ELECTORAL VOLATILITY IN GEORGIA: QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE STABILITY OF PARTY SYSTEM

Stable party system is the basic of consolidated democracy. Despite the fact that many researchers are interested in studying of system stability and institutionalism, the empirical studies about the mentioned issue are rather scarce. Electoral volatility is used as one of the measurements of the party system. Pedersen Index is one of the famous instruments in researches of electoral volatility. The mentions instrument is used into two directions: for measure party stability and the volatile electorate. The length of democratic transaction and party system fragmentation determines the electoral volatility. In accordance with the electoral volatility the post-soviet and former socialist countries are significantly ahead of the other regions. A little experience of multiparty political system and weak party identification is named as the cause of the mentioned. In this article my purpose was to study regional contest of electoral volatility in post-soviet and post-socialist countries, to analyze the condition in Georgia in this regard and to make conclusions only follow the contextual analysis. In the study I used qualitative methods, monographic study (Case Study) and I divided Georgian party system as the case. The study showed that in Georgia as well as in the many countries of the region the share of parties' instability in the overall volatility rate is much higher than the share of volatility caused by the volatile electorate. There are the weak state institutions in Georgia for decades, semi-authoritarian regime and difficult social-economical conditions prevents the formation of a stable party system.

Keywords: Electoral Volatility , party System, Post-Soviet Countries, Georgia

1. Electoral volatility

The developing democracies are characterized with high electoral volatility (Mainwaring, Torcal, 2005, p. 3). The electoral volatility determines the stability of party systems (Dalton, Wattenberg, 2000) and institutionalization (Mainwaring, Zoco, 2007, pp.155-178). The parties in the systems which are characterized with high electoral volatility has weak program features and it is difficult for citizens to identify them (Mainwaring, Torcal, 2006, in Katz and Crotty, pp. 204). In these conditions it is difficult to clear up in the election results and the democracy stands under the threat (Mainwaring, Zoco, 2007, p. 157). The high electoral volatility leads political elite to stop acting in accordance with the strategic plan and the voters – according to the strategic calculation (Moser, 1999, pp. 359 – 84; moser, 2001, in Grofman and Liphart,. pp. 43 – 68).

Post-Soviet and former socialist countries in accordance with the average rate of electoral volatility compared to the other countries looks as follows:
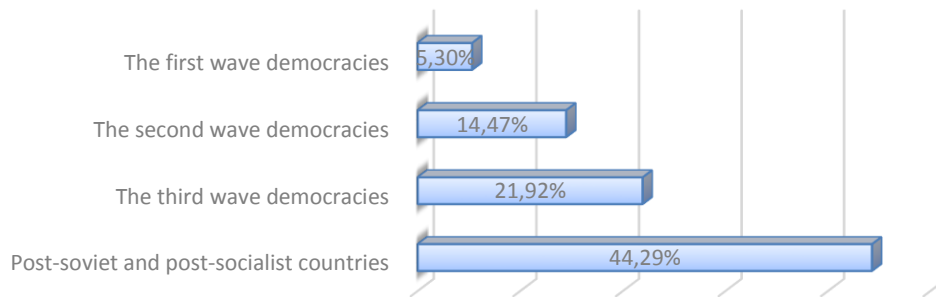
Electoral Volatility Across the Regions

Region	Volatility
The first wave democracies	5,30%
The second wave democracies	14,47%
The third wave democracies	21,92%
Post-soviet and post-socialist countries	44,29%

Diagram #1; Source: Jones, 2012, *Electoral Volatility in Old and New Democracies: Comparing Causes of Party System*

Institutionalisation. p. 28

Pedersen index (Pedersen, 1983) that measures electoral volatility covers two types of volatility: (A) emergence and disappearance of the parties from political system; (B) Replacement of the parties by voters that is one of the indicators of representative democracy and shows redistribution of power between the political actors; The first of them (A) is closely related to the political system stability of the country; in the post-communist countries the electoral volatility is mainly conditioned due to (A) volatility of party, but in the developing countries due to the voters volatility.

The high electoral volatility is determined by the following factors: a) the time factor that implies that the support and stability of the parties are determined in accordance with the fact how much time has passed since the start of the democratic transaction (Converse, 1969, pp. 139-71) and what kind of trend is loomed. B) Fragmentation of party system in the condition when there are many parties, when the ideological / program difference between them isn't clear we are facing to the high electoral volatility (Bartolini, Mair, 1990, pp. 130-45; Roberts, Wibbels, 1999, pp.575-90; Tavits, 2005, pp. 283-98)

2. Regional Context

A large part of the researchers believes that in the post-communist countries stabile and representative party system is very important for the consolidation of the democracy regime (Diamond, Linz & Lipset, 1990; Kitschelt, mansefeldova, Markowski&Tka, 1999; Mainwaring & Scully, 1995, pp.1-34). One of the most important problems in the region is the high electoral volatility and the combination of frequent turnover of parties (Bielasiak, 2002, pp.189-210; Birch, 2003).

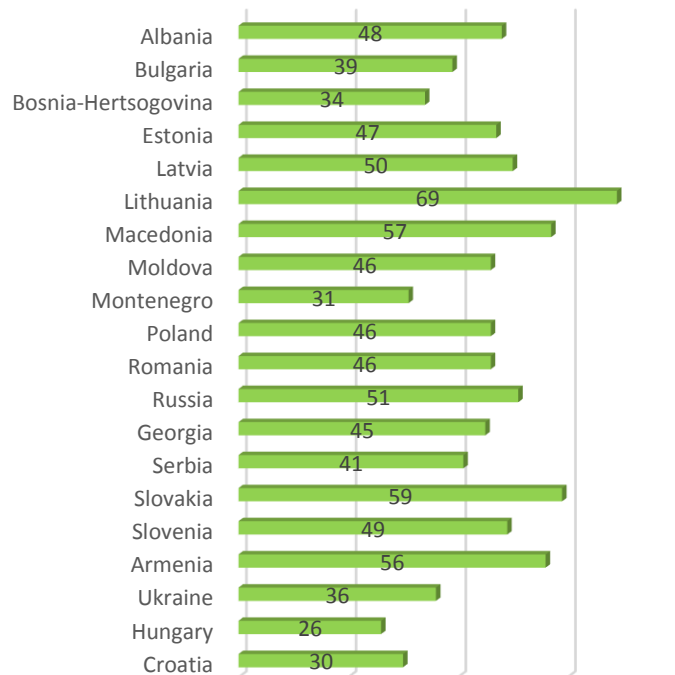## Electoral Volatility Rate in Post-Socialist and Post-Soviet Countries

Country	Value
Albania	48
Bulgaria	39
Bosnia-Hertsogovina	34
Estonia	47
Latvia	50
Lithuania	69
Macedonia	57
Moldova	46
Montenegro	31
Poland	46
Romania	46
Russia	51
Georgia	45
Serbia	41
Slovakia	59
Slovenia	49
Armenia	56
Ukraine	36
Hungary	26
Croatia	30

Diagram #2; Source: Powel, E. N. and Tucker, J. A. (2014).Revisiting Electoral Volatility in Post-Communist Countries: New

Data, New Results and New Approaches. In: *British Journal of Political Science*. Vol. 44. pp. 123-147.

In the central and Eastern European countries there wasn't experience multi-party system. The voters didn't have feeling of affiliation of political groups and party identification (Lewis, 2000; Mair, 1998, pp. 175-199) exactly by this may be explained the electoral volatility in the central and Eastern Europe is higher than in the Western Europe (Gallager, Laver & Mair, 2005; Lane & Ersson, 2007, pp.92-110; Lewis 200; Sikk, 2005, pp. 391-412; Tavits, 2008 pp. 537 – 555).

The average indicator of total electoral volatility in Post-Soviet is 45. A type volatility is less than 32%, but B type volatility is less than 13%. In the Post-Soviet space the 70% of volatility came to A type volatility. In the same period in the West European countries the 60% of electoral volatility came to B type volatility. Thus we can make conclusion that in the Post-Soviet and Post-Socialist countries the volatility caused by instability of parties is significantly higher than the volatility caused by hesitant electorate.

In the region in terms of electoral volatility Lithuania is significantly ahead of the other countries. In this regard in the Baltic countries is observed interesting trend. In Lithuania in 1990s the party system was more stable than in Latvia and Estonia, however the high indicator of volatility was caused due to the fluctuations of the number of votes between two main

parties (Conservative Union - Homeland and the Social Democratic Party) (Jurkynas, 2004, pp.278-296; Ramonaite, 2006, In: Jungerstam –Mulders, pp.69-90).
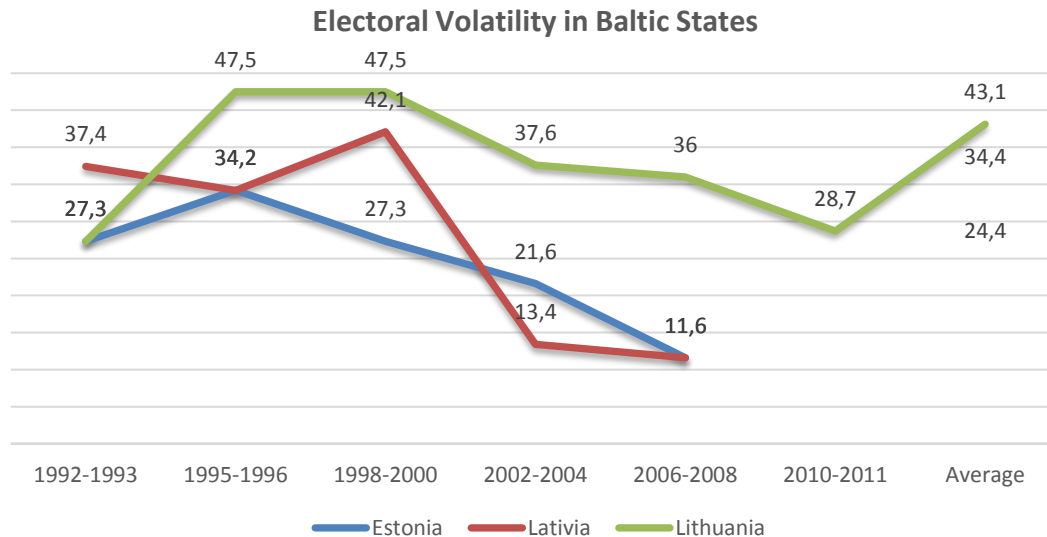
Electoral Volatility in Baltic States

Diagram #3; Source: Caramani, D. &Biezen, I.V. (2007). Cleavage structuring in Wester vs Central and Eastern Europe:

State formation, nation-building and economic modernization. Paper presented at the ECPR Joint 7-12 May

In the Lithuania the indicator of electoral volatility had been increased after the tipping elections of 2000. The electoral volatility was quite higher in Lithuania until 2006. In the parliamentary election of 2006 was observed positive changes; however in the election 2010 was found that several part of the parties lost the confidence and was again observed the high trend of volatility. In the Baltic countries from 1990s Estonia was distinguished by the trend of volatility decreasing.

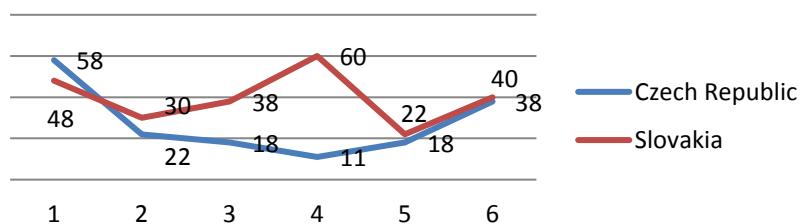**Electoral Volatility in 1990-2010**

Diagram #4; Source: Mackie, T. and Richard, R. (1991). *The International Almanac of Electoral History*. London: MacMillan.

The parties' competition in Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland are observed mostly between the big parties. In Czech Republic and Hungary two big parties are dominant. Unlike them in Estonia and Slovenia the stability of party system is based on the small and average parties. The Czech Republic with Hungary and Romania are distinguished with the low volatility in the central and Eastern European regions (Cherghina, 2014).

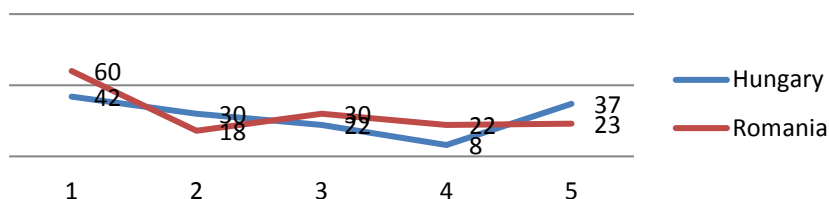**Electoral Volatility in 1990-2010**

Diagram #5; Source: Mackie, T. and Richard, R. (1991). *The International Almanac of Electoral History*. London: MacMillan.

From the beginning of 1990s the Bulgaria is characterized with the increasing electoral volatility. Weak party identification, fragile ideological grounds, and hesitant electorate are named as the reasons for the mentioned. For many years in Bulgaria to obtain governmental positions was possible through the patronalistic ties (Kolev and College, 2012). Bulgaria and Poland in the region are the countries where most of parties are distinguished by the high indicator of volatility.

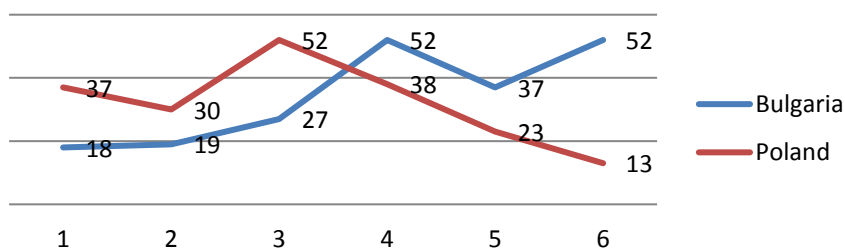**Electoral Volatility in 1990-2010**

Diagram #6; Source: Mackie, T. and Richard, R. (1991). *The International Almanac of Electoral History*. London: MacMillan.

In the weak conditions of party institutionalization of Ukraine the parties are quickly formed and disappeared. Before every election the formation of new political parties reaches to its peak in the Ukraine. Political parties don't have support from population. The hesitant electorate causes significant problems. It is interesting fact that in 1998, 2002, 2006, 2007 and 2012 years in the parliamentary elections only Communist Party of Ukraine - CPU participated uninterruptedly. The main obstacle factors of institutionalization of the party are considered the following: Unprepared legislative base, party communication gaps, low responsibility of electorate (Rybiy, 2013, pp.401-423).
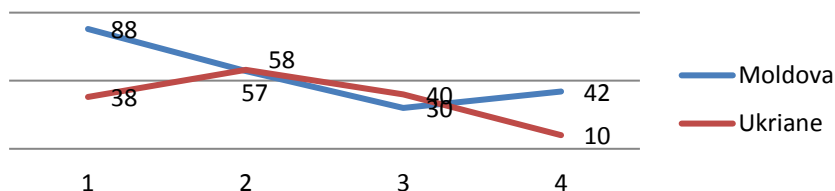
Electoral Volatility in 1994-2009

Diagram #7; Source: Mackie, T. and Richard, R. (1991). *The International Almanac of Electoral History*. London: MacMillan.

It should be noticed that Communist party of Moldova in the various period managed to cooperate with the government. The clear example of this was presidential election of 1996, when the Communists supported the future president Petre Luchinsky.
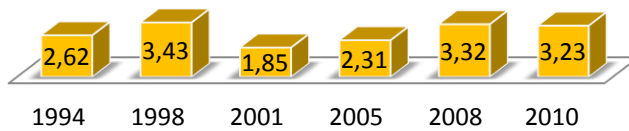
The Effective Number of Parties in Moldova

2,62	3,43	1,85	2,31	3,32	3,23
1994	1998	2001	2005	2008	2010

Diagram #8; Source: Berglund, St. (2013). *The Handbook of Political Change in Eastern Europe.* Edward Elgar Pub.

The existence of dominant party - Agrarian Party of Moldova significantly limits competition of parties. In Moldova parties mostly are used as clientelistic institutes. Corruption, parties lacking ideological basis and political fragmentation are the challenges of Moldova party system (Berglung, 2013, p. 757).
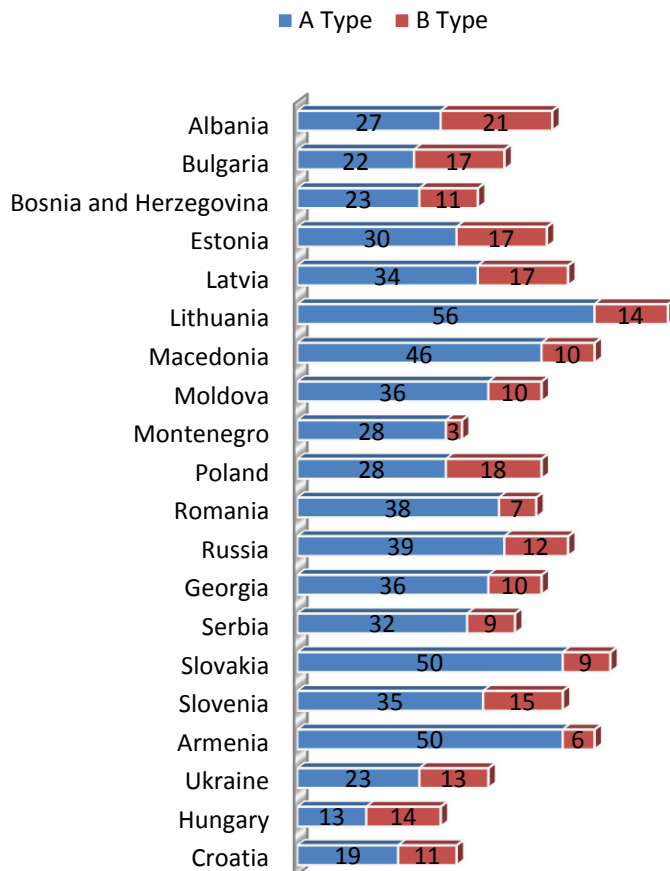
Types of Electoral Volatility

■ A Type ■ B Type

Country	A Type	B Type
Albania	27	21
Bulgaria	22	17
Bosnia and Herzegovina	23	11
Estonia	30	17
Latvia	34	17
Lithuania	56	14
Macedonia	46	10
Moldova	36	10
Montenegro	28	3
Poland	28	18
Romania	38	7
Russia	39	12
Georgia	36	10
Serbia	32	9
Slovakia	50	9
Slovenia	35	15
Armenia	50	6
Ukraine	23	13
Hungary	13	14
Croatia	19	11

Diagram #9; Source: Powel, E. N. and Tucker, J. A. (2014).Revisiting Electoral Volatility in Post-Communist Countries:

New Data, New Results and New Approaches. In: *British Journal of Political Science*. Vol. 44. pp. 123-147.

In the region Georgia in accordance with the A type volatility after Lithuania, Slovakia, Armenia, Macedonia, Romania and Russia along with the Moldova with 36% takes the eighth place. In accordance with the B type volatility after Albania, Poland, Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Slovenia, Lithuania, Hungary, Ukraine, Russia, Bosnia- Herzegovina, Croatia along with the Macedonia and Moldova Georgia takes 10%, the thirteenth place.

3. The Experience of Georgia

It is already 25 years Georgia is going through democratic transaction in the condition full with Instability and cataclysms, which revealed insufficient in term of institutionalism. The transaction in Georgia didn't begin by moving on the liberal democracy and it began from the authoritarianism. Weak state institutes and semi-authoritarian regime was the major abstract factor of country democratization (Nodia and Pinto Scholtbach, 2006, p. 5), more over the country had to move from the soviet past in the background of heaviest socio-economical and armed conflicts (Bader, 2010, p. 63). Georgia is joining the ranks of the hybrid countries, whose major challenges were the fair competition of political government and unconstitutional change of government. In accordance with the democracy progress scale developed by Freedom House (in which 1 scored is the indicator of highest progress and 7 score is the lowest indicator of progress) Georgian democracy transaction looks unfavorably.
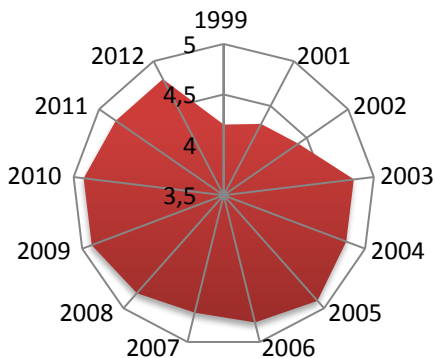
Democratic Transaction in Georgia

Diagram #10; Source: a) Nations in Transit, Georgia, 2008, Freedom House, p. 231; b) Nations in Transit, Georgia, 2012, Freedom House.

The fragmentation of party system is calculated in accordance with the effective parties number (ENP)[1] of Laakso and Taagepera (Laakso, Taagepera 1979, pp.3-27). The high indicator of effective parties means that the political system is diffusive and the governance is redistributed between many parties, but the low indicator means that the governance is concentrate only in the hands of several

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[1] $ENP=1/\Sigma(Si)^2$

Si –is the proportion of seats obtained by each party in the parliament (Number of votes received by parties), **Si** - is the squire of proportion of seats obtained by each party in the parliament (Number of votes received by parties), but **Σ** - is sum of squire of proportion of seats obtained by each party in the parliament (Number of votes received by parties).

parties. The average indicator of effective parties number of those ten countries, which are distinguished by the high indicator of volatility is 6,30 but in the ten countries having the lowest indicator it is made up 3,14 (Jones, 2012, p.37). For the beginning of 1990s the fragmentation of party system in Georgia was higher than in Brazil, that takes the leading position in the world in this regard (Budge, 2013, p. 228). After 1995 in the term of active fragmentation in Georgia had been outlined the following trend: frequent "turnover" of the parties, abundance of instable electoral coalitions, incompatibility of parliamentary factions and political parties and dominant governing party face to face of disconnected opposition (Bader, 2008, p. 4)
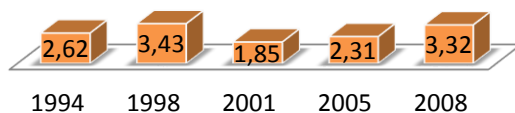
The Effective Number of Parties in Georgia

2,62	3,43	1,85	2,31	3,32
1994	1998	2001	2005	2008

Diagram #11; Source: a) Dawisha & Deets, 2006, Intended and Unintended Consequences of Elections in Russia and Postcommunist States. p. 17. b) Gallagher, 2014, *Election Indices*, p.14.

In Georgia after 1995 year the number of effective parties aren't high, however the volatility (fragmentation) is still high, that is defined due to the following reasons: Despite the fact that the number of parties in the country reaches to 220, most of them doesn't take active part in political processes, which while determining fragmentation level leads to a high error, because the fragmentation indicator doesn't cover less important even registered parties that hasn't sufficient number of members due to the existence of a number of small parties are lost the votes of social groups having identical interest and weakens parties, that causes fragmentation of political system. Georgian political system is characterized with the high concentration of (ruling party) votes and low support of opposite parties, that are distinguished with the high level of fragmentation (Nodia, Scoltbach, 2006, p. 108)

Types of Electoral Volatility in Georgia

■ A Type ■ B Type

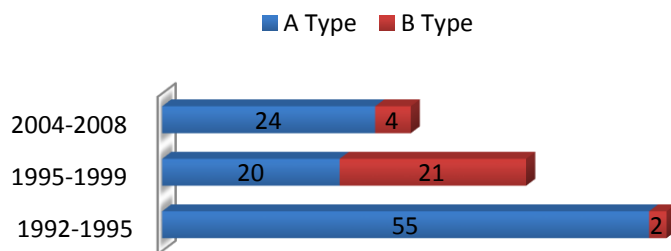|	A Type	B Type
2004-2008	24	4
1995-1999	20	21
1992-1995	55	2

Diagram #12; Source: Nef Powel & Tucker, 2009, *New Approaches to Electoral Volatility: Evidence from Postcommunist Countries*.

The volatility of opposite parties in Georgia is extremely high and in term of electoral volatility is considered as a core factor. From the 24 winner parties in the 1992 year parliamentary elections only one participated in the next elections in unchanged form. From the 20 parties/blocks which participated in the 2004 parliamentary elections only four took place in unchanged form in the next election (Nodia and

Pinto Scholtbach, 2006, pp. 103-104). "Especially hinders us the sense of instability. No one knows what can be happened from the election to the election. It hinders us in thinking about the long-term goals". [Interview with the representative of political parties].

During the period studied by me, in Georgia after the governmental changes the leading political parties disappeared from the political arena. After the obtaining of freedom the Communist Party disappeared from the political arena, the same happened with the Block Round Table – Free Georgia that was leading Block for the Shevardnadze's ruling period, which was dominant power earlier. The Union of Citizens and Revival which were quite powerful disappeared after the Rose Revolution (Nodia, Scoltbach, 2006, p. 105). The reason of this is that in the country the party is the attractive trampoline for carrier-oriented conformists.   For decades the stability of party was depended on maintaining their power. As soon as the party lost the power the party stopped its existence (Bertelsmann Transformation Index (BTI), 2014, p.15). In this regard the exception is United national Movement, which after the parliamentary elections of 2012 moved into opposition and continues its existence.

The formation of the parties in Georgia serves to political and economical elites rather than social factors. There were several satellite parties in the party system, which had title of opposite party, however (Bader, 2010, p.90) they were tolerant toward to the existed regime. And blocked the emergence (for the ruling team) of unwilling opponent. In the pre-election period satellite parties are oriented to weaken opposite party, by taking away their votes (Bader, 2010, p.98), such strategy promotes advance determination of election results and prolongs the ruling period of ruling team (Bader 2010, p.85). The mentioned circumstance in the Post-soviet space is called as "Virtual Politics" (Wilson, 2005).

To obtain the parliamentarian status is the major goal of politicians, and the party is the most important lever toward this goal. The lack of party discipline and frequent change of parties is one more reason of volatility of parties. Those deputes who were elected in accordance with the party list often replaced parties for many years sharply opposing parties in the country (whose watershed is not primarily ideological, but procedural issues), weak political actors, dominant governing party and hesitant (instable) elector created overall image of electoral volatility. In such conditions political forces hasn't the feeling of stability and are oriented short-term (on current pre-election) success.

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