

THE ROLE OF THE ROSE REVOLUTION IN GEORGIA'S DEMOCRATIZATION PROCESS

GÜRCİSTAN'IN DEMOKRATİKLEŞME SÜRECİNDE GÜL DEVRİMİ'NİN ROLÜ

ვარდების რევოლუციის როლი საქართველოს დემოკრატიზაციის პროცესში

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Abstract

After the dissolution of the USSR, the former Soviet Bloc countries had to cope with a series of problems in the first years of their independence, especially the transition to a free market economy, economic development, nation-state building. With the declaration of independence in 1991, Georgia experienced an uprising that led to the disruption of the country's territorial integrity. This hot conflict environment in Georgia has hindered the country's democratisation path, and preserving its territorial integrity has become the most important issue for Georgia. The lack of internal stability has led to the existence of weak state institutions, lack of development of civil society and lack of socio-economic development. In addition, while Russia's coercive diplomacy affected Georgian politics in the post-independence period, only in the early 2000s, with the strengthening of the geopolitical position of the country, Western countries, especially the USA, started to develop policies towards Georgia. Especially the existence of energy transit projects and the fact that Georgia is on the transit route have revealed the importance of Georgia's internal stability and security.

The colour revolutions, which rapidly manifested themselves in the former Soviet Bloc countries, took place in Georgia in 2003 under the name of the Rose Revolution. As a result of the movement, which constituted an important turning point in Georgian politics, Georgia's long-standing Russian-oriented state tradition came to an end and a series of reform efforts were initiated to create a more democratic and modern state in Western norms. As a result of the acceleration of the democratic transformation process, energy transit projects involving the country gained momentum.

In this study, internal and external factors in Georgia's democratisation process since its independence will be discussed. The changing face of Georgia with the Rose Revolution will be analysed and the impact of leaders and civil society on the transformation process will be evaluated.

Key Words: Rose Revolution, Georgia, Democratization Process, Nation- State Building.

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Özet

SSCB'nin dağılmasının ardından eski Sovyet Bloğu ülkeleri bağımsızlıklarının ilk yıllarında serbest piyasa ekonomisine geçiş, ekonomik kalkınma, ulus- devlet inşası başta olmak üzere bir dizi problemle baş etmek zorunda kalmıştır. Gürcistan, 1991 – 1993 yılında bağımsızlığının ilanı birlikte bu sorunların yanında ülkenin toprak bütünlüğünü bozulmasına neden olan bir iç silahlı çatışma yaşamıştır. Gürcistan'daki bu sıcak çatışma ortamı ülkenin demokratikleşme yolunda önünü kesmiş, toprak bütünlüğünü korumak Gürcistan'ın en önemli meselesi haline gelmiştir. İç istikrarın sağlanamamış olması zayıf devlet kurumlarının varlığına, sivil toplumun gelişim gösterememesine, sosyo- ekonomik kalkınmanın gerçekleşmemesine neden olmuştur. Bunun yanında bağımsızlık sonrası dönemde Rusya'nın zorlayıcı diplomasisi Gürcistan siyasetini etkilemiş iken ancak 2000'li yılların başlarında ülkenin jeopolitik konumunun güçlenmesi ile birlikte başta ABD olmak üzere Batı ülkeleri Gürcistan'a yönelik politikalar geliştirmeye başlamışlardır. Özellikle enerji transit projelerinin varlığı ve Gürcistan'ın transit güzergahında olması Gürcistan'ın iç istikrarının ve güvenliğinin önemini ortaya çıkarmıştır.

Eski Sovyet Bloğu ülkelerinde hızla kendini gösteren renkli devrimler 2003 yılında Gürcistan'da Gül Devrimi adı ile gerçekleşmiştir. Gürcistan siyasetinde önemli bir dönüm noktasını teşkil eden hareket neticesinde Gürcistan'ın uzun yıllardır devam eden Rus eksenli devlet geleneği sona ermiş, Batı normlarında daha demokratik ve modern devlet oluşturmak için bir dizi reform çalışması başlamıştır. Demokratik dönüşüm sürecinin hız kazanması neticesinde ülkenin dahil olduğu enerji transit projeleri ivme kazanmıştır.

Bu çalışmada Gürcistan'ın bağımsızlığından itibaren demokratikleşme sürecinde iç ve dış etkenlere değinilecektir. Gül Devrimi ile birlikte Gürcistan'ın değişen yüzü incelenecek, dönüşüm sürecinde lider ve sivil toplumun etkisi üzerine bir değerlendirmede bulunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Gül Devrimi, Gürcistan, Demokratikleşme Süreci, Ulus- Devlet İnşası.

ზეინებ თოფალი

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აბსტრაქტი

სსრკ-ს დაშლის შემდეგ, დამოუკიდებლობის პირველ წლებში ყოფილი საბჭოთა ბლოკის ქვეყნებს მოუწიათ უამრავ პრობლემასთან გამკლავება. ეს, განსაკუთრებით ეხება თავისუფალ საბაზრო ეკონომიკაზე გადასვლის, ეკონომიკურ განვითარების და ეროვნული სახელმწიფოს მშენებლობის პერიოდს. აღნიშნული პრობლემების გარდა, 1991 – 1993 წლებში საქართველოში მომხდარმა შიდა

შეიარაღებულმა კონფლიქტმა, დამოუკიდებლობის გამოცხადების შემდეგ, ქვეყნის ტერიტორიული მთლიანობა დააზიანა. ხსენებულმა კონფლიქტურმა გარემომ საქართველოს დემოკრატიზაციისკენ მიმავალი გზა გადაკეტა და საკუთარი ტერიტორიული მთლიანობის დაცვა ქვეყნისთვის ყველაზე მნიშვნელოვან საკითხად იქცა. შიდა სტაბილურობის მოშლამ სუსტი სახელმწიფო ინსტიტუტების ჩამოყალიბება, სამოქალაქო საზოგადოების წარუმატებლობა და სოციალურ-ეკონომიკური განვითარების შეფერხება გამოიწვია. ამას გარდა, რუსეთის მხრიდან ზეწოლა დამოუკიდებლობის შემდგომი პერიოდის საქართველოს პოლიტიკაზე გავლენას ახდენდა. თუმცა, 2000-იანი წლების დასაწყისში ქვეყნის გეოპოლიტიკური პოზიციის გაძლიერებასთან ერთად, დასავლეთის ქვეყნებმა, განსაკუთრებით კი აშშ-მა, საქართველოს მიმართ საკუთარი პოლიტიკის შემუშავება დაიწყეს. განსაკუთრებით, ენერგეტიკულმა სატრანზიტო პროექტებმა და საქართველოს სატრანზიტო მარშრუტზე მდებარეობამ საქართველოს შიდა სტაბილურობისა და უსაფრთხოების მნიშვნელობა ცხადყო.

ყოფილი საბჭოთა ბლოკის ქვეყნებში განხორციელებული ფერადი რევოლუციების კვალდაკვალ, 2003 წელს საქართველოშიც მოხდა „ვარდების რევოლუცია“. ამ ნაბიჯის შედეგად, რომელიც მნიშვნელოვანი გარდამტეხი მომენტი იყო ქართულ პოლიტიკაში, დასრულდა საქართველოს რუსეთზე ორიენტირებული სახელმწიფო ტრადიცია და დასავლური ნორმების შესაბამისად, უფრო დემოკრატიული და თანამედროვე სახელმწიფოს შექმნის მიზნით რეფორმების სერია დაიწყო. დემოკრატიული ტრანსფორმაციის პროცესის შედეგად, ენერგეტიკის სფეროს იმ სატრანზიტო პროექტების დაჩქარება მოხდა, რომლებშიც ქვეყანა ჩართული.

წინამდებარე კვლევა ეხება საქართველოს დამოუკიდებლობის დღიდან მოყოლებული საქართველოს დემოკრატიზაციის პროცესის შიდა და გარე ფაქტორებს. განხილულია ვარდების რევოლუციის შემდეგ საქართველოს ცვალებადი სახე და შეფასებულია ლიდერისა და სამოქალაქო საზოგადოების გავლენა ტრანსფორმაციის პროცესში.

საკვანძო სიტყვები: ვარდების რევოლუცია, საქართველო, დემოკრატიზაციის პროცესი, ეროვნული სახელმწიფოს მშენებლობა.

Introduction

When we try to explain the concept of democracy as a form of government, we come across many different interpretations. However, with a general definition that is accepted, democracy is a political system that is carried out through the transfer of political power through free and contested elections as well as the protection of individual rights and freedoms. However, while Tilly argues that democracy is a system that includes political and social equality (Tilly, 2007: 9), according to Popper, democracy is a political system in which power changes hands frequently and the people have the right to elect and be elected (Popper, 2021). Although there are so many different definitions of democracy, it is possible to create a framework that determines the basic features of democracy in general terms. In this context, David Beetham's approach to democracy serves the purpose of democracy by guiding the basic principles of democracy. According to Beetham, the democracy approach emphasises the concepts

of popular sovereignty, equality, protection of rights, representative democracy and accountability (Beetham, 1998).

The concept of democracy has become one of the most difficult concepts to define over time. The conjuncture-dependent change in democracy has also affected the democratisation process. Although democratisation is a multifaceted process, factors and elements vary depending on specific conditions. The success and sustainability of the process depends on historical, cultural, socio-political and economic conditions. As a matter of fact, in this study, especially the studies covering the democratisation process of the new states established after the dissolution of the USSR are mentioned. In general, the concept of democratisation refers to the process of evolution, maintenance and deepening of a democracy. The development of a democratic regime is expressed by the process of transition from an authoritarian or totalitarian state to a democracy. However, the elements related to the success or failure of democratisation are insufficient to express the post-Cold War transition processes. Socio-economic development and structural change in political institutions alone do not provide sufficient conditions to demonstrate the success of the democratisation process in the former Soviet Bloc countries.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the transition to a free market economy and democratic system in the countries that declared their independence has been painful. The transition to democracy and the reconstruction of the state came to the agenda simultaneously in the first years of independence in the Soviet bloc countries, and the political, administrative and economic institutions of the state had to be reconstructed. The simultaneous nation-state building and transition process revealed the difficulties of the transition process in many areas such as unemployment, poverty, economic problems, high inflation, education, health and social security. The liquidation of old institutions and the implementation of administrative and social institutions brought many problems.

Especially with the dissolution of the USSR in 1989, the global rise of democracy, which Huntington calls the 'third wave of democracy', has given a new impetus to democratisation efforts. Huntington identified various factors contributing to the third wave of democracy, such as changes in global norms, economic development, the spread of communication technologies and the influence of other democratic countries. Among the basic elements of democracy, it is stated that factors such as the declining legitimacy of authoritarian regimes, increasing public expectation for regular and competitive elections, poor economic performance or military failure are effective. In this context, the basic principles of democracy have evolved depending on the conditions and have included principles such as the rule of law, human rights, freedom of expression, freedom of the press, strengthening of civil society, pluralism of political parties, free and fair elections. These elements ensure the functioning of democracy and the creation of a participatory political system (Huntington, 2011: 19-25). In addition, the difficulties experienced by the former Soviet Bloc countries in the democratisation process after the dissolution of the Soviet Union were defined by Adam Przeworski as 'an attempt to break decisively with the past, both in the field of economics and politics' (Przeworski, 1995). Although the process of political transformation and the elements of democratisation differ in the former Soviet Bloc countries, nation-state building, political power, socio-economic development, citizenship culture and political tradition are accepted as elements of democratisation.

Methods

In the article, Field Research Method was used as a scientific research method. In order to analyse and understand the Georgian domestic politics, Georgia was visited to conduct fieldwork, face-to-face interviews and observation-based research were conducted. All the data obtained were analysed and evaluated in a cause-effect relationship.

Results

With the increase in Georgia's geopolitical importance, the strategic cooperation projects it has developed have increased. Especially the 2008 August War revealed how important the security and stability of the region is. In this context, this study examines the impact of the internal dynamics of the democratisation process and the Rose Revolution on Georgian politics. Accordingly:

1. The Rose Revolution constitutes a turning point in Georgian politics.
2. After the Rose Revolution, it was revealed that the elites were more interested in the modernisation of the country than its democratisation and used it as a tool to consolidate their power.
3. Russia has interrupted Georgia's democratisation tendency many times by 'blocking' it through its policies in the region.

Discussion;

Politics of Georgia until the Rose Revolution

When we look at the process of transition to democratic regime in Georgia, it is seen that it started before the declaration of independence with the coming to power of Zviad Gamsakhurdia after the parliamentary elections in October 1990. However, the continuity of the process has been interrupted several times. As a matter of fact, Ghia Nodia emphasised that Georgia managed to remove the Communist party from power in the first stage through the 1990 elections. He stated that no political organisation that was the successor of the Communist Party was active in Georgia before independence (Nodia, 2017). However, in the first years of independence, ethnic nationalist conflicts escalated rapidly in Georgia and preserving territorial integrity became a domestic issue. Likewise, Przeworski stated that in transitions from authoritarian regimes to democracy, maintaining territorial integrity in multinational societies is a serious problem (Przeworski, 1995). In the first years of Georgia's democratic transition process, Georgia's inability to achieve internal stability and the increasing conflict environment hampered the transition process. Gamsakhurdia, the first President of independent Georgia, was deposed by a coup d'état in January 1992 for his failure to ensure Georgia's internal stability. Although Shevardnadze endeavoured to establish a certain level of public order, he failed to ensure territorial integrity. The existence of ethno-regional divisions posed a problem for Georgia's democratisation process. In the first years of independence, Georgia succeeded in liquidating elements of the communist regime, but the democratisation that took place in free market reforms did not achieve the expected results.

Shevardnadze, while ruling the country with an interim administration until the elections held in 1995, tried to maintain unity and order in Georgia. Although the formal requirements of a democratic state structure were put into practice in Georgia with the adoption of the 1995 Constitution, these norms were abused by the government and those close to it. Factors such as corruption, bribery and an unstable economic environment have prevented the development of political, economic and legal reforms, which are necessary steps for democratic consolidation. Administrative failure, lack of internal stability and the emergence of domestic opposition led Shevardnadze to take authoritarian measures to remain in power. Deteriorating performance in almost all policy areas stalled the democratic transition process and led to the interruption of international aid.

Shevardnadze established a stable hybrid regime that consolidated his power from 1995 to 2001, but after 2001 the opposition began to mobilise in Georgia. The country faced an insurmountable budget deficit and the economic crisis became unmanageable. In 2001, Georgia became the country among the Soviet Bloc countries that had not completed the process of statehood and was in the greatest need of an urgent reform package. Although the reformist wing within the state administration expressed their demands in this direction, Shevardnadze resisted to remain in power and not to change. The most important indication that Shevardnadze resisted to stay in power and considered every means as permissible was the shady election results in 2003. However, Georgian public opinion and political actors were now against the arbitrary rule of Shevardnadze and pointed to the lack of full democratisation as the most important reason for the Rose Revolution. It is possible to say that Georgia took a serious step towards democratisation with the Rose Revolution. The contribution of civil society organisations to the protests and demonstrations is beyond doubt. The revolution showed both the weaknesses and strengths of civil society in Georgia. Georgian public opinion, which had been politically indifferent until this period, started to participate in the protests from the beginning of the 2000s and became influential.

In this context, Georgia's expectations from the new administration are quite clear. From a political point of view, the electorate expects the elections to be transparent, free and fair. A decisive fight against corruption and bribery, which has permeated almost every level of the state, must be initiated; the service network of public institutions and organisations that have lost their functions or have not yet been established during the Shevardnadze era must be improved; honest, competent and educated people must be ensured to play an active role in state services. From an economic point of view, timely payment of pensions, employee salaries and other social security payments; ensuring revival and growth by prioritising foreign investors are the problems that require priority solutions. In addition, it is of vital importance for Georgia to maintain its territorial integrity in the face of separatist movements supported by Russia, while trying to keep diplomatic relations at a certain level. The Georgian electorate showed an 80% turnout rate in the elections held in January 2004, emphasising the expectation of change in a massive way. Saakashvili, who was elected President with 94% of the votes, was aware of the expectations and demands of the public and the needs of the state levels. Accordingly, he initiated reform efforts as soon as he came to power.

Changes in Georgia after the Rose Revolution

The Saakashvili government that came to power with the Rose Revolution found itself in the midst of a series of socio-economic problems. Having inherited a wrecked economy from the Shevardnadze government, the new President was in urgent need of a series of structural changes to address the country's institutional and socio-economic problems. In this context, both institutional and economic reform movements were initiated. First of all, the economic crisis, which was one of the most important reasons for the Rose Revolution, had to be corrected and public confidence in the state had to be restored. Likewise, in 2003, just before the Rose Revolution, 55% of respondents to Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer (GCB) survey stated that they expected corruption to increase in the next three years, while only 10.5% expected it to decrease (GCB, 2003).

The fight against corruption has started at all levels of the government and public institutions and organisations have been renewed. The works and new arrangements to be carried out in public institutions and organisations are the building blocks of the Georgian state, which will be renewed in the economic, political and social fields. In order to attract international investors to Georgia, which is in a state of economic collapse, it was aimed primarily to renew the public institutions and organisations that had lost their functions. Likewise, the most important problem that the new government faced as soon as it took office was that the duties and obligations of the Ministries and Administrative Affairs Departments were unclear and intertwined. In addition, the accountability of public institutions and organisations was also ambiguous. The Georgian public expected the new government to create a new system instead of reforming the old system, thus making the bureaucracy more functional and increasing transparency and efficiency.

The economic data, which was considered one of the main reasons for the revolution, and the corruption at all levels of the state had shaken the people's confidence in public institutions and organisations. The new government needed a Minister of Finance who would develop the country and reform all institutions. Kakha Bendukidze, who took office in this context, made arrangements that could be considered as building blocks for the Georgian economy during his tenure as the Minister of Finance. First of all, Bendukidze, who started to make arrangements within the Ministry of Finance, wanted to transition to a strong market economy by limiting the economic activities of the state through the hiring of contracted personnel and privatisation. Because a large part of the Georgian economy had already been privatised. As a matter of fact, with the new privatisation law announced by the government in 2004, state-owned enterprises that had not been privatised before, such as industrial plants, ports and infrastructure facilities, were included in the programme. In this context, the Ministry reduced its staff by two thirds, from around 2000 civil servants to 700, and recruited on short-term contracts in order to increase efficiency and control. Other Ministries were cautious about Bendukidze's personnel policy. As a matter of fact, Bendukidze insisted on implementing the old employment system within his own Ministry, as it favoured bribery and led to lower performance in terms of efficiency (Bennet, 2011: 5).

The Saakashvili administration, which has frequently emphasised that it has launched a fight against corruption at all levels of the state in order to ensure stability and reinforce public trust, has prioritised the rehabilitation of institutions where citizens receive one-to-one services. In this context, the institutions where basic services such as passport or identity card transactions or land registry deed transactions are provided have been prioritised. In addition, traffic police officers, who frequently stopped and inspected for bribes, were among the institutions where small-scale corruption was observed. The newly established patrol police organisation was paid salaries that would not allow bribery. Citizens' right to education was also usurped, and the standard of education across the country was very low. In 2004, the Ministry of Education launched a large-scale reform programme. In December 2004, a new Higher Education Law was adopted, which aims to decentralise the education system and give more power to educational institutions (Freedom House, 2006). According to the law, the rectors to be appointed by the President were to change their curricula and administration according to European standards within two years. In addition, many universities offering diplomas to anyone and everyone were licensed. In order to prevent the widespread violation of rights during university entrance for many years, centralised examinations were introduced. With this new arrangement, an attempt was made to ensure social justice in the field of education and a centralised university entrance exam was prepared, the first of which was held in 2005. Thus, young people will be able to enter university by using only their knowledge (<https://old.civil.ge/eng/article.php?id=10823>).

Recognising the need to pay higher salaries in order to prevent bribery, increase morale and motivation, and employ more qualified personnel, the government took important steps in 2004 and 2005 to increase civil servants' salaries. First of all, Saakashvili aimed to attract the attention of international donor organisations by showing that he was on the road to democracy. Already in early 2004, George Soros' Open Society Institute (OSI) and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) developed a programme for additional payments. Aimed at recruiting skilled and trained personnel for reform work within the state, the programme introduced additional payments to the salaries of senior and mid-level civil servants, making state institutions more attractive than the private sector. The programme, which was planned to last for three years, ended with the state budget recovering after one year (Dadaluri, 2007: 159). In addition, the biggest concern of the citizens was the elimination of the failures in the energy sector. The biggest obstacle for the Saakashvili government was power cuts and heating problems. In the year before the revolution, electricity could be supplied to most of the provinces of the country, except Tbilisi, for a few hours a day. As a result of the struggle against the problems in the energy sector, electricity was supplied to the whole country in the winter of 2006-2007. The fact that the people received one-to-one service increased their faith and trust in the new government (Papava, 2009: 5).

One of the biggest changes has been in the tax system. At the end of 2004, the Parliament also passed a fiscal amnesty law forgiving the accumulated tax debts of businesses until 1 January 2004. The same law also included a new regulation to reduce the amount of taxes and tax rates. Bendukidze and his team, as a result of long studies, found it appropriate to abolish uncollectible taxes. As a result, Georgia's complex tax system was simplified and a new tax system was introduced. Taxes from 21 items were reduced by two thirds and reduced to 7 items. For the first three years, the new tax code consisted of a 12% flat rate income tax, a 20% Value Added Tax and a 10% dividend and interest income tax, while inheritance tax and capital gains were not taxed (Freedom House, 2006). The government's policy on taxation broke the ice with Saakashvili's businessmen.

The new regulations introduced by the new constitution together with the increase in the powers of the President have indirectly increased the welfare level of Georgia. With the reduction in the state staff and the employment of more competent personnel, financial order was ensured in the country. As a result of the regulations of the Minister of Finance, who was given wide powers, financial order was ensured and the budget deficit was closed as a result of regular collection of taxes. Especially with the significant organisation of the tax administration, unregistered transactions were completely eliminated. As a result, the budget crisis was completely overcome in 2004. In addition, with the overcoming of the crisis with Abashidze and the restoration of territorial integrity in Georgia, the Adjara Region has been able to provide regular revenue flow to the central government. As a result, pensioners and public employees were paid regularly, including backlog salary payments. In the summer of 2004, the IMF

programme, which had been suspended in 2003 due to the wrong policies of the Shevardnadze government, was renewed (Papava, 2009: 4). New model cars were on the road, indicating the new face of Georgia, while ambitious new skyscrapers were being built in the capital Tbilisi and the port city of Batumi. The construction of a motorway connecting to the Black Sea was accelerated. In addition, the restoration of the historic city of Syknaghi for tourism purposes was started (Jones, 2006: 45).

In the public sector, police officers, customs officers and tax collectors who were considered to have abused their duties were dismissed and replaced by new people on the basis of merit. Thus, following this arrangement, the institutions that were vital for Shevardnadze's neopatrimonial system were reformed. The re-centralisation of political control resulted in a significant decline in corruption, while tax revenues quadrupled in 2004 alone. According to Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, Georgia rose from 124th out of 133 countries in 2003 to 79th in 2007. The improvement in the current situation was noticeable to Georgian citizens in everyday life; in particular, interruptions in energy supplies were reduced and infrastructure repair work began to be carried out in a timely manner (Lazarus, 2010). The fight against corruption has begun at all levels of government and public institutions and organisations have been reformed. The works and new arrangements to be carried out in public institutions and organisations are the building blocks of the Georgian state, which will be renewed in the economic, political and social fields. In order to attract international investors to Georgia, which is in a state of economic collapse, it was aimed primarily to renew the public institutions and organisations that had lost their functions. Likewise, the most important problem that the new government faced as soon as it took office was the reorganisation of the Ministries and Administrative Affairs Departments.

However, the changes in the police organisation became the face of the new regime. Immediately after the revolution, President Saakashvili and his team felt the need to take important steps to rebuild trust in the state. Especially the campaign they created in 2004 to increase trust in the police organisation is very important in this respect. In order to create a new image among police officers, people with a clean record and a stronger and more effective appearance were appointed. Saakashvili dismissed traffic police officers with bad habits and low salaries and replaced them with more reliable police officers with payments that would not allow bribery. In the autumn of 2004, the new police officers were provided with unique uniforms and a fleet of Volkswagen vehicles. This reform is one of the government's most visible achievements on the street (Wertsch, 2005: 528). The duties and responsibilities of the Population Directorate and the Public Registry Department under the Ministry of Justice were restructured, including the issuing of personal identity documents, land ownership rights and title deeds.

Conclusions

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the struggle to establish democracy in Georgia has taken many years. In the last 15 years, three regime changes have been made against the will of the people. Subsequent elections were held in order to legitimise the already given authority.

After the 'Rose Revolution' in 2003, Georgia broke away from the old order and started to follow a different path. As a result of the elites' decision to change the status quo, the effort to get rid of the Soviet legacy has been possible to a certain extent. Since Mikhail Saakashvili took office in January 2004, the vision of Georgia's new leader has been evaluated and criticised from different perspectives both within the country and in the international community. The President was perceived by some as a courageous reformer and a true democrat, and was supported for his advocacy and realisation of Western-style democratic values. Others, however, argued that he was a Stalinist autocrat who pretended to serve democracy in order to secure economic support from the West. However, an important point that should not be ignored and on which there is a consensus is that the Saakashvili government has achieved great successes for the unity of the country and has done so at times at the expense of democracy. Since the perception of success in Georgia is based on elements of 'modernisation', it is debatable whether the Rose Revolution was successful in the process of democratic consolidation.

First of all, when we look at the state structure in Georgia before the Rose Revolution, it can be characterised as a failed state as the basic duties and services that the state should fulfil either did not

exist or were not functioning. While bribery and corruption, which were dominant in state institutions, were now recognised as a way of getting things done that was unique to Georgian culture, public infrastructure was inadequate and the state could not even collect taxes. In addition, there was no electricity supply, transport or utilities outside the immediate vicinity of Tbilisi.

The Saakashvili government, which came to power after the Rose Revolution, initially embarked on a successful reform process and fought against organised crime and corruption in the country. According to Transparency International, Georgia improved from 124th place in 2003 to 64th place in 2011 on the world corruption chart. In addition, thanks to a strong popular legitimacy won in 2004, Saakashvili was able to change the structure of power inherited from Shevardnadze. With the new arrangement, the President's power increased, officials who abused their authority were imprisoned, radical reforms were made in the traffic police, and the Adjara region was brought back under control. From this point of view, the Saakashvili administration has made progress in restoring state control over its territory and borders, fighting corruption, elections, political legitimacy, efficiency and effectiveness of public administration, and collection of taxes and fees. First of all, when we look at the state structure in Georgia before the Rose Revolution, it can be characterised as a failed state as the basic duties and services that the state should fulfil either did not exist or were not functioning. Bribery and corruption, which were dominant in state institutions, were now accepted as a Georgian cultural way of getting things done, while public infrastructure was inadequate and the state could not even collect taxes. In addition, there was no electricity supply, transport or utilities outside the immediate vicinity of Tbilisi.

Despite all these results and the rhetoric of democracy during the Rose Revolution, it is difficult to call Georgia's period from 2003 to the present fully democratised. Pre-2003 attempts at transition to democracy were never consolidated and led to the establishment of weak state institutions and the existence of a semi-authoritarian regime. Saakashvili's landslide victory in 2004 laid the foundation for a highly personal and dangerous authoritarian rule. Despite Saakashvili's initial democratisation rhetoric, his gradual authoritarianisation led to a decline in domestic support for him, but he managed to maintain his power until the last elections held in the country. After the 2008 presidential elections, it was observed that Saakashvili brought his democratisation discourses back to the agenda and made some concessions from his authoritarian attitude. The 2008 war with Russia and the decline in Saakashvili's support within the country resulted in the victory of Ivanishvili's 'Georgian Dream' coalition in the 2012 elections. Recent OSCE research has characterised Georgia's political system as a 'loose multi-party system dominated by a single party' and underlined that political competition usually takes place between the ruling party and a large number of opposition parties.

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