup>66</sup>. The mix of these two indicators – the extensiveness of the pool of donors and size of the average donations – already indicates a tendency of the mainstream parties to rely on a handful of wealthy donors. In this context, the alarming reports by CSOs and media (Cozonac and Preașcă 2010), unveiling the heavy reliance on plutocratic donations, led to a slight shift in the party fundraising strategies; yet a closer look at figure 7.8 reveals that their pools of donors have still remained narrow.

<sup>65</sup> In PCRM's case donations were collected by the highly well-organized local branches, often from local party activists. In case of smaller parties the own contribution of high party officials often accounted for the lion's share of the total party budget for campaigns (Timpul.md 2009).

<sup>66</sup> As a way of comparison in 2010 the average monthly salary in Moldova was of around MDL 3 thousand ( $\pm$ USD 252). Source: <https://tradingeconomics.com/moldova/wages> (last accessed in March 2019).

The above discussion provides strong evidence of the relationship between the Moldovan parties and the vested interests. Its crucial importance has been widely recognized by students of Moldovan party politics who have argued that “party dependence on business has become a major feature of party development in Moldova” (Protsyk and Osoian 2008, 105)<sup>67</sup>. Yet, while in the initial period of transition, this relationship was described as “contractual and mutually dependent” (Protsyk and Osoian 2008, 110), over time it hindered the autonomy of parties by transforming them into channels to accumulate personal wealth. Furthermore, as a consequence of this “deep intertwining of business battles and politics” (FT 2009; RFE/RL 2010b), the Moldovan state has become captive of a small number of wealthy parties (Foxall 2017; Tudoroiu 2015; RFE/RL 2018a; Cașus and Konończuk 2017; Boțan 2015).

This was especially the case of the PCRM era, whose eight-year-long incumbency proved very beneficial in financial terms to its leader, Vladimir Voronin and his family, but also to a number of PCRM’s deputies (RFE/RL 2010a). Nevertheless, this phenomenon has been systematic and widespread<sup>68</sup> before and after the Communist rule, which ended in 2009<sup>69</sup>. In fact, journalist investigations have revealed many instances of tight connections between companies contributing to election campaigns and the allocation of public contracts (Colun 2015)<sup>70</sup>.

The two mainstream parties led by the Moldovan oligarchs, respectively the PLDM of Vlad Filat and the PDM of Vlad Plahotniuc, represent another illustrative example of this pattern. Yet, while Filat has been a political figure well before he defected from the PDM to establish his own party (see Chapters 2 and 3), the case of Plahotniuc who seized the long-existing PDM after being its main financial backer for several years is even more suggestive in this respect. After becoming the party’s new leader in 2016, he has been promptly employing his financial resources to exploit party structures in expanding his political influence over state institutions. In this regard, several opposition representatives “confessed that Plahotniuc’s proxies used financial benefits and/or intimidation to corrupt numerous members of the Parliament” (Cenușa 2016), while others have openly declared that the phenomenon of parliamentary vote-buying has become a widespread

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<sup>67</sup> Along the same lines, some scholars have argued that since the first years of transition from the Soviet rule, Moldovan parties have been in a privileged position with respect to business interests for few reasons: the proportional electoral system contributed to parties’ monopoly over candidates’ nomination enhancing their resistance from external pressures; furthermore, stable parties had emerged before businessmen started to increase their wealth (Protsyk and Osoian 2008).

<sup>68</sup> For a more fine-grained analysis of this phenomenon see, *inter alia*, the reports of the CSOs in the framework of “Public money is my money too” campaign, available at <http://www.ager.md/en> (last accessed in March 2019).

<sup>69</sup> See section 2.6.

<sup>70</sup> For instance, in the period between 2015 and 2016 “companies affiliated with deputies and ministers have been offered over 150 public procurement contracts for a total worth of more than MDL 35 million (±USD 1.7 million)” (Moșneag and Eșanu 2016).

practice (Chatham House 2017). While such claims should be treated with caution from the academic point of view, it is undeniable that PDM has recently significantly increased its political dominance once the number of PDM's seats more than doubled following the intense wave of defectors. Although, as discussed in Chapter 3, the phenomenon of party-switching has not been uncommon in Moldova, the magnitude of this recent wave certainly does raise some doubts over the tools employed by PDM to increase its political clout.

Similar concerns have also been raised regarding the financial resources of PSRM – the winner of the latest 2014 parliamentary contest and the party of the current president Igor Dodon. Although the official party reports have indicated membership fees as their major source of income, journalist investigations have unveiled the presence of generous cash flows from offshore companies linked to Russian businessmen to companies affiliated to or controlled by the PSRM high officials<sup>71</sup>. More intriguing, several connections have also been established between PSRM and companies linked to Vlad Plahotniuc, officially the political opponent of the president Dodon (Rise.md 2016a)<sup>72</sup>.

To summarize the discussion, it appears that by creating the favourable conditions for the financial dominance of mainstream parties through a monopoly over private donations, the lax PFR in Moldova has contributed to increasing entry barriers for possible challengers, which could not compete on an equal footing due to the lack of financial resources. In this context, the most recent switch to the mixed electoral system will, most likely, further strengthen this pattern by enhancing the “undue influence” of business interests on political outcomes<sup>73</sup>. These observations confirm the argument about the possible reasons behind the delay in introducing public funding by evidencing that each of the mainstream parties seemed to have found its own source of private financing, which not only strengthen their reluctance in allowing state contributions but also contributed to their stabilization over time.

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<sup>71</sup> At this point, it is important to remember that financing from foreign sources is prohibited in Moldova. According to these investigations, PSRM “would have benefited from millions of dollars of sponsorship from a secret business with an offshore company in the Bahamas connected to the Russian Federation”. More specifically, among others, contributions amounting to MDL 30 million (±USD1.6 million) would topped up PSRM coffers few months before the local elections in 2015 through *Exclusiv Media*, “a company owned by the deputy Corneliu Furculita and administered by Petru Burduja, municipal councillor of PSRM” in Moldova’s capital, Chişinău. (Rise.md 2016b; Raţă 2016; TI Moldova 2016).

<sup>72</sup> In this respect, Plahotniuc has also been believed as linked to PCRSM before his switching to PDM.

<sup>73</sup> More specifically, experts have speculated that the fact that parties can present the same candidate for both tiers will lead to increased costs of electoral campaigning which, in turn, will privilege wealthy participants: considering the typical strategy of parties in Moldova to rely on small number of donors, there is a reasonable risk of increased linkage between SMD candidates and particularistic, corporate interests and further personalization of politics, thus certainly does not contribute to successfully reduce the risk of collusion between SMD candidates and business interests at the local level (Venice Commission and OSCE/ODIHR 2017a; Lipcean 2018).

Having said that, one may argue that the relationship between party weight in the political process and its capacity to attract resources could be very well reversed – in particular with regard to public funding as in the Georgian case – in a sense that it is the first that generated the latter and not vice-versa. While it is certainly a valid point, I argue that these two elements are rather mutually reinforcing. In fact, financial disparities between parties and their impact on political/electoral competition in both countries can be even better captured by campaign spending regulations since they directly structure electoral competition and produce immediate effects on the electoral fortune of parties and candidates. Hence, a natural question arises, namely how the financial inequalities translate into concrete effects? In order to address this issue, I look at spending regulations and analyse the patterns of party expenditures for the electoral campaign, which represents an appropriate proxy that captures the extent of competitive advantage held by wealthy contenders.

Both countries introduced campaign spending caps already for the founding elections but followed slightly different trajectories. For instance, in the 1995 parliamentary contest, each Georgian candidate could not exceed the spending cap of GEL 2 thousand ( $\pm$ USD 1.6 thousand). Yet this was soon abolished while the universal spending limit for political parties was introduced only in 2011 – initially set at 0.2 percent of the GDP and further reduced to 0.1 percent in 2013 (LPUC, article 25<sup>1</sup>). Likewise, until 2008, the Moldovan regulatory framework did not specify any spending restrictions on an annual basis. An implicit spending cap was, however, set by limiting the total amount of private contributions collected by parties. The cap was set at 0.1 percent of the budgetary revenue in 2008 and lifted to 0.3 percent in 2015. At the same time, a specific cap on campaign expenses was determined by the CEC separately for each campaign, but only in 2010, a specific methodology was applied to establish this limit<sup>74</sup>.

Against this backdrop, the significant disparities in party expenditures for electoral campaigning have been a common trait of party politics in Georgia. For instance, in 2008 the incumbent UNM spent GEL 12 million ( $\pm$ USD 8.4 million) for its electoral campaign which was twenty-five times more than its main competitor, the United Opposition bloc composed of nine parties<sup>75</sup> reporting only GEL 480 thousand (USD 336 thousand) (OSCE/ODIHR 2008, 14). In the context of overwhelming financial dominance of the UNM, only the personal wealth of Bidzina Ivanishvili – equal to nearly half of the Georgian GDP – “was finally able to pose a credible electoral threat to the UNM” (Briscoe and Goff 2016). Yet, once in power, the GD-DG followed exactly the same path: in 2016 its campaign expenditures amounted to seventy percent of the

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<sup>74</sup> Parties could spend a specific amount for voter (the number of voters multiplied by 0.5 percent of the AMW) which, at that moment amounted to approximately € 0.50 per registered voter for a party and € 0.05 for individual candidates.

<sup>75</sup> Respectively, Freedom Movement, Conservative Party of Georgia, Party of Georgia, People's Party, Movement for United Georgia, National Forum, Georgia's Way, Georgian Troupe, On Our Own Party and the New Rights party (OSCE/ODIHR 2012).

total campaign outlays<sup>76</sup>. The disproportion is even more visible when one accounts for the distribution on campaign expenses by category – while GD-DG spent around Gel 13 million (USD 6.1 million) on electoral advertising, the former incumbent UNM, ranked second, has spent only about GEL 1 million (USD 468 thousand) (TI Georgia 2017).

Likewise, it has been estimated that between 2010 and 2014 the cost of the electoral campaign in Moldova increased several times (Ziare.com 2014). In this context, the financial resources have assumed even more relevance as confirmed by the pattern of party campaign expenditures: if in 2010 PDM has spent MDL 11,5 million (±USD 930 thousand), in 2014 it has thrown in the electoral battle about MDL 35 million (±USD 2.5 million). A similar increase was common for other parties such as PLDM (MDL 36 million; ±USD 2.6 million) and quickly gaining foothold PSRM (MDL 13.2 million; ±USD 940 thousand). Other electorally relevant parties such as the former incumbent PCRM and PL were left far behind: in 2014 PCRM has spent MDL 3.5 million (±USD 250 thousand) while PL MDL 3 million (±USD 210 thousand)<sup>77</sup>.

The significance of material resources deployed by parties in elections has grown over time, particularly in the context of the relatively high volatility of the electoral market, especially in Georgia, as reflected by the low party identification and unstable voters' preferences. The analysis of pre-electoral opinion polls reveals that a significant part of the electorate is undecided about their voting choices. For instance, a survey conducted in May 2015 (a year prior to the 2016 elections) revealed that as many as 45 percent of respondents were unable to indicate their party preference if the elections were to be held that day (24 percent indicated GD-DG while 16 percent UNM) (Civil.ge 2015e). In contrast, in Moldova the number of undecided voters accounted for 19.9 percent in November 2013 (a year prior to the 2014 contest), with 34.5 percent preferences in favour of PCRM, 8.6 percent – PDM, 7.5 percent – PL, and 12.9 percent – PLDM<sup>78</sup>. Against this backdrop, it is worth emphasizing that most party electoral expenditures go to political advertising, especially on TV which is the most favoured and credible source of information for both electorates<sup>79</sup>.

Besides the increasing demand for financing, there is another aspect that warrants emphasis, namely the relationship between campaign spending and electoral performance. Without delving into the unsettled debate on the extent to which money ensures electoral success, both scholars and politicians rather agree that

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<sup>76</sup> More precisely, in 2016 parties have declared GEL 31.6 million (±USD 14.8 million) of total expenditures with the three electoral subjects managing to clear the threshold respectively reporting as follows: GD-DG with GEL 22.3 million (±USD 10.5 million), followed by the UNM with GEL 2.6 million (±USD 1.2 million) and Alliance of the Patriots of Georgia with GEL 1.3 million (±USD 0.6 million). For more details see TI Georgia (2017).

<sup>77</sup> This data is extracted from party reports thus it should be treated with certain caution (Ziare.com 2014).

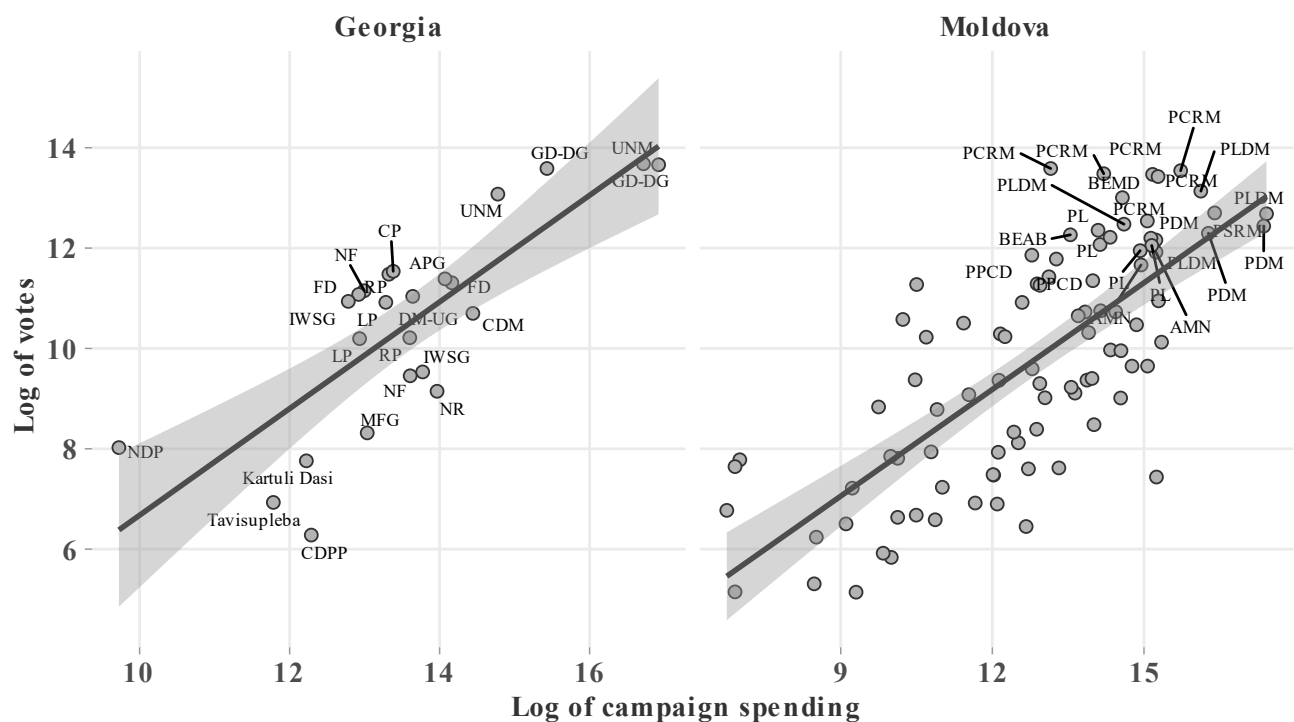
<sup>78</sup> See Barometer of Public Opinion (Moldova).

<sup>79</sup> See Barometer of Public Opinion (Moldova and NDI Opinion Polls for Georgia).

the lack of financial resources undermines the odds of electoral competitors. This appears especially likely in political arenas where the relationship between voters and parties is feeble as in the majority of post-communist states. Under such circumstances, and as evidenced thus far, the role of money in affecting the outcomes of electoral competition assumes relevance. While the assessment of the impact of campaign spending on electoral outcomes requires a more thorough analysis to minimize the noise from other possible causal factors, here it suffices to check whether such a relationship is present in both countries.

In this vein, figure 7.9 depicts a positive correlation between the level of campaign spending and electoral success.

**Figure 7.9 Relationship between the spending of electoral competitors and electoral performance in Georgia and Moldova (log-transformed)**



Note: The electoral campaigns taken into consideration are those of 2012 and 2016 in Georgia and those of 2001, 2005, 2009, 2010 and 2014 in Moldova. More complex analysis in the Georgian case was not possible due to the unavailability of data. Points on the graph represent political parties. In order not to clutter the picture, in the Moldovan case, only the parliamentary parties have been labelled. Source: own elaboration based on party financial reports

In the case of Georgia, the dots located on the upper-right corner of the graph represent the two biggest parties, namely the UNM and GD-DG which, as mentioned above, have also featured the largest campaign expenditures. The strength of the correlation is additionally underlined by the 2016 elections when the UNM

spent significantly less than in the previous campaign and its electoral performance was also much worse<sup>80</sup>. In Moldova, the relationship between expenditures and the number of votes that parties obtain seems to be weaker which, perhaps, can be associated with a higher level of multi-party competition relative to Georgia. But it still locates the mainstream parties, which also are the biggest spenders, in the upper-right corner of the graph. Again, while figure 7.9 certainly does not indicate causality, it nevertheless suggests a certain association between the amount spent for campaign purposes and the electoral results, particularly if one keeps in mind the above-mentioned openness of electoral markets.

#### **7.4.1. PFR as a political weapon**

A few final considerations pertain to the misuse of PFR mechanisms for political purposes. As the previous discussion has shown, the limited transparency has allowed parties to keep large parts of their finances unaccounted and hidden from public knowledge. Likewise, the selective application of sanctions has represented a powerful tool used by incumbents to undermine the fairness of political competition. Various sections of this chapter have discussed how the gaps in the regulatory frameworks have been masterfully exploited by the ruling parties, by the UNM in Georgia, against their political rivals. More specifically, the blurry definition of what constituted a serious breach has left a significant margin for discretionary interpretation by the, not entirely politically independent, monitoring entity.

An additional indication of this phenomenon is the propensity of the oversight body to impose sanctions on private donors rather than on political parties themselves. Accordingly, considering that in the majority of cases this instrument was used against the opposition, it represented an effective tool to hinder their capacity to amass private money (OSCE/ODIHR 2012, 15–17). In this respect, the first parliamentary term under the UNM (2004-2008) already yielded some noteworthy instances of the incumbent's tendency to take advantage of the regulatory gaps in the PFR. Soon after the snap 2004 parliamentary elections, the CEC, controlled by the UNM, decided not to grant state subsidies to the two formations, the Conservatives and the Republicans, who run under the umbrella of the victorious "National Movement-Democrats" electoral bloc but subsequently quit it once in parliament. Following the intense negotiations, the two concerned parties eventually obtained funds subtracted from the total amount received by the entire bloc in proportion to their mandates (Nodia 2006, 47); yet this incident underscored how the gaps in the existing legislation could be used for political purposes<sup>81</sup>.

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<sup>80</sup> Respectively, 873.233 votes obtained in 2012 and 477.253 in 2016.

<sup>81</sup> The main contentious aspect pertained to the unclear wording of the art.30.4 of the LPUC, which stated that the state funds were to be divided equally among the parties forming an electoral bloc, but did not stipulate the procedure to be applied in case of the bloc's disintegration once it entered the parliament.



Party funding regulations were exploited for political purposes also during the second term of the UNM incumbency. In fact, a few months after the parliamentary elections held in 2008, the ruling majority adopted a controversial decision according to which six parliamentary opposition parties were denied state contributions, following their renouncement of mandates as a sign of protesting allegedly rigged elections. The incumbents motivated this decision by the lack of fulfilment of the parliamentary duties by the opposition who, in turn, denounced it as a “punitive measure” and political “persecution”<sup>82</sup>. The funding was eventually restored in December 2008 (Civil.ge 2008j), however, the whole incident left little doubts about the promptness of the incumbents to resort to this type of practice.

The 2011 LPUC amendments (Law № 5661, 2011) constitute perhaps the most illustrative example of such tendency. Indeed, if on the one hand, the revision followed a long line of recommendations of the international experts in terms of increasing the efficiency of the control mechanism<sup>83</sup>, on the other, however, it introduced some clearly tailor-made provisions aimed at restricting the financial capacities of the UNM political opponents by prohibiting the corporate donations (LPUC, art.26.A<sup>1</sup>) along with several secondary provisions significantly constraining the flow of money from business environments (LPUC, art. 26<sup>1</sup>). Again, even though this decision was assessed as “a legitimate choice for a country to make” (OSCE/ODIHR 2012), several national experts pointed out its clear political nature (Civil.ge 2011e). More concretely, it was argued that due to the imprecise wording, the provision was believed to have retroactive application (Civil.ge 2011d), which would result particularly harmful for four opposition parties (the Republican Party, Our Georgia-Free Democrats, Conservative Party and Party of People) benefitting from the aggregate sum of GEL 4.1 million (±USD 2.5 million) in donations from twelve companies linked to the Georgian oligarch and main critique of the then-ruling elite, Bidzina Ivanishvili<sup>84</sup>.

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<sup>82</sup> The concerned opposition parties were the New Rights Party; Freedom Party; Movement for United Georgia; Georgia’s Way; Party of People and National Forum while the Conservative Party, the Industry Will Save Georgia and the Republican Party continued to receive funds due to their entitlement stemming from having clear the eligibility threshold in the local elections (Civil.ge 2008g).

<sup>83</sup> As the oversight capacity was granted to the Chamber of Control instead of the Central Electoral Commission, the amendment was judged as a step forward towards de-politicization of the controlling body considering that the president of the Chamber was elected by the parliamentary majority for a fixed term of five years. Another positive step was constituted by the allocation of additional funds for parties respecting gender quota (LPUC, art.30.7<sup>1</sup>) which was assessed as a positive step towards increasing women participation in political process, especially considering that Georgia was among the countries with the lowest proportion of women in parliament in legislative chamber. Nevertheless, such an incentive, further increased in 2013, proved relatively ineffective as no party has qualified for this state funding (Civil.ge 2011b).

<sup>84</sup> More precisely, the four opposition parties received GEL 3.3 million (±USD 2 million) from companies and a charitable foundation linked directly to Ivanishvili while the remaining GEL 800.000 (±0.5 million USD) were represented by a contribution of two of Ivanishvili’s political ally’s Kakha Khaladze companies and business affiliate (by the end of 2012 Cartu Bank owned by Ivanshvili purchased 8.67 percent shares in Progress Bank

Although the new rules were not, eventually, retroactively applied, the pressure from the ruling party to inhibit Ivanishvili's participation in the elections "on equal footing" (Bolkvadze 2013, 19) further increased following the oligarch's decision to get personally involved in politics through his newly established formation, the GD-DG, which carefully became the major UNM's rival<sup>85</sup>. In this vein, the selective applicability of sanctions constituted one of the preventive measures, including an unprecedentedly high fine of GEL 149 million ( $\pm$ USD 90 million), later cut in half, imposed on Ivanishvili for allegedly illegal vote-buying through "distributing thousands of free satellite antennas to citizens so that they could watch (his) TV-9 television channel" (RFE/RL 2012). Furthermore, Cartu Bank owned by Ivanishvili was fined with GEL 0.8 million GEL ( $\pm$ USD 0.5 million) for allegedly serving as a channel of illegal donations for the Georgian Dream coalition (Georgian Journal 2012).

Overall, during the 2012 electoral campaign, two hundred GD-DG donors were investigated against only ten of the UNM's, even though the total amount of donations handed out by the latter was 6.5 times higher than the aggregate contributions of the former<sup>86</sup>. Furthermore, watchdog organisations reported numerous cases of intimidating the opposition donors, including those contributing with symbolic amounts, which certainly did not encourage other potential sponsors to engage in the process<sup>87</sup>.

Besides restoring corporate donations, the 2013 reformed carried out by the new incumbent GD coalition substantially increase the state subsidies and render them more easily accessible to all political actors through more inclusive eligibility and allocation criteria (Civil.ge 2013c). However, some experts have argued that the more all-embracing PFR was dictated mostly by the political calculations of Ivanishvili: more specifically, the increase of state funding would contribute to fragmentation of the opposition by incentivizing the parties to run individually rather than forming electoral alliances, thus posing a lower political threat to the ruling party<sup>88</sup>.

To conclude, regardless of the specific motivations behind this decision, the revision of the party funding scheme has led to a substantial increase in the poll of recipients of state subsidies: after the 2016

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owned by Khaladze) (Civil.ge 2011d). Furthermore, the rush in its adoption and enforcement would prevent those parties from using that money for electoral campaigning (Civil.ge 2011c; 2011e).

<sup>85</sup> According to opinion polls GD could enjoy the support of 24 percent of respondents in contrast to 43 percent of UNM in June 2012, while in early September GD was supported by 49 percent against 43 percent of UNM (Civil.ge 2012a; Radio Tavisupleba 2012).

<sup>86</sup> Furthermore, sixty-eight out of those 200 suspected donors of the GD-DG were fined by courts with the seizure of bank accounts as well as of the movable or immovable property of the donor, or both, against six of the UNM sponsors.

<sup>87</sup> For instance, an investigation by SAO on GD finances concerned, *inter alia*, a contribution of GEL 100 ( $\pm$ 60 USD) and one in-kind contribution equal to GEL 10 ( $\pm$ 6 USD) (OSCE/ODIHR 2012).

<sup>88</sup> Expert interview, 2018.

parliamentary elections the number of eligible parties increased from eleven to twenty, which constituted a rise of around GEL 9.8 million ( $\pm$ USD 4.5 million) disbursed budgetary resources (Agenda.ge 2016b; 2018). Bearing in mind that before 2012 almost all parties, with an exception of the incumbent UNM, struggled financially<sup>89</sup> in coping with the increasing costs of electoral campaigning, the additional state contributions, including the reimbursement of campaign expenditures, can certainly be viewed as a positive step towards diminishing the financial inequalities among the Georgian parties.

The same holds for Moldova where the selective application of sanctions has surged in recent years, particularly during the 2014 parliamentary and the 2016 presidential elections. To provide an example, while the monitoring reports conducted by the national CSOs have uncovered financial wrongdoings of many electoral contestants (Promo-LEX 2014; 2015), the CEC made use of the softest punishment – i.e. warning – in all cases, but one, the Patria party, which was excluded from the electoral race on grounds linked to use prohibited, foreign sources of financing (RFE/RL 2014b). Consequently, a legitimate concern was raised on why the harshest sanction was applied only in this specific case<sup>90</sup>. Furthermore, given that the pre-electoral opinion polls clearly showed that Patria would have gained enough votes to obtain parliamentary representation, the cancellation of its registration constituted a significant interference in the political process<sup>91</sup>.

In this vein, despite the ambitious scope of its 2015 revision aimed at provide “the system of checks-and-balances which are to protect the Moldovan political landscape from illegal funding, dependency of parties on few donors or over-spending (...)” (Promo-LEX 2016), it still contained too many gaps to ensure “transparency, integrity and accountability” of party finances (OSCE/ODIHR 2016). The consequences of the 2015 amendments to the PFR are yet to be seen, but its further revision pertaining to the campaign finances

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<sup>89</sup> According to the estimation of IDEA prior to 2012 the cost of an electoral campaign varied between USD 35 and USD 55 thousand, and the budgets of opposition parties could hardly cope with that: for instance the annual revenues of the Republican Party accounted for USD 5000 while the highest expenditures of the Labour Party were equal to USD 25 thousand (Briscoe and Goff 2016).

<sup>90</sup> The decision of exclusion of Patria party was taken just one day before the elections, see Decision Nr. 3069 and Decision Nr. 3070 of the CEC. Yet the CEC was considerably less rigorous in condemning the more obvious violations of electoral rules. In this context, rather curiously, and despite several appeals, the CEC did not prevent from running the other contestant in clear violation of electoral rules, namely the Party of Reformed Communists of Moldova (PCR), which used almost identical acronym and symbols as the former incumbent PCRM. Several experts have pointed out the sole purpose of establishing the PCR was to weaken the PCRM electoral performance: indeed, the goal was achieved as the clone PCR almost cleared the electoral threshold of five percent as it obtained 4.92 percent of votes by exploiting the voters’ confusion (ADEPT 2014).

Similar problems were reported during the campaign for the 2016 presidential elections (openDemocracy 2018).

<sup>91</sup> From 8.2 percent to 11.2 percent based on different opinion polls (Unimedia 2014a).

carried out in 2017 in view of the change of the electoral systems suggests the lack of political will to reduce financial inequalities between parties<sup>92</sup>.

## 7.5. Conclusions

This chapter has accomplished two main tasks: on the one hand, it has provided insights into the structure and evolution of PFRs in Georgia and Moldova; on the other, it has sought to assess their possible effects on party and party systems development in both countries. The empirical analysis relied on a general theoretical supposition according to which the availability of public funding is more favourable to party development than the dependency on private donations. The second crucial underpinning assumption was that in politics characterized by resource-scarceness and volatile electoral markets, such as those in the post-Soviet region, the role of financial resources in structuring political competition is expected to be much greater than otherwise. Therefore, the skilfulness of political parties in extracting financial resources from public and private sources becomes a key asset that ensures not only their capacity to compete successfully for public office but also safeguards their organizational survival. There are a few crucial conclusions that can be drawn from this inquiry.

The fundamental difference between the two countries lies within the availability of public funding granted to political parties: while in Georgia state contributions were envisaged since the earliest stages of party development (even though effectively disbursed after a few years), in Moldova public money remained unavailable to political formations until 2016 (although formally introduced in 2008). Hence, in most general terms, from a theoretical point of view, it can be expected that PFR in Georgia was more favourable to the development and organizational consolidation of parties as well as systemic stabilization than the Moldovan one. It should have also offered more incentives to party survival than the Moldovan one exclusively relying on private contributions (Casal Bértoa and Spirova 2019). My inquiry only partially confirmed these expectations.

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<sup>92</sup> The legislative alignment was aimed at integrating the SMD candidates into the party funding regime scheme. More precisely, the introduction of single member districts required more complex provisions regulating money flows and tighter enforcement mechanism. However, as pointed out by experts, the reforms have introduced further complexity to the existing party funding scheme, additionally confused by electoral provisions allowing candidates to run in both electoral tiers contemporarily, which, in turn, has rendered the oversight of party finances even more difficult. Finally, it has been argued that in the context of the mixed electoral system, the importance of money will further increase, which, in turn, will affect the fairness of political competition by offering advantages to wealthy contestants. For a comprehensive discussion on possible problems entailed by the electoral reform with relations to party funding see (Lipcean 2017) as well as Priority Reform Action Roadmap prepared by the Moldovan government in 2016, available at: <http://www.mfa.gov.md/img/docs/Moldovas-Priority-Reform-Action-Roadmap-Key-measures-until-31-July-2016.pdf> (last accessed in March 2019).

In this respect, the analysis has revealed that the potential of PFR in stimulating party development in Georgia was attenuated by its structure. Until the late 2000s, the total amount of public subsidies granted to parties was rather low while the entire system remained favourable to big, established parties as the distribution formula was tied to seat-share. In fact, only the 2008 PFR reform (effective from 2010), represented a more concrete step forward towards introducing a slightly fairer redistribution of public subsidies by introducing the differentiation between local/national elections and a more equitable redistribution method. It is, however, also useful to recall that the eligibility threshold, even though lower than the electoral one, remained rather high for most of the time examined in my thesis. In sum, it was not until 2013 that the system offered more substantive incentives for smaller formations to engage in the political process through, *inter alia*, a considerable increase of the amount of public funding and lower eligibility threshold.

The relative stabilization of the Moldovan party system along with increasing consolidation of organizational structures of a few mainstream parties run counter the theoretical argument according to which dependency on private funding is detrimental for party survival. This brings me to another crucial point, namely to the fact that lax rules on private funding have affected the internal dynamics of party life as the promotion of personal interests of its top officials become one of their main functions. In fact, with time, the mainstream Moldovan parties became not as much dependent on external sponsors as they transformed into vessels through which party leaders could extract resources, which may have paradoxically contributed to their increasing stabilization. It is still too early to draw decisive conclusions about the effects that the effective introduction of public funding in Moldova will have on party development in this country. Nevertheless, if the method currently applied to its redistribution will be maintained, it can be expected that the entire system will become significantly more friendly towards smaller and/or new formations.

Having said that, my study has also shown that at the systemic level party funding schemes in both countries offered significant competitive advantages to the mainstream parties by preventing the challengers from gaining sufficient resources to compete on an equal footing. This is certainly not surprising as PFR generally tends to reward mainstream parties; nevertheless, I argue that in the post-Soviet context the consequences of financial inequalities among parties proved particularly detrimental for the fairness of political competition. More concretely, in Georgia, the first real threat to the incumbent rule in electoral terms arose only in 2012 when its main challenger, the GD-DG's leader Ivanishvili employed his personal wealth (used also to co-opt few smaller parties) for campaign purposes. Prior to that the ruling party had by far dominated financially over all the other political formations – while it can be argued that it was precisely the condition of being the incumbent that generated this advantage, it cannot be denied that the distance between

the ruling party and all the opposition formations in financial terms contributed to sustaining the predominant character of the Georgian party system.

The lack of public funding in Moldova induced mainstream parties to seek alternative funds for their survival, but once they managed to do so their monopoly in extracting resources from private sources significantly affected the fundraising capacities of smaller and/or new formations. Needless to say, this had important repercussions on the structure of political competition by substantially limit the access of newcomers to political competition. In this way, in my view, the financing rules in Moldova have contributed to the stabilization of a moderate multipartyism constructed around a few increasingly stabilising political parties.



## Conclusions

There are two objectives that this thesis achieved. Firstly, it put two, under-explored, post-Soviet republics – Georgia and Moldova – on the map of comparative party research by providing insights into the trajectories of their political development from the outset of transition to the most recent 2016 Georgian parliamentary elections. Secondly, it analysed the role of the formal institutional variables, i.e. the type of government, the electoral system, and the party funding regime on party system structure and stabilisation. Thereby, this study contributes to a broader debate on the institutional constraints of party and party system development in Eurasian polities by presenting empirical evidence from the idiosyncratic experiences of the two post-Soviet republics.

This research project is based on the underlying assumption that political development in the post-Soviet region has been strongly affected by the neo-patrimonial order, in which political process is entrenched and exercised through informal channels of patronage, clientelism, and corruption, bounded and legitimized by formal institutional structures (Hale 2014). Nonetheless, my study departs from the mainstream research line “principally concerned with how the informal distorts formal political development through patronage, loyalty and the pervasiveness of corrupt practices” (Isaacs 2014, 241). Furthermore, by investigating two less-known FSR, in which power alternation has not only been possible in principle but also occurs in practice, my efforts have concentrated on understanding how formal institutions channel political behaviour and structure inter-party relations instead of focusing on how they provide legitimacy and support for the political order in authoritarian regimes.

My thesis has revealed similarities, but also interesting differences in trajectories of political development and power concentration in Georgia and Moldova. It has also emphasized the structuring role of institutional variables in this process, even though the exact mechanism of this relationship remained context-dependent and not entirely consistent with theoretical predictions. The following sections will discuss the main findings of the thesis in more detail.

### **I. Party systems’ origins: historical legacies and contingency**

The goal of the first chapter was to provide the historical and contextual background of party development, crucial for better understanding of trajectories of political development in the post-Soviet period. The analysis has highlighted the role of historical legacies in determining the content of the early institutional choices as well as in shaping the structure of party systems in Georgia and Moldova. The discussion on the origins of party systems has revealed that historical legacies can partially explain the political and institutional arrangements of the earliest phases of transition, but the theoretically-driven legacy-based approaches are not entirely able to predict and interpret these outcomes. Both countries share several experiences from the past,



including the lack of substantial pre-Soviet democratic rule, the absence of well-organized dissident movements, the presence of national minorities and separatist territories, and, finally the heritage of patrimonial communism. Yet, the structure of their political and institutional setups at the outset of transition diverged not only from one another but also from the theoretical expectations.

To partially explain these diverging paths, my analysis has also focused on the role of contingency in affecting actors' political and institutional decisions. This aspect has often been neglected in literature but it is wise "not lose sight of the critical role that chance plays in politics" (Hale 2004, 169), even beyond the formative stage of party systems in post-authoritarian countries. In other words, the endurance of legacies can be, and often is, jeopardized by the "unique exogenous historical shocks, idiosyncrasies of timing and particular leadership choices" (Kitschelt 2002, 35). Finally, my study has shown that the basic power and competition structure established at the outset of transition from the Soviet rule persisted over time even in front of the discontinuity of the mainstream actors.

Hence, once the dust set after the collapse of the Soviet order, Georgia found itself with a presidential Constitution and mixed electoral system resulting from a sequence of events including the 'rupture-type' transition triggered by the 9<sup>th</sup> of April massacre as well as violent internal conflicts requiring the intervention of the former authoritative First Secretary of the Georgian Communist Party, Eduard Shevardnadze. The 'continuist' nature of Moldovan transition left most of the power in the hands of the younger Bessarabian generation of the Soviet elite but the early institutional set up of the country reflected both the communist legacies and the immediate strategic contingency. As such, the 1994 Moldovan Constitution introduced a premier-presidential regime and PR electoral system with one, nation-wide constituency. Consequently, since these early phases, Georgia embarked on the path towards power concentration, even in front of the initial extreme fragmentation of its political landscape while in Moldova power remained divided between a narrow number of parties, easily distinguishably by their position on the ethno-nationalist issue.

Finally, despite various constitutional and electoral readjustments, Georgia maintained the presidential-centred nature of regime until 2013 when the 2010 constitutional amendments entered into force establishing a premier-presidential system. Moldova underwent a major constitutional revision in 2000 by switching to parliamentarism, but the basic features of its electoral system remained intact until the end of the period analysed in this thesis.

## **II. Parties and party systems: evolution and stabilisation**

The process of political development in Georgia and Moldova did not follow a linear pattern and in both cases unfolded in a few distinguished phases. The first, most chaotic, stage in post-Soviet Georgia took place between 1990 and 1992 setting the political and institutional basis for strong executive sustained by a

supportive party and confronted by a fragmented opposition. The second phase (1992-1995) was marked by an increased fragmentation and gradual concentration of power in hands of the newly elected, *de facto* head of state, which triggered the establishment of political division along the loyalty/disloyalty towards the president. During the third stage (1995-2003), the presidential position was further strengthened along with the personalized dimension of political competition. At the same time, however, the constitutionally established presidential system, paradoxically, left some considerable space for parties to play a role in the political process – this was especially the case of the presidential party, which, however, soon disintegrated due to internal quarrels.

The next stage of party development (2003-2012) was launched right after the Rose Revolution, which ousted from power most of the hardliner ruling elite replaced by its reformist component. This period was marked by the – constitutionally and politically induced – increasing dominance of the president and his party as well as the strengthening of the pro/anti-incumbent dimension of political competition. The most recent stage was launched in 2012 by the emergence of a new, powerful political actor who managed to successfully challenge the eight-year-long incumbency of the ruling UNM so that for the first time in post-Soviet Georgia political power was transferred peacefully.

In Moldova, the first stage of party development was launched by the 1990 semi-free elections to the Supreme Soviet and lasted until the 1994 founding parliamentary contest. The initial period offered the Moldovan political actors enough time to reflect on their political and institutional choices without being exposed to public scrutiny. This allowed the intra-elite factions to transform into fully-fledged parties with well-defined political positions. The second phase (1994-2000) was marked by increasing political tensions and party system fragmentation triggered by the direct election of the president pitting all the major political figures, including the leaders of the ruling PDAM, against one another. Yet the role of parties in the political process was strengthened by their role in counterbalancing the presidential political initiatives. During this stage, a major constitutional revision introduced the indirect presidential elections putting an end to the legislative-presidential struggle for power. The subsequent phase (2001-2009) featured the replacement of a fragmented parliament with the domination of the PCRM holding constitutional (2001-2005) and governing majorities (2005-2009). The PCRM's monopoly of power coincided with a major organizational reshuffle among the opposition parties so that in 2009 four well-distinguished formations successfully challenged the incumbent Communists and realigned the Moldovan party system to its balanced multiparty nature.

#### **a. The nature and consolidation of political parties**

The chief conclusion emerging from Chapters 2 and 3 devoted to explore the trajectories of party development and consolidation, is that in both countries parties remained quite weakly consolidated, even though the

Moldovan formations developed greater organizational stability, deeper linkage with society, and higher electoral continuity. Furthermore, while in both countries political parties have served as vehicles of personal interests of their leaders and/or narrow party elites, Moldovan parties have also become the major channels of patron-client relations, while in Georgia, at least until the regime change in force since 2013, this function was performed by the strong executive embodied by the head of state.

More concretely, Chapters 2 and 3 have unveiled a mixed picture of stability and change in both countries in terms of party consolidation over time. Somehow surprisingly, I have observed certain durability of some among the Moldovan and Georgian parties, even though none of the political formations that dominated the transition phase maintained its oversized majority nor preserved its organizational continuity under the same label<sup>1</sup>. However, increasing cross-temporal stability did not affect individual parties in the same way. In Georgia, several smaller formations established during the first decade of transition survived various endogenous (such as leadership alternation) and exogenous (such as the loss of electoral support) shocks. At the same time, ‘parties of power’ like CUG and the Democratic Union for Revival (at the local level) proved less immune to these shocks, eventually leading to their extinction.

Furthermore, in both countries, the main parties have been progressively consolidating their internal organizational structures in terms of territorial coverage, even though they remained highly centralised and little professionalised. Yet the organisational consolidation was not accompanied by an increased party autonomy. I have also noted an interesting difference between the two countries in terms of party capacity to control their internal structures. Although in both cases the frequency of organizational changes (i.e. splits/mergers as well as party-switching) was quite high, their nature varied: in Georgia, splits have been the most common strategy, while in Moldova splits prevailed over mergers before the 2000 constitutional revision but this trend was reversed afterward. What is also interesting in the Moldovan case is that “turning coats” appears to be a quite common political strategy of the Moldovan elite. This was the case of a few

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<sup>1</sup> In this respect, the Round Table-Free Georgia alliance led by the first Georgian President, Zviad Gamaskhurdia, disintegrated within first two years and ceased to exist once its leader was ousted from power through the coup d’état in January 1992. Likewise, the Georgian Communist Party, discredited after the massacre of peaceful protesters in April 1989 and banned after the Moscow coup in 1991, disappeared soon after leaving its members dispersed around various formations, most notably the Peace Bloc. In this context, the 1995 elections held with an important corrective – i.e. the 5 percent threshold, swept away most of the smaller formations present in the previous parliament (1992-1995) elected with no legal barrier. However, a number of these smaller formations established in the period surrounding the independence from the Soviet rule, has survived until the present day<sup>1</sup>. In Moldova, during the first parliamentary term (1990-1994), the anti-communist Popular Front soon disintegrated in two wings – the more radical PPCD and more moderate BTI; likewise, the CPM was significantly weakened when its reformist wing broke away to establish the Agrarian Party (PDAM).

prominent PCRM members, including Marian Lupu who defected to PDM as well as Igor Dodon and Zinaida Greceanîi who defected to PSRM.

Launching new formations as the most diffuse political strategy in Georgia is a clear sign of low party-identification of political activists perceiving parties predominantly as channels to achieve their personal goals rather than as autonomous organisations pursuing programmatic platforms. The consequences of this trend are also quite straightforward at the systemic level resulting in a highly fragmented opposition (among which only a few formations manage to mobilize electoral support) pitted against a politically and electorally strong incumbent party. By contrast, except for PLDM established in 2007, the roots of all of the current mainstream political parties in Moldova can be traced back to the initial phases of party development (see Chapter 3 for more details). Consequently, the major changes in political structure in Moldova are induced by the realignment of the mainstream political elite, rather than by the emergence of “genuinely” new parties (Sikk 2005). This trend was reflected at the systemic level in a progressive stabilization of multipartyism structured around a few consolidating parties.

The differences in political strategies can, at least partially, be attributed to party registration rules, which, since 1998, have been much more restrictive in Moldova than in Georgia. However, regardless of their nature, the cases of organizational discontinuity in both countries reveal quite clearly their personalized nature. Personal clashes among party leaders have been the most frequent cause of their separation in Georgia, while mergers in Moldova were not necessarily dictated by ideological closeness. The case of the Social Liberal Party, which merged with PDM instead of uniting with the ideologically closer PL, or the defection of Marian Lupu from the pro-Russian Communist Party to pro-European PDM illustrate this point.

This observation points to another crucial aspect of party development, i.e. the limited degree of their organizational autonomy from influential and charismatic personalities. In both countries, the frequency of leadership alternation remained low, even though the personification of the party with its leader appears to be more deeply rooted in Georgia than in Moldova. Yet the individual trajectories of mainstream parties provide mixed evidence regarding their resistance to the endogenous shock caused by leadership replacement. On the one hand, it either led to the progressive party marginalization as it was the case of PLDM in Moldova or to party extinction as it was the case of CUG and the Democratic Union for Revival. On the other hand, however, several formations in Georgia resisted this organizational change. The survival of the pro-presidential UNM in Georgia is a case in point as it continued to be the major opposition party even after the departure of its leader, president Mikheil Saakashvili. This is perhaps partially due to Saakashvili's continuous informal control over the party, but in this regard, the UNM does not represent a typical case of ‘party of power’ whose survival is strictly connected with its role in sustaining the executive. In Moldova, a

few parties like, *inter alia*, PDM and PSRM somewhat reinvented themselves and gained substantial political weight after the leadership replacement.

Although in both countries the electoral support for parties fluctuated quite pronouncedly over time, its overall stability has been higher in Moldova than in Georgia. Here it is worth reminding that the electoral volatility scores do not entirely reflect the underlying political dynamics in either country. In the Georgian case, volatility has been partially influenced by the reshuffling of the opposition forces regrouping in different electoral blocs before each parliamentary contest rather than by the emergence of ‘genuinely new’ parties. The two newest entries, i.e. the GD-DG in 2012 and the APG in 2016 also run in common blocs, each with five smaller opposition parties. In Moldova, the volatility had been progressively decreasing for the three consecutive elections since 2005 and the major swings in the electoral preferences were taking place among the established parties. This trend was partially disrupted in 2014 by the shift in voters’ support towards the Socialist Party, though the PSRM was not an entirely new formation.

Finally, even if the mainstream Georgian and Moldovan parties have not resembled the programmatic, Western-type organizations, there are a few differences between the two in terms of party nature. If the Georgian formations were predominantly of charismatic type, in Moldova clientelistic parties prevailed. This trend has consolidated over time to the point that the Moldovan mainstream parties are now either controlled by wealthy oligarchs (as PDM and PLDM) or exploited by the political elite for business purposes (as PSRM, PL, and PCRM).<sup>2</sup> At this point, however, it is quite important to recall that the most recent incumbent party in Georgia, the GD-DG, was also established and led, more or less officially, by an oligarch, Bidzina Ivanishvili, which hints to its clientelist nature. On a more positive note, some recent studies of national political experts suggest a deepening of the party-voters programmatic linkages in Georgia (Kakhishvili 2017) while the latest political developments in Moldova indicate that parties may weaken their clientelist ties in the future.

#### **b. Patterns of inter-party relations**

Chapter 4 discussed the types of party systems and the degree of stabilization of inter-party relations in Georgia and Moldova. As indicated by the Golosov ENPP index, party system fragmentation was higher in Moldova than in Georgia, while the major frame of political competition that emerged at the outset of transition remained quite stable over time in both countries. Along this line, since the earliest stages of party development in post-Soviet Georgia, the primary axis of party cooperation/confrontation revolved around the loyalty/disloyalty to the president. As such, this pro/anti-incumbent alignment persisted even after the 2013

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<sup>2</sup> With exception of the PAS and PPDA which, however, are not discussed in the thesis as they entered the political scene outside the examined period.

switch to the premier-presidential system, which removed the centrality of the head of state from the political process. Nevertheless, even if this pattern has become quite predictable over time it can hardly be considered as an equivalent of structuration. In other words, while one could expect a certain mobilization among the opposition forces against the incumbent, the ultimate configuration of respective camps appeared quite hard to predict. Likewise, and considering the highly personalized nature of political competition, it remains difficult to anticipate what type of alignments would emerge in the case of a potential governmental coalition.

The core issue of party competition in Moldova revolved around an ethno-nationalist divide overlapping with a geopolitical one. As a result, the political alignments among the mainstream parties became quite predictable; yet, they did not always follow the expected pattern. Indeed, this highly socially divisive and polarizing issue was systematically overemphasized and exploited by the political elite in its power struggle, sometimes giving birth to odd alliances. This was the case of an unnatural coalition between the pro-Russian PCRM and pro-Romanian PPCD during the 1998-2001 parliamentary term, but also under the PCRM rule following the 2005 elections.

More importantly, it proved insufficient to downplay the personal nature of inter-elite struggle resurfaced more pronouncedly during the most recent stage of party development. This was reflected, *inter alia*, by the collapse of the pro-European government in 2013 and the subsequent disintegration of the pro-European coalition caused by the personal rivalry among its two most influential leaders, Vlad Filat and Vlad Plahotniuc from PLDM and PDM respectively. The tacit cooperation between the formally pro-European PDM and the pro-Russian PSRM is another clear evidence of this pattern. However, the most recent political turbulences in Moldova have seen the rise of a new, anti-corruption dimension, which not only facilitated the entry of an influential challenger, the ACUM bloc<sup>3</sup> but also contributed to the break of the expected coalition pattern, when after the 2019 elections the pro-European ACUM formed a tactical alliance with the pro-Russian PSRM to oust the oligarch-led PDM from power<sup>4</sup>.

Despite these political realignments, the key finding of my inquiry is that since 1999 Georgia embarked on the path of progressive power concentration characterized by the clear predominance of one party, usually holding constitutional majority and monopoly over cabinet formation, over fragmented opposition united in various configurations against the incumbent. By contrast, the Moldovan party system oscillated between power concentration and dispersion as the authority remained divided between the parliament and the president until 2001, then concentrated under one-party rule between 2001 and 2009 and

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<sup>3</sup> Composed of PAS and PDDA.

<sup>4</sup> At this point it is necessary to point out that this coalition was also influenced by external actors, in particular Russia (Politico 2015).

then dispersed again among the members of the pro-European coalition between 2010 and 2016. Furthermore, the higher fragmentation of the Moldovan party system rendered it more difficult to establish a sound and enduring predominance of one party/coalition.

Another difference between the two countries lies with the nature of systemic predominance. While in Georgia it was continuous, regardless of the identity of the ruling party, in Moldova, it was bounded to the electoral success of the PCRM, whose power was, however, circumscribed during the second parliamentary term by the constitutional requirement of the three-fifths majority to elect the president. Finally, the character of the dominant party also differed in both cases: while in Georgia its main role was to support the executive and its electoral fate remained mostly linked to the success of the president, in Moldova the electoral fortune of the dominant Communist party was linked to its governmental performance and to its capacity to mobilize its natural electorate of pro-Russian oriented population.

### **III. The structuring role of institutional variables**

The second objective of this research project was to assess the effects of the formal institutional factors – the form of government, the electoral system, and the party funding regime – in structuring and stabilizing the inter-party relations in Georgia and Moldova. Since the political systems in both cases are fairly competitive, I assumed that my explanatory variables should confine the gamut of available options in structuring political outcomes. My chief conclusion is that in both countries institutional engineering had a powerful role in shaping political outcomes, although these manipulations not necessarily aligned with the expectations of their crafters. Likewise, the structuring role of formal institutions was not always congruent with the theoretical hypotheses formulated by the mainstream party research since the nature of this relationship remained contextually circumscribed. In general, each factor had its own specific impact – the form of government established a general framework for inter-party relations, while electoral system and party funding regime determined who and how can compete for power.

Along this line, Chapter 5 has corroborated the widely acknowledged argument that the president-oriented systems of government (as in Georgia) are less conducive to party and party system development and stabilization than the parliament-oriented regimes (as in Moldova). Nevertheless, the political consequences of the regime type were not always as straightforward as the theoretical debate would suggest. Indeed, the structuring impact stemmed not only from the regime type *per se* but also from the concrete set of powers and tools that it bestowed on political actors to influence and control the political process. It also remained contextually bounded.

Likewise, the employment of powerful correctives slightly deviated the nature of this relationship from theoretical predictions, although Chapter 6 has shown that electoral laws had important consequences

at the party and systemic levels in both countries. The first discrepancy concerns the origins of electoral systems. The legacy-based approach suggests that at the outset of transition from the Soviet rule, PR was preferred in polities where the opposition prevailed in the power struggle as well as in those countries where the regime liberalized due to exogenous circumstances rather than on its own (Herron 2009; Birch et al. 2002; Moser 1995; Millard 2004). Contrariwise, the mixed systems were adopted in communist-dominated countries to minimise the old elites' risks of losing power (Shugart 1998; Birch et al. 2002). Both, Georgia with the mixed electoral design and Moldova with a pure PR adopted at the outset of transition, run counter these expectations. Secondly, while I did not formulate deterministic hypotheses on the effects of the mixed parallel system, building on theoretical and empirical evidence from post-communist party research, I assumed that the PR would boost party fragmentation while the double-majority component would constrain it (Moser 1998). My findings in this regard have been mixed.

Finally, Chapter 7 unveiled that the role of party funding regimes in shaping political outcomes may not have been unidirectional. Nonetheless it played a key role in controlling the access to the political arena and affected party strategies in both countries. The specific content of PFR turned out to be quite puzzling. Contrary to what one would expect, in president-dominated Georgia, public funding was made available to parties since the early stages of party development, while in parliamentary Moldova with a PR electoral design, political formations relied mostly on private donations until 2016 when state subsidies started to be effectively disbursed. My analysis has also revealed that PFRs in both countries have offered distinctive competitive advantages to the mainstream parties. While this is certainly not surprising, I argue that in countries such as the post-Soviet republics characterised by weak party-voter linkages and volatile electoral markets the extent of financial inequalities significantly affects the fairness of political competition and exercise far-reaching consequences on electoral outcomes.

To be sure, the institutional variables rarely function independently from each other, hence they affect political outcome jointly. In order to emphasise the complementary and context-specific nature of this relationship, the following sections summarize the role of explanatory variables in structuring political outcomes in, respectively, Georgia and Moldova

#### **a. Georgia**

There are a few ways in which the combination of formal institutions affected the trajectory of the Georgian party system towards the concentration of power in the hands of the president and its supporting party as well as the consolidation of this predominant nature since 1999. Since the first post-Soviet elections held in 1992 until the 1995 presidential and parliamentary contests under the new electoral and constitutional rule, Georgia functioned in a sort of a transitory politico-legal order. There are two crucial roles that formal



institutions played during this initial stage. Firstly, the mixed parallel electoral system with a minimal threshold for the PR tier and the SMD offering the opportunity for independent (mostly regional/local) candidates magnified party system fragmentation. This fragmentation significantly obstructed the work of the assembly but, paradoxically, facilitated the establishment of centralized power. In this respect, the Georgian experience was similar to that of the early post-Soviet Russia (Gel'man 2016). However, unlike Russia, the two-thirds majority required for constitutional amendments compelled the then Georgian leader to compromise over the ultimate content of his powers. As a result, the 1995 Georgian constitution did not follow the Russian super-presidential model as the head of state was not, *inter alia*, entitled to dissolve the assembly.

The following stages of party development in Georgia took place under the president-dominated regimes – the presidential one between 1995 and 2004, and the presidential-parliamentary one between 2004 and 2012. Both systems assigned a central role of everyday political decision-making to the president rendering him/her the main source of political power and resources. Accordingly, the head of state substituted parties in their role as gatekeepers to public offices and limited their function as the channels of interest representation by offering “route to influence over policy-making that could be accessed without party support” (Robinson 2012, 303). Furthermore, the presidential role in cabinet formation considerably limited the relevance of parties in the governmental arena: upon his nomination between 1995 and 2012 the governments were mostly composed of technocrats executing presidential decisions, including premiers<sup>5</sup> whose responsibility in determining government's compositions remained very limited.

At the same time, however, following the 2004 constitutional amendment and until 2012, the assembly maintained a minimal level of control over the executive through a few disciplinary measures like veto power, despite the procedural difficulties in its enactment, thus the presence of a compacted pro-presidential majority greatly facilitated the presidential dominance over the political process. Finally, contrary to some other presidential-dominated Eurasian regimes (like Russia), the president was not an “above-party” actor and his party affiliation translated into clear political accountability, extended to his own formation.

Quite expectedly, by entrenching the Georgian party system in the “relatively stable power of the executive branch” (Makarenko 2012), the presidential-oriented regime types sustained its concentration. Consequently, in the governmental and legislative arenas, “all other parties and candidates taken together did not have enough potential to form a real alternative to the pro-governmental parliamentary majority and to the incumbent president” (Gel'man 2006). Furthermore, besides generally enhancing the personal dimension of the political process, the pro-presidential form of government contributed to the strengthening of the

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<sup>5</sup> Since 2004 when this post was reintroduced by the constitutional amendment.

pro/anti-incumbent pattern of political competition based on loyalties towards the head of state at the expense of a more programmatic, issue-based competition. Hence, as the presidential executive became the main political prize, the electoral strategies for the parliamentary contests lead to the “consolidation of smaller party formations into larger coalitions” (Moser 2001a, 98).

Party system concentration was further enhanced by the laws and mechanisms of electoral competition. Firstly, even though the electoral cycle did not follow a uniform logic as in 1995, 2004, and 2008 the presidential contest preceded the parliamentary one, while in 1999 and 2012 the order was reversed, it displayed a self-reinforcing character – winning one type of contest offered a significant electoral advantage in the other. Secondly, parliamentary fragmentation was partially induced by the introduction of a relatively high entry barrier since 1995 elections. This was particularly visible in 2004 when the 7 percent threshold prevented many smaller formations from entering the parliament, hence magnifying the dominance of the pro-presidential camp, which further strengthened the centralized power.

Thirdly, once the regional competing networks of power were dismantled in the aftermath of the 2003 Rose Revolution and the regional/local parties banned by the 2004 constitutional provision, the double-ballot majority system helped to maximise the electoral gains of the ruling elite, emphasizing the ‘winner-takes-all’ character of the Georgian party system. This effect was further encouraged by the peculiarity of the majoritarian component of the electoral system, namely the 30 percent winning threshold, which distorted the logic of double majority by offering a distinct advantage to the largest party. Nevertheless, while “the use of single-member districts tended to magnify the seat share of the largest party” (Meleshevich 2007), the mixed parallel electoral system still left a possibility for smaller formations to gain at least some representation.

This latter aspect acquired more relevance for party survival since 2008 and especially the 2013 reform of party funding rendering more inclusive the distribution of public subsidies. The Georgian PFR, since the late-2000s, seemed to have offered some tangible incentives for smaller parties to engage in the political process, mitigating to a certain extent the barriers generated by the president-parliamentary system of government and the mixed electoral design. However, until the 2008 reform, the access to public funding was granted only to parliamentary parties due to a seat-share based distribution formula. The 2008 reform offering to electoral subjects a choice between the national and local election results as basis for funding distribution was, in principal, beneficial for smaller formations, even though until 2013 the overall amount of public funding distributed to parties remained quite modest.

Consequently, the Georgian PFR was highly advantageous for the incumbent parties whose enormous financial superiority over the opposition, especially since 2004, sustained the predominant nature of the

Georgian party system. Hence, it should not be surprising that the first real political threat to the incumbent UNM (2004-2012) was possible only when in 2012 a billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili – the leader of the GD coalition – threw his personal wealth, including a private TV channel, into the electoral campaign. The mobilization of the ruling UNM in preventing him to use personal resources reflected by the excessive punitive measures such as record-high sanctions further confirms the fundamental role that money exerts in the Georgian politics.

Finally, building on theoretical arguments from the literature, I expected that the 2013 regime change introducing premier-presidential system would encourage party development by significantly reducing the presidential role in manipulating party support and increasing partisan role in controlling the executive. My conclusion is that it is still too early to fully account for the direction of these changes. While a slight shift towards more programmatic orientation could be observed, the direct presidential elections continued to exalt the political polarization.

Concomitantly, the personality-based political competition and the role of the leader in deciding on the political nominations continue to undermine party autonomy. I have also observed that the regime change did not alter the patterns of inter-party competition, which still took place along the pro/anti-incumbent axis. Lastly, despite a substantial increase in state funding to Georgian parties and the introduction of an allocation scheme friendlier to smaller formations introduced in 2013, the gap between the current ruling party and all the other political forces taken together is still very large, which significantly affects their ability to compete on an equal footing.

#### **b. Moldova**

Although more favourable to party development and consolidation, formal institutions in Moldova entailed some contrasting and oftentimes mutually neutralizing effects. Firstly, the mechanism of the semi-presidential system (1994-2000) run counter the theoretical expectations and developments across other countries in the region. The division of powers introduced by the 1994 Constitution effectively prevented the head of state from assuming the leading role in the political process by offering “greater institutional openings” (L. March 2006) for the legislature to counterbalance, if not prevail, over the president. As a result, the premier-presidential regime theoretically offered stronger leverage for political parties to develop more coherent internal structures.

At the same time, however, by enhancing the personalized dimension of political competition, the direct presidential election had an inflationary effect at systemic level. Indeed, the 1996 contest contributed to the disintegration of the first ruling party, the PDAM, by pitting all of its leaders against each other and encouraging party splits to support them. The ensuing increased parliamentary fragmentation between 1996

and 2001 complicated the inter-party relations and hindered the assembly's ability to establish a working majority. This, in turn, contributed to the increasing activism of the president in manipulating party support, which proved detrimental for the consolidation of party structures.

The parliamentary system of government established by the 2000 constitutional amendment introducing the indirect presidential elections also yielded some anomalous effects. On the one hand, by abolishing the divided executive it removed a separate veto player, i.e. the president, pursuing his/her own political agenda. On the other hand, however, it introduced an unusual feature, namely the three-fifths majority requirement for the presidential elections. Since hardly any party (except PCRM between 2001 and 2005) could obtain such a high number of seats (61 out of 101), the inter-party bargaining during the presidential elections strengthened the importance of party discipline providing an additional institutional incentive for political formations to stabilize over time. Furthermore, this provision diminished the weight of the PCRM's dominance between 2005 and 2009 despite its absolute control over the government as the party did not dispose of a sufficient number of votes on its own.

In parallel, however, it put the election of the president at the heart of the political competition and granted the Moldovan head of state with political powers exceeding those normally attributed to the parliamentary presidents. Consequently, following the clear-cut victories of the PCRM in 2001 and 2005, the cabinet remained under the total control of the president-elect and Communist leader, Vladimir Voronin. Albeit to a lesser extent, between 2015-2016 president Timofti was also actively involved in the political process, for instance by solving the institutional deadlock caused by the inability of the ruling majority to nominate a candidate for the premiership.

In this context, the PR electoral design had a mixed effect on political competition. On the one hand, it encouraged party engagement in the political process and stimulated the progressive consolidation of party internal organizational structures along with party nationalization, induced by the nation-wide magnitude of the electoral district. On the other hand, however, it helped reducing party system fragmentation as the high electoral threshold acted as a sizeable barrier against smaller parties and independent candidates. It was particularly the case in 2001 when the increased entry barrier of 6 percent, against the previous 4, prevented at least two additional parties from entering the parliament. It also contributed to the absolute constitutional dominance of the PCRM by granting it a significant bonus of additional seats redistributed from the wasted votes<sup>6</sup>. These two elements helped to preserve the predominant nature of the Moldovan party system between 2005 and 2009 by manufacturing the PCRM dominance in legislative and governmental arenas. Overall, I

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<sup>6</sup> The peculiar redistribution formula usually granted the ruling party between 20 and 40 percent of those it obtained from regular votes.

found electoral design favourable to the progressive stabilization of a few national parties by having a “constraining effect on parties’ number and freezing effect on party competition” (Birch 2003).

The case of the Moldovan PFR is also quite curious as it runs counter not only the general regional trend where public funding was made available since the earliest stages of party development but also to theoretical expectations. The literature suggests that the dependency on uncertain private contributions should increase party instability and significantly hinder party consolidation. Paradoxically, however, in Moldova, the unavailability of public funding resulted in a progressive monopolization of resource extraction by a few political formations, which ultimately transformed them into vessels of private interests of their leaders. This, in my view, appears to have constituted one of the crucial factors contributing to their stabilization over time. By the same token, the long-term unavailability of public funding in Moldova along with the quasi-monopoly over the extraction of private contributions considerably affected the fundraising capacities of smaller and newer formations, thus hindering their access to the political arena. As a result, the lax PFR represented an additional entry barrier which helped to sustain a moderate multipartism.

#### **IV. Lessons learned and future challenges**

The present thesis has investigated the evolution and stabilisation of parties and party systems in Georgia and Moldova from the outset of transition until the Georgian parliamentary elections held in 2016. The major conclusion that can be drawn from my study is that the post-Soviet party systems are complex yet fascinating cases, which – contrary to what is commonly believed – differ among each other in terms of political dynamics and power structure.

Accordingly, while both cases remained fairly competitive multiparty party systems in electoral arena, their structures in legislative and governmental spheres differed, confirming the argument that “multi-party elections do not lead automatically to multi-party systems” (Bogaards 2004, 173). In the Georgian case, party system has been of a predominant type while the Moldovan one has been characterized by a more or less balanced multipartism with a predominant spell (2001-2009). Both countries also differed in terms of the structure of political competition. While in Georgia all of the arenas has become dominated by one party since 1999 over a fragmented and weak opposition, in Moldova the competition has been generally more open and balanced (except for the period between 2001-2005), revolving around a few, ideologically distinguished parties. In other words, the Georgian party system has had a continuous predominant nature with weaker and less consolidated parties, while in Moldova this predominant systemic identity has been much more difficult to maintain as a few parties have been progressively stabilising over time.

My second crucial finding emphasized the role of political engineering in shaping political outcomes but the precise mechanisms of how institutional factors have affected party development proved contingent

on country-specific circumstances. The ambiguous impact of explanatory variables that did not entirely concur with the theoretical expectations warn about the perils of simplified generalizations in trying to understand the Eurasian political orders.

At the same time, my research indicates that there is still much to learn about how the precise mechanisms through which political power and competition are organized in the Eurasian region. To be sure, the formation and stabilisation of party systems in post-authoritarian contexts is a complex process affected by other factors, including the informal ones, besides the formal-legal perspective emphasized in this thesis. Nevertheless, I agree with those scholars who claim that to enhance “our ability to understand the multiple forms of development available to the former Soviet republics” we still need “expanding our conceptual toolkit” beyond the strict neo-patrimonial label (Isaacs 2014, 241). In other words, considering that the FSR differ regarding the role of political parties, the structure of political competition and the organization of power (Styckow 2016), I strongly support the argument that the post-Soviet scholarship would greatly benefit from slightly redirecting its focus from highlighting how the informality distorts the functioning of the formal-legal order towards the role of the latter in structuring political outcomes.

Fourthly, the study has also demonstrated that the politico-institutional order that emerged at the outset of transition in both countries resulted from historical legacies, but was equally importantly affected by contingent factors. Furthermore, my thesis has proved right the argument that the choices made in the early phases of transition had “a disproportionate weight in determining what followed” (Crowther and Roper 1996, 149). Finally, by highlighting specific limits of conventional tools used in party system research, my findings suggest the need for further methodological and analytical refinement when applied to the post-Soviet regimes.

Having said that, party systems in both cases had not fully consolidated during the period examined in this thesis. Working on cases, which are in constant flux entails some inevitable risks; the most important being that immediately after the end of writing – or even during the process – what has been just discussed becomes history. In fact, at the moment of drafting these concluding remarks both countries have been experiencing some important, and potentially far-reaching, institutional changes as well as political realignments.

More concretely, for a few years now Georgia has been functioning under the premier-presidential regime, which deprived the president of its capacity to intervene in the political process. This change has already yielded some, albeit timid, indicators of a possible increased role of parties in the Georgian politics. Furthermore, Georgia will most likely switch to the parliamentary form of government from the 2024 parliamentary elections accompanied by a shift to a full PR electoral system. In this context, it will be

particularly interesting to see whether the transition to the PR system will translate into a more fragmented assembly and, if this will be the case, what will be the parties' strategies in seeking electoral support. Finally, but perhaps more importantly, what will be the logic behind the political alignments in the absence of a separate veto player – i.e. the president.

In Moldova, in turn, the most recent 2019 parliamentary elections held under the mixed electoral design acted exactly as expected by its main supporter – the PDM – by granting it with 17 supplementary seats (in addition to 13 obtained through the national list in PR tier), which made it the second-largest parliamentary party. Nevertheless, the increasingly authoritarian tendencies of the PDM's leader and oligarch Vlad Plahotniuc were ultimately cut off by a coalition of the pro-Russian PSRM led by President Dodon and pro-European, anti-oligarch alliance ACUM (composed of two new parties, PAS and PDDA). This seems to have marked a significant realignment of the Moldovan party system in which mainstream parties (besides PDM also PCRM and PLDM) have lost their role in the political process. Following the Plahotniuc's ousting from power, the new coalition returned to PR electoral design, and snap elections are expected to be held in the near future. Considering this recent turmoil, any predictions on party system shape and format becomes difficult.

The assessment of these changes will be a matter for future studies, regardless of the uncertainty about the future political direction of Georgia and Moldova, I hope that my thesis has helped to better understand the political developments in these two, less-known post-Soviet republics. After all, this has been my chief goal.

## Appendix I Electoral results

**Table 1 Results of parliamentary elections in Georgia (1992-2016)**

Year	Party	Coalition members	Number of seats (majoritarian)	Number of votes	% votes	Number of seats (PR)	Number of seats (total)
1992	Peace Bloc		6	528.328	20.4	29	35
	11 October Bloc		1	277.496	10.7	18	19
	NDP		2	211.938	8.2	12	14
	Unity Bloc		1	190.844	7.4	14	15
	Democratic Party		0	162.014	6.3	10	10
	UGT		1	127.923	4.9	7	8
	Green Party		0	113.028	4.4	11	11
	Charta 91		1	111.148	4.3	9	10
	Ilia Chavchavadze Society		0	69.306	2.7	7	7
	Merab Kostava Society		2	65.381	2.5	5	7
	NIP		0	62.198	2.4	4	4
	Socialist Party of Georgian Workers		0	54.364	2.1	4	4
	Union of National Concord and Revival of Georgia		1	49.595	1.9	4	5
Independents			60				60
1995	CUG		18	504.856	25.2	90	108
	NDP		3	169.218	8.4	31	34
	RU		6	145.626	7.3	25	31
	United Communist Party of Georgia-Social Democrats Bloc		0	95.506	4.8	0	0
	UGT		3	89.752	4.5	0	3
	21st Century-Konstantin Gamsakhurdia Society-United Georgia Bloc		0	88.405	4.4	0	0
	Socialist Party of Georgia		4	80.474	4	0	4
	Georgian Union of Reformers-National Consent Bloc		2	61.424	3.1	0	2
	Merab Kostava Society		0	48.829	2.5	0	0
	Stalin Communist Party		0	46.174	2.3	0	0
	Political Union Support		3	45.747	2.3	0	3
	Abkhazia-My Home		0	44.191	2.2	0	0
	Communist Party of Georgia			44.117	2.2	0	0
	All-Georgian Party of Peace and Freedom		0	43.017	2.1	0	0
	NIP		0	39.788	2	0	0
	RP		1	35.051	1.7	0	1
	Progress Bloc		4	29.189	1.5	0	4
Union for Law-Governed State		1	19.675	1	0	1	



	All-Georgian Political Organisation Lemi		1	8722	0.4	0	1
	Independents		29				29
	Abkhazian representatives		8			4	12
1999	CUG		46	890.915	44.5	85	131
	RU		7	537.297	26.8	51	58
	IWSG Bloc		1	151.008	7.5	14	15
	LPG		2	140.595	7	0	2
	National Democratic Alliance-The Third Way Bloc		0	95.039	4.7	0	0
	Popular Party-Digori Bloc		0	87.781	4.4	0	0
	Independents		17				17
	Abkhazian representatives		12			0	12
	For a New Georgia			407.045	21.3	38	
2004	National Movement – Democrats		18	1.027.070	66.24	135	153
	Rightist Opposition	New Rights IWSG	8	116.282	7.56	15	23
	Democratic Union for Revival		6		3.86	0	6
	Labour Party		3		6.01	0	3
	Freedom Movement		0		4.2	0	0
	National Democratic Alliance	NDP UGT	0		2.55	0	0
	Jumber Patiashvili – Unity	Ertoba (Unity) Intellectuals League of Georgia	0		2.47	0	0
	Abkhazian MPs elected 1992		11			0	11
	Independents		21				21
	For New Georgia		19			0	19
2008	UNM		71	1.050.237	59.18	48	119
	United Opposition-National Forum- New Rights	New Rights Party Conservative Party Georgia's Way Freedom On Our Own	2	314.668	17.73	15	17

		Party of People Movement for United Georgia National Forum Georgian Troupe					
	Christian-Democrats		0	153.634	8.66	6	6
	Labour Party		0	132.092	7.44	6	6
	Republican Party		2	67.037	3.78	0	2
<b>2012</b>	Georgian Dream	GD-DG Conservative Party of Georgia  IWSG Republican Party  Our Georgia – Free Democrats  National Forum	41	1.181.862	54.97	44	85
	UNM		32	867.432	40.34	33	65
	Christian Democratic Union	CDMG European Democrats of Georgia	0	43.805	2.04	0	0
<b>2016</b>	GD-DG		71	856.638	48.68	44	115
	UNM		0	477.053	27.11	27	27
	APG		0	88.097	5.01	6	6
	Free Democrats		0	81.464	4.63	0	0
	Democratic Movement		0	62.166	3.53	0	0
	State for People		0	60.681	3.45	0	0
	Labour Party		0	55.208	3.14	0	0
	Industry Will Save Georgia-Our Fatherland		1	13.788	0.78	0	1
Independents		1			0	1	

\* threshold set at 2% for PR or at least one seat from double-ballot majoritarian tier; \*\* 2003 rigged elections are not included.  
Source: Central Electoral Commission of Georgia.

**Table 2 Results of presidential elections in Georgia (1992-2016)**

Year	Candidate	Party affiliation	1 <sup>st</sup> round		2 <sup>nd</sup> round	
			Number of votes	% votes	Number of votes	% votes
1992	Zviad Gamsakhurdia	Round Table-Free Georgia	2.565.362	87.6		
	Valerian Advadze	Concord, Peace, Revival Bloc	240.243	8.2		
	Jemal Mikeladze	Communist Party of Georgia	51.717	1.8		
	Nodar Natadze	People's Front	36.266	1.2		
	Irakli Shengelaia	Freedom Bloc	26.886	0.9		
	Tamaz Kvachantiradze	Democratic Georgia Bloc	8.533	0.3		
1995	Eduard Shevardnadze	CUG	1.589.909	77.0		
	Jumber Patiashvili	Independent	414.303	20.1		
	Akaki Bakradze	Ilia Chavchavadze Society	31.350	1.5		
	Panteleimon Giorgadze	United Communist Party of Georgia	10.697	0.5		
	Kartlos Gharibashvili	Independent	10.023	0.5		
	Roin Liparteliani	"David the Builder" Party	7.948	0.4		
2000	Eduard Shevardnadze	CUG	1.870.311	82.0		
	Jumber Patiashvili	Independent	390.486	17.1		
	Kartlos Gharibashvili	Independent	7.863	0.3		
	Avtandil Jogildze	National State Union of Georgia-Victorious Georgia	5.942	0.3		
	Vazha Zhghenti	Progressive Party of Georgia	3.363	0.2		
	Tengiz Asanidze	Independent	2.793	0.1		
	2004	Mikheil Saakashvili	National Movement-United Democrats	1.692.728	96.0	
Teimuraz Shashiashvili		Independent	33.868	1.9		
Roin Liparteliani		"David the Builder" Party	4.248	0.2		
Zaza Sikharulidze		Independent	4.098	0.2		
Kartlos Garibashvili		Lawyers of Georgia Party	3.582	0.2		
	Zurab Kelekhsashvili	<i>Mdzleveli</i>	1.631	0.1		
	Against all		22.817	1.3		

2008	Mikheil Saakashvili	UNM	1.060.042	54.73		
	Levan Gachechiladze	United National Council <sup>a</sup>	509.234	26.29		
	Badri Patarkatsishvili	independent	140.826	7.27		
	Shalva Natelashvili	Labour Party	128.589	6.64		
	Davit Gamkrelidze	New Rights Party	79.747	4.12		
	Gia Maisashvili	Party of the Future	15.249	0.79		
	Irina Sarishvili-Chanturia	Imedi party	3.242	0.17		
2013	Giorgi Margvelashvili	GD-DG	1.012.569	62.12		
	Davit Bakradze	UNM	354.103	21.72		
	Nino Burjanadze	Democratic Movement – United Georgia	166.061	10.19		
	Shalva Natelashvili	Labour Party	46.984	2.88		
	Giorgi Targamadze	Christian-Democratic Movement	17.354	1.06		
	Koba Davitashvili	People's Party	9.838	0.60		
	Zurab Kharatishvili	European Democrats	3.718	0.23		
	Levan Chachua	Independent	3,093	0.19		
	Nino Chanishvili	Independent	2.276	0.14		
	Sergo Javakhidze	Movement for a Fair Georgia	2.107	0.13		
	Giorgi Liluashvili	Independent	1.909	0.12		
	Akaki Asatiani	Union of Georgian Traditionalists	1.559	0.10		
	Mikheil Saluashvili	Independent	1.376	0.08		
	Teimuraz Mzhavia	Christian Democratic People's Party	1.285	0.08		
	Mamuka Melikishvili	Independent	995	0.06		
	Giorgi Chikhladze	Independent	820	0.05		
	Nestan Kirtadze	Independent	762	0.05		
	Tamaz Bibiluri	Independent	687	0.04		
	Nugzar Avaliani	Independent	664	0.04		
	Avtandil Margiani	Independent	627	0.04		
Kartlos Gharibashvili	Independent	530	0.03			
Teimuraz Bobokhidze	Independent	356	0.02			
Mamuka Chokhanelidze	Independent	315	0.02			

<sup>a</sup> nine-party coalition (Republican Party of Georgia, Georgian Conservative Party, Georgia's Way, Tavisupleba, We Ourselves, People's Party, Movement for United Georgia, Georgian troupe and National Forum). Source: Central Electoral Commission of Georgia

**Table 3 Results of parliamentary elections in Moldova (1994-2014)**

Year	Party	Coalition members	Number of votes	% votes	Number of seats
1994	PDAM		766.589	43.18	56
	Socialist Party-Unity Movement	Socialist Party of Moldova “Unitate-Unity” Movement	390.584	22.0	28
	BȚI	Congress of Intellectuals of Moldova Alliance of the Free Peasants Women Christian-Democratic League Democratic Christian Party PNL	163.513	9.21	11
	Alliance of the Christian Democratic Popular Front	PPCD Council of the Voluntary Combatants of Moldova Christian-Democrats Youth Organization	133.606	7.53	9
	Social Democratic Bloc	Social-Democratic Party of Moldova National Youth League of Moldova	65.028	3.66	0
	Association of Women in Moldova		50.243	2.83	0
	Democratic Labour Party of Moldova		4921	2.77	0
	Reform Party		4198	2.36	0
	Independents		45.152	2.54	
1998	PCRM		487.002	30.01	40
	CDM	PCRM PPCD “Green Alliance” Environmental Party of Moldova Women Christian-Democratic League Christian Democratic Peasants Party	315.206	19.42	26
	PMDP	PMDP Movement	294.691	18.16	24
		Civic Party of Moldova			
		New Force Socio-Political Movement			
		People’s Democratic Party of Moldova			
	PFD		143.428	8.84	11
	PDAM		58.874	3.63	0
	Furnica Civil Alliance Electoral Bloc		53.338	3.29	0
	Alliance of Democratic Forces		36.344	2.24	0
Independents		90.997	5.6	0	
2001	PCRM		794.808	50.1	71

	Braghiș Alliance	“Forta Noua (New Force)” Movement Movement of Professionals “Speranța-Надежда” Socialist Party of Moldova Labour Union Centrist Union of Moldova Party of Social Democracy “Furnica”	212.071	13.4	19
	PPCD		130.081	8.2	11
	PRCM		91.894	5.8	0
	PDM		79.757	5.0	0
	NLP		44.548	2.8	0
	Social Democratic Party		39.247	2.5	0
	Independents		36.447	2.3	0
<b>2005</b>	PCRM		716.336	46.0	56
	BMD	PDM AMD Social-Liberal Party	444.377	28.5	34
	PPCD		141.341	9.1	11
	“Patria-Rodina” Electoral Bloc	Socialist Party of Moldova Party of Socialists of Moldova “Patria-Rodina”	7749	4.97	0
	Social Democratic Party		45.551	2.9	0
	Republican Movement “Ravnopravie”		44.129	2.83	0
	Independents		14.676	0.9	0
<b>2009 (Apr)</b>	PCRM		760.551	49.5	60
	PL		201.879	13.1	15
	PLDM		191.113	12.4	15
	AMN		150.155	9.8	11
	Social Democratic Party		56.866	3.7	0
	PPCD		46.654	3.0	0
	PDM		45.698	3.0	0
	Centrist Union of Moldova Independents		42.211 17.287	2.7 0.33	0 0
<b>2009 (Jul)</b>	PCRM		706.732	44.7	48
	PLDM		262.028	16.6	18
	PL		232.108	14.7	15
	PDM		198.268	12.5	13
	AMN		116.194	7.3	7
<b>2010</b>	PCRM		677069	39.34	42
	PLDM		506253	29.42	32
	PDM		21862	12.70	15
	PL		171336	9.96	12

	AMN		35289	2.05	0
	Independents		18832	1.09	0
<b>2014</b>	PSRM		327.912	20.51	25
	PLDM		322.188	20.16	23
	PCRM		279.372	17.48	21
	PDM		252.489	15.80	19
	PL		154.507	9.67	13
	Communist Reformist Party		78.719	4.92	0
	'Moldova's Choice - Customs Union' Electoral Bloc		55.089	3.45	0

\*threshold set at 2 percent.

Source: Central Electoral Commission of Moldova and Asociația pentru Democrație Participativă “ADEPT”.

**Table 4 Results of presidential elections in Moldova (1991-2016)**

Year	Candidate	Party affiliation	1 <sup>st</sup> round		2 <sup>nd</sup> round	
			Number of votes	% votes	Number of votes	% votes
1991	Mircea Snegur	Independent	1.952.142	98.2		
	Against all		35.451	1.8		
1996	Mircea Snegur	Party of Rebirth and Conciliation of Moldova	630.652	38.8	782.933	46.0
	Petru Lucinschi	Independent	430.836	27.7	919.831	54.0
	Vladimir Voronin	Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova	159.393	10.2		
	Andrei Sangheli	Democratic Agrarian Party of Moldova	147.555	9.5		
	Valeriu Matei	Party of Democratic Forces	138.605	8.9		
	Marina Levițchi	Independent	33.115	2.1		
	Anatol Plugaru	Independent	28.159	1.8		
	Iuliana Gorea-Costin	Independent	9.926	0.6		
	Veronica Abramciuc	Independent	6.619	0.4		
2016	Igor Dodon	Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova	680.550	47.98	834.081	52.11
	Maia Sandu	Action and Solidarity	549.152	38.71	766.593	47.89
	Dumitru Ciubașenco	Our Party	85.466	6.03		
	Iurie Leancă	European People's Party	44.065	3.11		
	Mihai Ghimpu	Liberal Party	25.490	1.80		
	Valeriu Ghilețchi	Independent	15.354	1.08		
	Maia Laguta	Independent	10.712	0.76		
	Silvia Radu	Independent	5.276	0.37		
	Ana Guțu	Party "The Right"	2.453	0.17		

Source: Central Electoral Commission of Moldova and Asociația pentru Democrație Participativă "ADEPT".



## Appendix II Index of Presidential Powers

**Table 5 Presidential powers in Georgia (1995-2013) and Moldova (1994-2014)**

	Georgia					Moldova			
	IPP score	Constitutional reference	1995-2004	2004-2013	2013	Constitutional reference	1994-2000	2000-2014	2014
<b>Popular election</b>		<b>art. 70</b>				<b>art 78 (1)</b>			
Yes	4		4	4	4		4		4
No	0							0	
<b>Legislative initiative</b>		<b>art. 67</b>				<b>art 73</b>			
No amendments from Assembly	4								
Unrestricted, but subjected to amendments	3		3				3	3	3
Restricted to areas prescribed by Constitution and/or Organic Laws, and subjected to parliamentary amendments	1			2					
no power	0				0				
<b>Decree Power</b>		<b>art.73 (g;i)</b>				<b>art 94</b>			
Unrestricted	4						2*	2	2
Restricted to areas prescribed by Constitution and/or Organic Law (may require countersignature)	2		2	2	2				
no power	0								
<b>Constitutional Review</b>		<b>art. 89 (1)</b>				<b>no constitutional provision<sup>a</sup></b>			
Unrestricted/exclusive right	4								
unrestricted, but other institutions can do the same	2		2	2	2		2	2	2
In cooperation with other institutions	1								
no power	0								
<b>Referendum initiative</b>		<b>art.74 (1)</b>				<b>art 88 (f)</b>			
Unrestricted/individual	4								
Unrestricted; other institutions (independetly)	3								
restricted to certain areas or in coopeation with other institutions	2		2	2	2		2	2	2
only date; countersignature	1								
no power	0								
<b>Veto (partial)</b>		<b>art. 68 (1-6)</b>				<b>art 93 (2)</b>			

≥ 2/3 (or 3/5) of Assembly	4		4	4			2	2	2
absolute majority (or the same majority as required to pass the law in normal procedure)	2				2				
simple majority; PM countersignature	1								
no power	0								
<b>Suspension or abrogation of acts of executive bodies</b>		<b>art. 73 (3)</b>				<b>art 131</b>			
Unrestricted	4		4	2					
restricted by constitution/organic law	2								
no power/no provision	0				0		0	0	0
<b>Budgetary power</b>		<b>art. 93 (1)</b>	4	3		-			
only president	4								
only government with consent of president	3								
amendments of assembly allowed	1								
no role	0				0		0	0	0
<b>Nomination of PM</b>		<b>artt. 73 (b) - 80 (5)</b>				<b>artt. 82 (1) - 98</b>			
unrestricted	4								
own candidate, approval of Assembly, but can be dissolved	3		0 (na)	3					
own candidate, approval of Assembly, cannot be dissolved	2								
nominate after the consulting majority, but president can oppose	1						1	1	1
no say, candidate of parliamentary majority	0				0				
<b>Nomination of cabinet members</b>		<b>art 73 (b)</b>				<b>artt. 82 (2) - 98 (6)</b>			
President names cabinet; no need for approval of assembly (or not clear)	4		4*						
President names premier who then names other ministers subject to presidential consent and confidence vote	3			3					
President nominates ministers proposed by PM but can oppose only once (e.g if no integrity)	1						1	1	1
no say, but nominates cabinet ministers proposed by the PM, confirmation or investiture by assembly	0				0				
<b>Revoke PM/cabinet</b>		<b>art 73 (c) - 81</b>							
unrestricted dismissal of any minister (and entire cabinet as a whole)	4		4	3					
unrestricted dismissal of specific ministers (and entire cabinet as a whole); can reject dismissal request of PM	3								

can initiate but needs approval of assembly	2								
President may dismiss only upon acceptance by assembly of alternate minister or cabinet; only by no confidence, but president needs to assent	1						0	0	0
no say; only by assembly with constructive no confidence vote	0				0				
<b>Dissolution of Assembly</b>		<b>art 80-81</b>				<b>art 85</b>			
exclusive and unrestricted power	4						1	1	1
restricted by Constitutional terms	3			3					
restricted - only as a response to no-confidence after 2nd attempt or institutional deadlock	1				1				
no power/no provision	0		0						
<b>Cabinet meetings</b>		<b>art 78 (4) – (6)</b>				<b>art 83</b>			
convene and preside unrestricted (may do that)	4		4**				4		
convene and preside restricted to certain areas	3			3					
yes, as participant	1				1				
no (or no provision)	0							0	0
<b>Censure (except for criminal charges)</b>		<b>art 73 (c) art 64 (1-2) art 81 (1)</b>				<b>art 106</b>			
Assembly may not censure and remove cabinet or ministers	4		4						
Assembly may censure, but president may respond by dissolving assembly	2			2					
“Constructive” vote of no confidence (assembly majority must present alternative cabinet); or may censure through impeachment	1				1				
Unrestricted censure	0						0	0	0
<b>Apoining Constituional Court's judges</b>		<b>art 88 (2)</b>				<b>art 136 (2)</b>			
independently (or more than 1/2 if in cooperation)	4								
in cooperation (less than 1/2, but more than 1/3)	3								
in cooperation (less or equal to 1/3)	1		1	1	1		1	0	0
no power	0								
<b>Commander in chief of armed forces</b>		<b>art. 69 art. 73 (4)</b>				<b>art 87 (1)</b>			
yes, always	4		4	4	4		4**	4	4
not in war, but nominates the Commander	3								

not in war, but participates in Security Council	2								
yes, always, but with counter signature (shared responsibility)	1								
no	0								
<b>Impeachment</b>		<b>art 63 (2-3)</b>				<b>art 81 (3)</b>			
cannot be removed	4								
removal requiring majority $\geq 2/3$ of total members of parliament or by referendum	3		3	3	3		3	3	3
removal requiring simple majority of total members of parliament or 2/3 of members participating at discussion	1								
removal requiring simple majority of parliament members participating at the discussion or by the decision of a court	0								
<b>Countersignature</b>		<b>art 73-1</b>				<b>art 94 (2)</b>			
no (or only in for emergency declarations)	4		4	4			2	2	2
only for formal acts (nomination of diplomatic corp, etc) or specific areas	3								
in cases foreseen by Constitution	2								
every decision in main policy areas	1				1				
every decision	0								
<b>Call special sessions of parliament</b>		<b>art 61 (2)</b>				<b>art 67</b>			
yes	4		4	4	0		4	4	4
no	0								
<b>Conduct foreign policy</b>		<b>art 73 (a)</b>				<b>art 86 &amp; 96 (1)</b>			
yes, alone	4		4	4	2		2	2	2
yes, in cooperation with cabinet	2								
no	0								
<b>Priority to presidential laws</b>		<b>art. 67</b>				-			
yes, upon request	4		4	4					
no priority/no applicable	0				0		0	0	0
	<b>total</b>		<b>65</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>26</b>		<b>42</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>33</b>

<sup>a</sup> art. 38 (1-a) Constitutional Jurisdiction Code); Sources: Own elaboration based on texts of Constitution of Georgia and Constitution of Moldova  
Source: Own textual analysis of the Georgian and Moldovan Constitutions; Index's structure based on Beliaev (2006); Shugart and Carey (1992); Taghiyev (2006).

## Appendix III Cabinet structure

**Table 6 Cabinets in Georgia (1992-2016)**

Gov	Prime Minister (party)	Beg	End	Dur (days)	No of Ministries (initial)	No of Ministers	ToG	Government party (% seats)	Ro T
1	Zurab Zhvania (NM-United Democrats)	17 Feb 2004	3 Feb 2005	353	17 (19)	33	1	NM-United Democrats (65.1)	3
2	Zurab Noghaideli (UNM)	17 Feb 2005	24 July 2006	522	17	22	1	UNM (65.1)	7*
3	Zurab Noghaideli (UNM)	24 Jul 2006	7 Sep 2007	410	17	24	1	UNM (65.1)	7
4	Zurab Noghaideli (UNM)	07 Sep 2007	16 Nov 2007	70	17	17	1	UNM (65.1)	2
5	Lado Gurgendidze (indep)	22 Nov 2007	5 Jan 2008	44	17	17	1	UNM (65.1)	1**
6	Lado Gurgendidze (indep)	31 Jan 2008	01 Nov 2008	270	17	20	1	UNM (79.3)	6
7	Grigol Mgaloblishvili (indep)	1 Nov 2008	30 Jan 2009	90	17	22	1	UNM (79.3)	2
8	Nika Gilauri (indep)	06 Feb 2009	02 Jul 2010	511	18	23	1	UNM (79.3)	7
9	Nika Gilauri (indep)	2 Jul 2010	20 Mar 2012	627	19 (18)	23	1	UNM (79.3)	7
10	Nika Gilauri (indep)	20 Mar 12	30 Jun 12	102	19	19	1	UNM (79.3)	6
11	Vano Merabishvili (UNM)	4 Jul 2012	1 Oct 2012	89	19	26	1	UNM (79.3)	1
12	Bidzina Ivanishvili (GD-DG)	25 Oct 12	17 Nov 13	388	20 (19)	22	3	GD (55.3)	2
13	Irakli Garibashvili (GD-DG)	20 Nov 13	26 Jul 14	248	19	20	3	GD (55.3)	7
14	Irakli Garibashvili (GD-DG)	26 Jul 14	9 May 15	287	19	23	3	GD (55.3)	7
15	Irakli Garibashvili (GD-DG)	9 May 15	23 Dec 15	228	19	23	3	GD (55.3)	2
16	Giorgi Kvirikashvili (GD-DG)	30 Dec 15	8 Oct 16	283	18 (19)	23	3	GD (55.3)	1

\* the parliamentary confirmation vote was required after the reshuffle of more than one-third of cabinet members ; \*\*in Georgia until 2012 government was required to resign after the presidential and not after the parliamentary elections; Source: own compilation based on data retrieved from the Georgian parliamentary website and newspaper textual analysis.

**Table 7 Cabinets in Moldova (1994-2016)**

Gov	Prime Minister (party)	Beg	End	Dur	No of Ministries (initial)	No of Ministers	ToG	Government party (% seats)	RoT
1	Andrei Sangheli (PDAM)	5 Apr 1994	12 Dec 1996	982	18	18	1	PDAM (53.8)	2
2	Ion Ciubuc	24 Jan 97	22 Mar 98	461	17	21	6	/	1
3	Ion Ciubuc 2	22 Ma 1998	3 Feb 1999	257	16	16	6	/	2
4	Ion Sturza	12 Mar 1999	12 Nov 1999	245	16	18	6	/	5
5	Dumitru Braghiș	21 Dec 1999	25 Feb 2001	455	14	18	2	/	1
6	Vasile Tarlev	19 Apr 2001	06 Mar 2005	1435	16 (15)	32	1	PCRM	1
7	Vasile Tarlev 2	19 Apr 2005	19 Mar 2008	1065	17 (16)	25	1	PCRM	2*
8	Zinaida Greceanii (indep)	31 Mar 2008	5 Apr 2009	399	16 (17)	18	1	PCRM	1
9	Zinaida Greceanii (PCRM)	10 Jun 2009	29 Jul 2009	96	16	16	1	PCRM	1
10	Vlad Filat (PLDM)	25 Sep 2009	28 Nov 2010	458	16	16	2	PLDM PDM PL	1
11	Vlad Filat (PLDM)	14 Jan 2011	8 Mar 2013	784	16	20	2	PLDM PDM PL	5
12	Iurie Leancă (PLDM)	31 May 2013	30 Nov 2014	558	16	20	2	PLDM PDM PLR	7
13	Chiril Gaburici (indep)	18 Feb 2015	12 Jun 2015	114	16	16	2	PLDM PDM	2
14	Valeriu Streleț (PLDM)	30 Jul 2015	29 Oct 2015	91	16	16	2	PLDM PDM PL	5
15	Pavel Filip (PDM)	20 Jan 2016	-	-	9 (16)	9	2	PDM PL PPEM	-

Source: own compilation based on data retrieved from the Moldovan parliamentary website and newspaper textual analysis.

Notes: Based on Muller-Rommel, Fettelschoss, and Harfst (2004)

Reasons for termination: 1) Elections (any national election); 2) Voluntary resignation of Prime Minister; 3) Prime Minister's death; 4) Dissension within government; 5) Lack of parliamentary support; 6) Intervention by the Head of State; 7) Cabinet reshuffle requiring confidence vote; 8) Unknown

Type of Government: 1) Single-party government (one party holds the majority in parliament and all government seats); 2) Minimal winning coalition (all parties in government are necessary to form a majority government); 3) Surplus coalition (coalition governments that exceed the minimal winning criteria); 4) Single-party minority government (the party in government does not possess the majority of seats in parliament); 5) Multi-party minority government (the parties in government do not possess the majority of seats in parliament); 6) Technocrat cabinet .

## Appendix IV Mapping party programmatic positions

### Economic issues

per401 Free Enterprise: Positive, per402 Incentives: Positive, per414 Economic Orthodoxy: Positive, per505 Welfare State Limitation: Positive, per702 Labour Groups: Negative, per704 Middle Class and Professional Groups: Positive, per403 Market Regulation: Positive, per404 Economic Planning: Positive, per412 Controlled Economy: Positive, per413 Nationalization: Positive, per504 Welfare State Expansion: Positive, per701 Labour Groups: Positive, per703 Farmers: Positive.

### Economic position

= (per401 + per402 + per414 + per505 + per702 + per704) – (per403 + per404 + per412 + per 413 + per504 + per701 + per 703)

### Cultural issues

per601 National Way of Life: Positive, per603 Traditional Morality: Positive, per605 Law and Order: Positive, per608 Multiculturalism: Negative, per501 Environmental Protection: Positive, per503 Social Justice: Positive, per602 National Way of Life: Negative, per604 Traditional Morality: Negative, per607 Multiculturalism: Positive, per705 Underprivileged Minority Groups: Positive, per706 Non-economic Demographic Groups: Positive, Positive, per7051 Minorities Inland: Positive, per7052 Minorities Abroad: Positive.

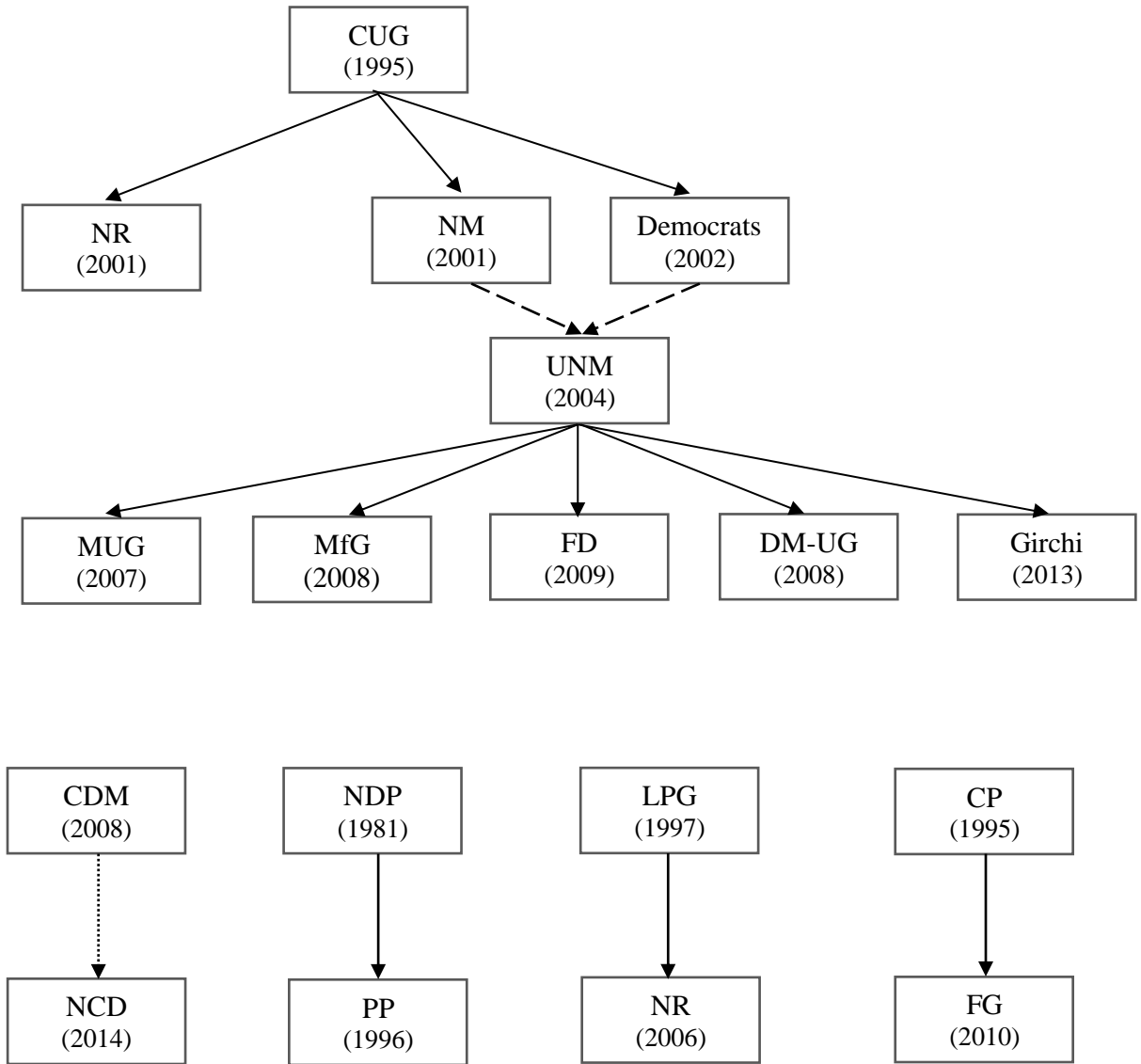
### Cultural position

= (per601 + per603 + per605 + per608) – (per501 + per503 + per602 + per604 + per607 + per705 + per7061 + per6072 + per7051 + per7052)

Source: Rafałowski (2014), Tavits & Letki (2014) and Manifesto Project Database

**Appendix V Organizational continuity of political parties**

**Figure I. Major organizational changes of the mainstream political parties in Georgia (1992-2016)**

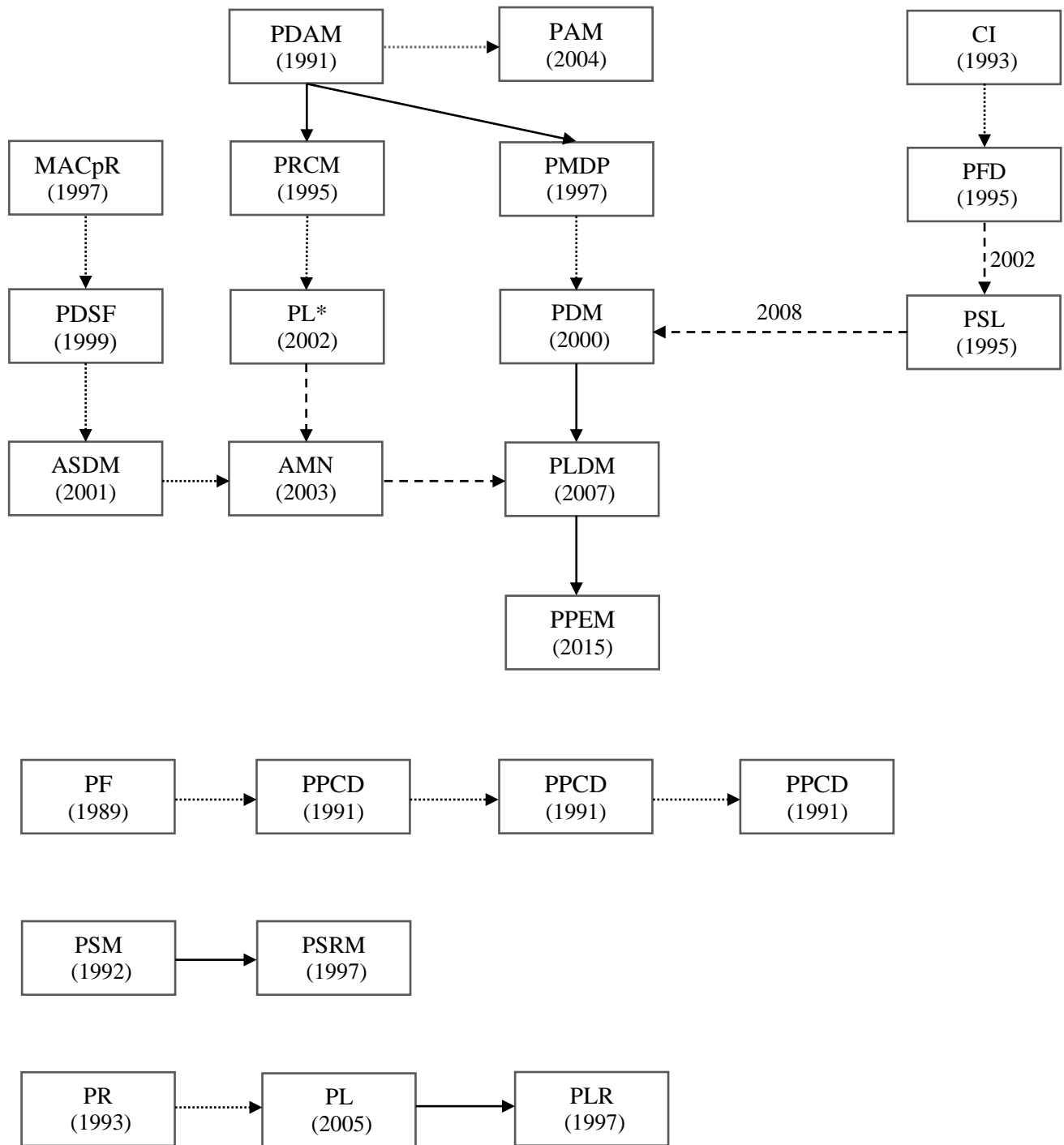


Note: solid arrow indicates splits; long dashed arrows indicate mergers, dotted arrows indicate name change; party founding year in parenthesis

Source: own elaboration



**Figure II. Major organizational changes of the mainstream political parties in Moldova (1991-2016)**



\*this LP is different from the one depicted at the bottom of the chart

Note: solid arrow indicates splits; long dashed arrows indicate mergers, dotted arrows indicate name change; party founding year in parenthesis

Source: own elaboration

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